Spatial Constructions

The Expression of Identity in Three Delegated Performances Staged Outside the Gallery Space, 1994-2017

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For copyright reasons the figures and appendices have been removed from this document.
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At the time when I had to start thinking about my Research Master thesis (a moment that I should have felt coming from the start of this degree program), I was still in the midst of my second internship at the Research Institute for Art and Public Space (LAPS). It was during this internship that I encountered one of the performances discussed in this thesis, namely *The Roof* by the collective Moha. My internship has in many ways formed the foundation of my thesis and I could therefore not be more grateful for the guidance of Dr. Jeroen Boomgaard (my on-site supervisor at the LAPS).

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Introduction

In 1994, a group of adolescents gathered on a square in a residential area in Utrecht, the Netherlands. They performed a dance which was filmed and televised on a local network. The group consisted of young men of around the same age who had been commissioned by the artist Renée Kool (b. 1961) for the work *Celebration*. Several years later, in 1997, a group of reportedly 160 *castellers* (Catalonian ‘castle-builders’) gathered on the Dam Square in Amsterdam to form a human tower. They too had been commissioned by an artist, namely Alicia Framis (b. 1967), for the work *Walking Monument*. More recently, in 2017, a group of people carried a white tarp through the streets of Rotterdam. These people had been invited to join a group of artists in a performance of *The Roof* (2016-), an ongoing performance-project of the artist-collective ‘Moha’.

These three incidents might all be seen as ‘delegated performances’ in some way or another. The term ‘delegated performance’ was first used for the exhibition “Double Agent” (Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, 2008), organized by Claire Bishop and Mark Sladen, which was described as ‘an exhibition of collaborative projects which use other people as a medium.’

Bishop later defined the practice as: ‘the act of hiring non-professionals or specialists in other fields to undertake the job of being present and performing at a particular time and a particular place on behalf of the artist, and following his/her instructions,’ adding that artists who use this strategy often ‘hire people to perform their own socioeconomic category, be this on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, age, disability, or (more rarely) profession.’ Bishop distinguishes between three types of delegated performance: the ‘live installation’ in which the performers ‘perform an aspect of their identities;’ the specialist performance for which the artist hires experts with a particular skill; and the documented performance, the category to which the delegated performances which are presented on film belong, typically performances ‘that are too difficult or sensitive to be repeated.’

Though the staging of non-professional performers who ‘play’ themselves is not new (as Meg Mumford and Ulrike Garde have pointed out referring to medieval mystery plays, age-old freak shows and the ethnographic exhibits of nineteenth-century World’s Fairs as examples), in art the practice is seen to have emerged in the early 1990s and is associated especially with the

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3 Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 91.
5 Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 92.
6 Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 98. See also: pp. 92-102. In 2009 Bishop listed five types of delegated performance, but this typology was less elaborate, see: Bishop & Austin, 2009. p. 102.
European art scene of the last two to three decades. It should be mentioned that this performance strategy became popular in theatre and dance as well in the 1990s, concurrently with, one might add, the rise of reality television. In theatre this strategy has been considered an important part of what Mumford and Garde call ‘Theatre of Real People,’ which they define as: ‘a mode of performance that is characterized by the foregrounding of contemporary people who usually have not received institutional theatre training and have little or no prior stage experience.’

In 2012 Bishop noted that delegated performances had not received much academic attention. While the practice has gradually gained more attention since then, this attention is often focussed on the ethical questions raised by many delegated performances and the way these performances relate to contemporary labor practices. It should also be noted that delegated performances are often subsumed under other genres and trends, especially under the much-discussed category of relational aesthetics. Additionally, the practice is sometimes described using different terms. Recently, for example, the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst in Zürich organized the exhibition “Extra Bodies - The Use of the ‘Other Body’ in Contemporary Art” (18 November 2017 - 4 February 2018, curated by Raphael Gygax), which explored ‘the artistic practice of resorting to and deploying “extra bodies”,’ and also emphasized that artists often ‘select these “other bodies” because of their specific social or biosocial role - which is why they may also be characterized as extras.’

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12 See, for example: Harvie, 2013. Montenegro Rosero, 2013. Da Silva Perez, 2015. Jakubowski, 2017. See also: Ridout, 2008. Bishop herself pays a lot of attention to the manner in which delegated performances relate to contemporary labor practices as well. See, for example: Bishop, 2012[b].

13 Nicolas Bourriaud, who coined the term ‘relational aesthetics’, refers to several art pieces which could fall into the category of delegated performance in his characterization of ‘relational aesthetics’. Felix Gonzales-Torres’ Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform) (1991) and Vanessa Beecroft’s vb09 (Ein Blonder Traum) (1994) for example, see: Bourriaud [1998], 2002. pp. 39-40. Bishop herself discusses works which could be called ‘delegated performances’ (though they are not yet named as such) in her seminal article “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics”, here she actually discusses these performances in opposition to ‘relational artworks,’ see: Bishop, 2004. pp. 70-73. In his criticism of relational aesthetics Stewart Martin also refers to delegated performances, though he too does not yet categorize them as such, see: Martin, 2007. p. 383.


As might be expected, the exhibitions “Double Agent” and “Extra Bodies” showed the practice of delegating performances in the context of a gallery space. The works included in these two exhibitions, as well as most of the works discussed by Claire Bishop and others, either consist of performances staged in a gallery space or of the (video-)documentation of delegated performances which are presented in a gallery space (and usually meant for this context). The performances of Celebration, Walking Monument and The Roof, on the other hand, were all staged outside of the gallery space (in public spaces) and the documentation of these performances was not (initially) meant to be exhibited in gallery spaces. With ‘the gallery space’ I refer to the spatial context in which art is usually exhibited: inside the walls of a museum or cultural institution, inside the ‘white cube’. Because delegated performances are often repeatedly staged and experienced in different gallery spaces, where they are seen to ‘implicate, provoke, or disrupt the privileged art world audience,’ the role specific sites (outside the gallery space) can play in these performances has remained underexposed in studies of this artistic practice. What interests me in the works I have chosen to discuss is the way these performances respond to specific sites and the manner in which these sites contribute to the identity constructions which these performances make visible using the bodies of a (specific) group of performers. In other words, the question which has driven my research is: what role does site play in exposing and/or destabilizing (a specific) ‘identity’ in the selected delegated performances?

16 Bishop even states that ‘all of this work [referring to delegated performances - MvB] maintains a comfortable relationship to the gallery, taking it either as the frame for a performance or as a space of exhibition for the photographic and video artifacts that result.’ Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 91. Notably, the exhibition “Extra Bodies” did not include any live performances, see: Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, 2017.

17 Celebration consisted of a live performance on a public square, a video clip which was televised on a local network and an audio-recording which was meant for a public radio broadcast. Neither the video clip nor the audio-recording have been presented in a gallery space. The exhibition catalogue Framis in Progress suggests that the documentation of Walking Monument was not supposed to be part of the work: ‘does the Walking Monument still exist? Yes, it does, and on two separate levels. It exists in the heads of all those people who happened to be there. […] Furthermore, it does exist in the discussion on the ephemeral position, as temporary art projects can be taken out of the traditional art context.’ (Breddels, 2013. p. 108.) The artist’s own statements on the work also suggest that the ephemerality of the performance was an important part of the work (see, for example: “Monument herleeft zwiepend,” 1997. p. 14.). In 2012, however, the artist apparently gifted the only photograph she (still) had of the performance (a photograph [fig. 40] which is also shown on her website and in the aforementioned exhibition catalogue) to the Rabo Kunstzone - at that time a public gallery space owned by the Rabobank, see: “Na de Prix de Rome,” 2012. The exhibition catalogue Prix De Rome 1997: Sculpture and Art and Public Space furthermore suggests that some documentation of Walking Monument, which won the Prix de Rome in 1997, may have been on display for the exposition of the nominees of this prize. The Roof is an ongoing performance project, which at the time of writing had not been presented in gallery spaces, though workshops which involved staging The Roof have taken place in ‘institutional’ spaces such as the Veem Theater. How we relate to public spaces is, however, central to The Roof.

18 Goldstein, 2016. p. 113.

19 See: note 16. Bishop, notably, does pay attention to the specificity of the exhibition space in her discussion of Santiago Sierra’s 133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Dyed Blond (a delegated performance), in her seminal essay on relational aesthetics. Sierra’s performance is also focussed on confronting a privileged art audience, see: Bishop, 2004. It should be mentioned, furthermore, that site-specificity in performance more generally has received quite a lot of academic attention recently, see for example: Birch & Tompkins (eds.), 2012.
Before examining the case studies in detail, I first discuss the practice and history of delegation in art in the introductory chapter De-skilling, Dancing and Disorientation. As the title suggests this chapter delves into the ways in which artists have used the strategies of de-skilling and delegation in visual art as well as in the field of dance. I will relate these two strategies to the economic context in which they emerged, as this context is often central to the criticism of delegated performances. This chapter will also discuss concurrent trends in contemporary art, specifically ‘relational aesthetics’ and ‘site-specificity’.

The second chapter, The Body Exposed, addresses the essential ‘medium’ of delegated performances - bodies - and the role of the body in the construction of identities, paying particular attention to what is regarded as one of the most important precedents of contemporary performance practices: body art. This chapter, furthermore, briefly discusses some key aspects of phenomenology, the role spaces play in foregrounding (oppositional) identities and the (art-)historical context in which body art and, later, delegated performances emerged.

Celebration, Walking Monument and The Roof were chosen as case studies for several reasons. First of all, these three works can be seen to visualize ‘identities’ on entirely different grounds: Celebration on the basis of gender and (to some extent) ethnicity, Walking Monument on the basis of national identity, and The Roof on the basis of vulnerability. A second reason why I chose these particular works is that these three performances might be considered to adhere to different types outlined by Bishop. Celebration might be seen to fall into the category of the ‘live installation’ as well as into the documented performance category because it includes a video clip. Walking Monument can be considered a specialist performance as the performers were commissioned because of their skill, though in some ways this performance might also be seen as a ‘live installation,’ because the performers shared a common nationality particular to their skill. The group which performs The Roof often consists of audience members, as well as the artists themselves. For this reason one might argue that The Roof is not really a delegated performance at all. I wish to consider this performance here, however, not only because audience-members are (usually) also non-professional performers, but also because the collective behind The Roof, Moha, often invites specific groups to collaborate with for this performance project. I included different types of delegated performances in order to shed light on the different strategies used to visualize ‘identities’ in this genre, strategies such as: editing (Celebration), skill (Walking Monument) and the use of props (The Roof). Another reason why I have selected these three works is because they have not yet received any attention in discussions of delegated performances.

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20 It was probably Bishop who first suggested that delegated performances are ‘heavily indebted to the body-art tradition of the late 1960s and early ’70s.’ Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 96. See also: Bishop, 2008.


For my critical examination of *Celebration*, *Walking Monument* and *The Roof* I have attempted to reconstruct the performances as well as the (historical) context in which they took place, to the best of my ability, through visual analysis of the documentation, by studying contemporary sources (mainly newspaper articles), by interviewing the artists23 and, in the case of *The Roof*, with the help of my own experiences of this performance. I did not experience the performances of *Celebration* and *Walking Monument* first-hand. Live presence has received much attention in studies of performance art and is often seen as essential, Peggy Phelan famously stated, for example, that: ‘Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representation of representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance,’24 adding that ‘the labor to write about performance (and thus to “preserve” it) is also a labor that fundamentally alters the event.’25 I do not wish to refute these claims. Indeed, having been dependent on written, photographic and filmed material for *Celebration* and *Walking Monument* has meant that I needed to reconstruct these performances based on subjective and selective accounts. Having tried to reconstruct my own experience of *The Roof* has also shown me that it is impossible not to be selective and, to use the words of Amelia Jones, to not ‘reframe [the performance] through my own invested point of view.’26 As Bishop points out, however, live presence itself has become less highly valued by contemporary artists.27 She suggests that this can be seen not only in the ways in which artists often document performances and present these documents as artworks, but also in the ways in which many delegated performances have been repeated in different locations and with different performers, as well as in the manner in which delegated performances frequently challenge our notion of authenticity by, for example, rehearsing performances.28

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23 I have interviewed Renée Kool and the founders of Moha, Olivia Reschofsky and Alice Pons, but did not manage to interview Alicia Framis.


De-skilling, Dancing & Disorientation
From the Theatre to the Gallery to the Public Square

“How can you ask these dancers who have trained since childhood to simply run and walk?”¹ Rebekah Harkness reportedly said when Yvonne Rainer proposed to work on a performance of We Shall Run (1963) with Harkness’ ballet company.² In We Shall Run dancers, in the words of a critic: ‘just stand. Then they jog, clumping, splintering off and clumping again.’³ It is significant that this piece, which, some might say, could also have been performed by amateurs, was (and is) performed by dancers, and it is for this reason that Claire Bishop has used it as an example of a ‘de-skilled’ performance.⁴ ‘De-skilling’ is referred to by Bishop as ‘the conscious rejection of one’s disciplinary training and its traditional competences,’⁵ which, in her eyes, distinguishes We Shall Run, ‘from an amateur performance in which a jogger runs about on stage.’⁶ It might thus be said that it distinguishes We Shall Run from a performance like Martin Creed’s Work No. 850.

The work Work No. 850, which was recently shown in the Netherlands (in Museum Voorlinden), consisted of runners, running through the gallery space as fast as they could (fig. 1). For this piece, Museum Voorlinden had asked for runners on Facebook.⁷ Though the museum is said to have specifically stated that the performance called for ‘more than run-of-the-mill joggers’⁸ (as the performance demanded sprinting and endurance), anyone could respond, and local news spoke of ‘ordinary people’ being ‘elevated’ to artworks.⁹ Whether you see the performing runners as amateurs or not, this performance is not a de-skilled performance, at least not in the same sense that We Shall Run is. The runners of Work No. 850 did not have to reject their training for this performance, though it might be argued that the venue did require them to perform their skill differently. The runners’ knowledge that they were being viewed as art might, for example, have influenced the way they ran. Some might even go so far as to say that one can speak of ‘re-skilling’, in the case of Work No. 850. Re-skilling is defined by Bishop as:

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¹ As quoted by Yvonne Rainer in: Abbie, 2017.
² Blake, 2017.
⁴ Bishop, 2011.
⁵ Bishop, 2011.
⁶ Bishop, 2011.
‘mov[ing] from one area of disciplinary competence to another,’\textsuperscript{10} and she suggests that the spatial context, or rather the institutional context, is often an important part of this motion.\textsuperscript{11} As the runners in \textit{Work No. 850} move from the treadmill at home, or the park, to the museum, they might be seen to move on from sports to theatre, though that might be stretching the term a bit too far.

* *

In this chapter I will briefly examine a couple of key concepts. First of all, the concept of de-skilling will be discussed, focussing especially on the reasons why artists have turned to this strategy. Similar strategies have been observed in the field of dance since the 1990s, coinciding with the widespread appearance of delegated performances. This will be the second topic explored in this chapter. I will concentrate on dance not only because the concurrent trends in the art world and the dance world seem to be related, but also because the majority of the artists on whose work my research is focussed - namely Renée Kool, Olivia Reschofsky and Alice Pons - have a background in dance, which has influenced the works I analyse. Kool’s \textit{Celebration} even involves a dance performance. The focus will then shift to the economic situation, to which both artists and dancers have been seen to respond in the 1990s. How delegated performances fit in to this context is detailed in the next part of this chapter, after which the importance of site is briefly outlined. The last part of this chapter draws attention to the relation between the supposedly ‘democratizing’ tendencies of the trends discussed and the use of space - which will lead to the following chapter, Chapter 2: The Body Exposed.

\textbf{De-skilling & Delegation}

The subject of this thesis was, in part, inspired by a series of lectures and seminars given in Amsterdam by Claire Bishop, in the winter of 2016. In this series, Bishop addressed a number of issues related to performance art, focussing especially on dance. One of the issues that was explored, was the issue of virtuosity, which was juxtaposed with the notion of ‘de-skilling’.\textsuperscript{12} Though virtuosity is usually associated especially with the impressive skill of a performing artist,\textsuperscript{13} it is also used sometimes to describe the skill of an artist who does produce an end product, the skill of a painter, for example.\textsuperscript{14} The term ‘de-skilling,’\textsuperscript{15} on the other hand, was borrowed from the field of economics, where it refers to the diminished demand for craft skill in industry, which is often caused by increased mechanization, as machines replace craftsmanship.

\textsuperscript{10} Bishop, 2011.

\textsuperscript{11} Bishop, 2011.

\textsuperscript{12} Bishop, 2016[a].

\textsuperscript{13} See, for example: Virno, 2004, p. 52.

\textsuperscript{14} See, for example: Rodenbeck, 2007, pp. 84–87.

\textsuperscript{15} Usually written without the hyphen, as ‘deskilling’. I have chosen to include the hyphen, following Bishop.
leading to workers becoming easily replaceable and alienated from their work as well as from the product and each other.\(^{16}\)

In the context of art, the term ‘de-skilling’ was probably first used in the 1980s, in part at least in reference to artists such as Donald Judd, who delegated the execution of their work to others, often ‘in order to bring attention to art’s conceptual underpinnings,’\(^{17}\) as Judith Rodenbeck points out.\(^{18}\) John Roberts, however, traces the history of de-skilling in art back to the nineteenth century, when French artists in particular (Roberts mentions Gustave Courbet and Édouard Manet) began to challenge the ‘outdated’ skills which were taught at the academy, skills which ‘fundamentally de-subjectivized art and as such de-linked its forms from the appearance of the contemporary world,’\(^{19}\) a world which was quickly industrializing.\(^{20}\) In Roberts’ account de-skilling in the art world, therefore, does not lag far behind the decline of craftsmanship in the workforce.\(^{21}\)

It seems that according to Roberts, the challenging of the academic painting style was not just a matter of adjusting to a new world for some nineteenth century artists, but also a matter of assuming a new role within this world: a ‘nascent, undefined, unofficial social role as a critic of bourgeois culture.’\(^{22}\) In the eyes of Roberts, certain aesthetics - especially ones which required traditional skills\(^{23}\) - were associated with ‘inherited cultural power.’\(^{24}\) Other characteristics, on the other hand, such as ‘an “unfinished” quality’\(^{25}\) were equated with ‘an exemplary distance from [inherited cultural] power.’\(^{26}\)

This link between the artist’s critical role and de-skilling lasted, as Rodenbeck similarly sees de-skilling as a strategy used by artists in the twentieth century to draw attention to capitalist working conditions.\(^{27}\) Following Roberts, Rodenbeck points out how works such as Duchamp’s Fountain (fig. 2) - an industrially manufactured urinal placed on its side and signed with ‘R.

\(^{17}\) Rodenbeck, 2007. p. 84.
\(^{19}\) Roberts, 2010. p. 78.
\(^{22}\) Roberts, 2010. p. 79.
\(^{23}\) As traditional skills were marked by ‘unnecessary ornateness and intricacy, and metaphysical atmospheres and vagaries.’ Roberts, 2010. p. 85.
\(^{27}\) Rodenbeck, 2007. p. 86.
Mutt 1917’ - align ‘the nonproductive (but authored) labor of artmaking’\textsuperscript{28} with ‘the productive, anonymous labor of industry.’\textsuperscript{29} Duchamp’s ‘readymades’ were an important step in the narrative of de-skilling. These works are seen to have broadened the artist’s possibilities. As Roberts has pointed out, ‘readymades’ not only paved the way for conceptual art - which valued the ‘concept’ of the artwork above its execution - but also enabled the introduction of skills which were not formerly considered ‘artistic’ into the realm of art. In this sense, the ‘readymades’ of Duchamp are also seen to have made it possible to delegate the execution of artworks to craftsmen or skilled workers in other fields.\textsuperscript{30}

Delegated performances can, as Bishop suggests, also be interpreted as an act of de-skilling on the part of the artist who (generally) does not take part in the performance him/herself.\textsuperscript{31} Furthermore, artists usually do not hire professional actors to perform these pieces, but people who perform as themselves - lending, in the eyes of Bishop, a certain ‘authenticity’ to the piece.\textsuperscript{32} In this sense, there is a ‘readymade’ quality to delegated performances as well.\textsuperscript{33} Though the performers follow the instructions of the artist, they are given agency, to a certain degree, as the artist withdraws and lets the events unfold.\textsuperscript{34} While Duchamp’s \textit{Fountain} might be seen to respond to ‘de-skilling’ in the economic paradigm of the early twentieth century, delegated performances seem to respond to a new economic paradigm. This new economic paradigm and its relation to delegated performances will be discussed later, first related developments in dance will be addressed.

\textbf{Challenging Virtuosity in Contemporary Theatre Dance}

In 1999 André Lepecki declared that one word characterized recent developments in dance in Europe, namely ‘reduction.’\textsuperscript{35} Not only were the lighting, music and set-design of many dance productions reduced to a bare minimum, but costumes too were often lacking, indeed even naked bodies were increasingly on display, noted Lepecki.\textsuperscript{36} What’s more, the bodies on stage often did not display a traditional training in dancing: virtuosity, in the sense of performing a great skill, was often rejected altogether.\textsuperscript{37} In fact, the organization of the International Dance Festival of Ireland was sued for false advertisement when it presented Jérôme Bel’s \textit{Jérôme Bel Rodenbeck}, 2007. p. 87.

\textsuperscript{28} Rodenbeck, 2007. p. 87.
\textsuperscript{29} Rodenbeck, 2007. p. 87.
\textsuperscript{31} Bishop, 2011.
\textsuperscript{35} Lepecki, 1999. p. 129.
\textsuperscript{36} Lepecki, 1999. See, for example: p. 129 and p. 131. See also: Burt, 2017. p. 9.
\textsuperscript{37} Ginot, 2004.
(1995), in 2002. It was claimed that the piece could not rightfully be called a dance performance. 38

In Jérôme Bel (fig. 4) light is provided by a single lightbulb carried on stage by one of the naked dancers. The music - Igor Stravinsky’s Le Sacre du Printemps - is hummed by another dancer (also naked) and at the end a man sings Sting’s ‘An Englishman in New York’. The back wall of the stage is used during the piece to write text on with chalk, such as the personal information of the dancers: their name, their weight, their telephone number, even their bank account balance. Other parts of the performance included: dancers pulling at their skin, writing on their bodies with lipstick, urinating on stage and wiping the chalk off the back wall with this urine. 39 It was not just the ‘dancing’ itself which challenged the expectations of the audience, the dancers were also seen to diverge from the norm, as Lepecki explains: ‘Their bodies are not the ones that may be expected in a dance show. They are “normal” bodies, not slim, not lean, not muscled, not all within the prime of their youth.’ 40 Later in his career, in 2012, Bel staged a performance by the company Theater HORA, which is composed of performers with ‘various cognitive, intellectual, and learning disabilities.’ 41 This dance performance, titled Disabled Theater (fig. 5), was notably part of Documenta (a recurring contemporary art exhibition in Kassel, Germany), in 2012.

‘Normal’ bodies were on display in Dutch dance productions as well in the 1990s. In 1994, part of Gonnie Heggen’s show Einzelgänger (for the Festival a/d Werf in Utrecht) was performed by a team of young majorettes - the ‘Metronettes’ from Amsterdam. A critic later wrote:

Such a team should parade outside on the street or in an echoing sports hall, and on that much too tiny theatre stage everything was too up-close. It was as if Heggen zoomed in on the touching, individual dreams of all those blushing too-fat and too-skinny girls, who all wanted to shine in the exact same glitter costumes. 42

While some found such ‘delegated’ performances ‘obscene’ in dance, others seemed to see Heggen’s invitation as a disarming, and perhaps even a democratizing, act, as the commentary of the Dutch dancer and choreographer, Robert Steijn, suggests:

42 Van der Jagt, 1998. My own translation of the following text: ‘Zo'n corps hoort buiten op straat te paraderen of in een galmende sporthal, en op dat veel te kleine toneelpodium zag je het van veel te dichtbij. Het was alsof Heggen inzondere op de onteroerende, individuele dromen van al die blozende, te dikke en te dunne meisjes die zo graag willen schitteren in precies dezelfde glitterkostuums.’
The spectators, who were used to seeing modern dance, were suddenly confronted with bodies which in their eyes were exceptionally plump or extremely skinny. “It’s totally obscene,” a fellow choreographer said in shock, he was himself exceptionally well trained and had a toned body. Eventually, the performance won over the audience, the spectators dared to enjoy everything they saw, because they understood that the magic of dance does not lie in an aesthetic body, but in the pleasure to move and the desire to convey that pleasure to an audience.43

Works like Jérôme Bel and Einzelgänger not only challenged the virtuosity that was expected from dancers, but seemed to suggest that anyone can possess virtuosity, a virtuosity which, in the words of Ramsay Burt, ‘everyone in their different ways can express.’44 In his recently published work, Ungoverning Dance, Burt suggests that the challenging of virtuosity in contemporary dance might be considered to have a political edge.45

Burt, first of all, shows how these recent developments can be related to countercultural approaches to dance seen in the 1960s and 70s, particularly to the performances of dancers and choreographers, like Yvonne Rainer, who were connected to the Judson Dance Theater (an artists’ collective which also consisted of composers and visual artists).46 Bishop has also pointed out how these performances can be seen as an important precedent for delegated performances.47 In the 1960s and 70s, many dancers and choreographers were especially critical of consumerism and the way modern life increasingly reduced the need for bodily movement (one might think of office work), leading to a perceived ‘lack of authentic experience.’48 They therefore focussed more on bodily awareness, improvisation and everyday movements than on traditional dance training.49 Burt and Lepecki have both argued that in the 1990s critical European choreographers used comparable strategies to disrupt the contemporary (economic) context.50 What distinguishes recent dance performances from the performances at the Judson Dance Theater in the eyes of Lepecki is the contemporary focus on ‘presence’, which he argues

43 Steijn, 1995. p. 10. My own translation of the following text: ‘De toeschouwers, die gewend waren moderne dans te aanschouwen, zagen zich ineens geconfronteerd met lichamen die in hun ogen uitzonderlijk dik of juist uitzonderlijk dun waren. ‘It's totally obscene’, zei een collega-choreograaf geschokt na afloop, zelf uitzonderlijk goed getraind van lijf en leden. Uiteindelijk trok de voorstelling het publiek over de streep, durfden de toeschouwers zich te vermaken om alles wat ze zagen, omdat ze begrepen dat de magie van de dans niet schuilt in een esthetisch lichaam, maar in het plezier om te bewegen en het verlangen om dat plezier over te willen brengen aan een publiek.’
44 Burt, 2017. p. 79.
46 Burt, 2017. p. 32.
48 Burt, 2017. p. 37. See also: p. 36.
is influenced by the work of Pina Bausch and performance art.\(^{51}\) Burt, on the other hand, stresses the rise of audience-interaction and the celebration of the virtuosity of nonprofessional dancers - encouraging the audience, he claims: ‘to recognize their potential and emancipate themselves, and use their virtuosities to develop democracy from below in what is otherwise an undemocratic, neoliberal dance market.’\(^{52}\)

Burt suggests that it was, in part, the economic climate of the 1990s that inspired choreographers like Bel, but also Jonathan Burrows and Xavier Le Roy, to strip down theatre dance in a way that exposed the institutional context of dance.\(^{53}\) The dance historian cites Le Roy’s difficulty with the way funding controlled the type of dancing that was shown:

> the systems for dance production had created a format that influenced and, sometimes to a large degree, determined how a dance piece should be. I think that to a large extent Dance producers and programmers essentially follow the rules of the global economy.\(^{54}\)

One of the reasons virtuosity was challenged was because spectacular dancing skills were increasingly marketed and monetized, Burt suggests.\(^{55}\) He refers to music videos which use dance to attract viewers and promote the music of artists like Beyoncé, but also to the marketing campaigns of brands like Puma.\(^{56}\) He specifically comments on the *Puma Dance Dictionary*, which not only appropriated street dance to advertise Puma’s new fragrances, but according to Burt, actually tried to privatize the movements used.\(^{57}\) These ‘moves’ had not actually been developed by Puma but belonged to ‘a common-pool resource’\(^{58}\) and are recognized as Black cultural heritage.\(^{59}\) Not mentioned by Burt, but worth touching upon here, is the use of flash mobs to promote certain brands. Although not all flash mobs are part of a marketing campaign, this performance genre, which often uses dance, was quickly appropriated by the market since its emergence in 2003.\(^{60}\) Though especially flash mobs do not always require advanced skills and sometimes involve amateurs, the dancing seen in music videos, advertisements and flash


\(^{52}\) Burt, 2017. p. 79. See also, for example: p. 3.


\(^{54}\) Le Roy, 1999. This passage is also quoted in Burt, though slightly differently, see: Burt, 2017. p. 13.


\(^{57}\) Burt, 2017. p. 65.

\(^{58}\) Burt, 2017. p. 65.


\(^{60}\) Gore, 2010.
mobs is usually spectacularly synchronized, routinized and uniform - preserving none of the ‘singularity’ that the choreographers named by Burt aim to show.\textsuperscript{61}

Lepecki similarly argues that contemporary European choreographers challenge the way dance is monetized. He points out that while the ‘signature’ of a choreographer is usually found in the technique of a certain dance - a technique which can be learned and perfected so that the dance can be reproduced - dancers do not need to learn any specific technique for many contemporary dance pieces.\textsuperscript{62} In the eyes of Lepecki, this ‘challenges absolutely the very “saleability” of the dance object’\textsuperscript{63} and can be seen as ‘a political statement on the market value of the dance object.’\textsuperscript{64}

There might also be other political reasons for challenging virtuosity in dance. Bel, for example, has noted that he often finds the training of dancers alienating, seeming to imply that this particular aspect of dancing could almost be compared with work on the factory-line:

\begin{quote}
I can enjoy myself as a spectator of virtuosity, although it seems to me politically unacceptable, but I cannot re-enact that fatal scenario, because that virtuosity usually comes from the part of a dancer’s work that I regard as alienating - infinite repetition of the same movement, and competition - not mentioning the ideology that underpins that practice… I try to emancipate these dancers from what tends to reduce them to functions, and turn them into subjects, and I try to remove them from the status of dancing objects that prevails in the type of ‘artistic’ education they have received as well as in their practices.\textsuperscript{65}
\end{quote}

Bel’s words appear to show the influence Pina Bausch, the renowned artistic director of the ballet company Tanztheater Wuppertal, has had on the dance world - especially her focus on the presence of the dancer.

To some Bausch has become known as a ‘pornographer of pain,’\textsuperscript{66} this might be because dancers in her choreographies actually run into walls (and each other) and (intentionally) fall on stage.\textsuperscript{67} Royd Climenhaga suggests that it is, in part, the exposure of what the dancers’s bodies experience which prohibits the audience from seeing the dancers merely as \textit{dramatis personae}

\textsuperscript{61} Burt, 2017. See, for example: p. 74.
\textsuperscript{63} Lepecki, 2004. p. 177.
\textsuperscript{64} Lepecki, 2004. pp. 177-178.
\textsuperscript{65} Jérôme Bel as quoted in: Burt, 2017. p. 62.
\textsuperscript{66} Alene Croce as quoted in: Climenhaga, 2015. p. 218.
\textsuperscript{67} See: Climenhaga, 2015. p. 220.
or representations in the work of Bausch, in the words of Climenhaga: it ‘renders the dancer’s present as body-subjects.’ The performance theorist points out that ballet, perhaps more than any other form of performance, ‘sacrifices our [the dancers’] subjective connection to our [the dancers’] bodies to achieve ethereal weightlessness.’ In the piece Bandoneon (1981), Bausch draws attention to the pain and emotional labor involved in ballet, through personal stories told by the dancers, but also through acts. Climenhaga refers to a scene, for example, in which one dancer violently combs the hair of another dancer whose head is roughly pushed into a bucket of water when she forgets to smile throughout the ordeal. It is to this kind of objectification of the body that Bel, too, seems to refer. Not just the labor of dancing and the pain involved are often carefully concealed on stage, but also the individuality of the dancer, the personal. Perhaps Bel asked the dancers in Jérôme Bel to write their personal information on the back wall for this reason.

It is precisely this concern for the ‘presence’ of the dancer which has informed Bel’s choice to stage performers with a disability in the aforementioned dance performance Disabled Theater, according to Leon Hilton, who finds that for Bel it seems ‘that Theatre HORA’s disabled performers possess a more immediately visceral “presence” than their nondisabled counterparts.’ Hilton suggests that this ‘presence’ is considered to be induced by the performers’ supposedly less self-conscious performance, an idea which in his eyes can be regarded as ‘patronizing’ and risks ‘romanticizing the Theater HORA performers.’ A similar concern for ‘presence’ - strongly related to the aforementioned interest in ‘authenticity’ - might be seen to inform delegated performances in which artists hire a specific group of nonprofessional performers to ‘perform their own socioeconomic category.’ These performers are supposedly not putting on an act and can therefore be viewed as more ‘present’. It might not come as a surprise that accusations of exploitation, patronization and romanticization are far from uncommon in this subgenre of performance.

Whereas some delegated performances, including Bel’s Disabled Theater, might rightfully be accused of not being critical enough of the way the bodies of ‘others’ are employed and represented, other delegated performances ‘[reify] precisely in order to discuss reification,’ in

68 Climenhaga, 2015. p. 221.
75 As Bishop points out, see: Bishop, 2012[b]. pp. 95 and 98.
the words of Bishop, bringing attention to what Silvija Jestrović has called the ‘hyper-authentic.’ This term, which is derived from Jean Baudrillard’s idea of the ‘hyperreal’, is used by Jestrović to describe the way in which some delegated performances foreground the “tensions between presence and representation,” inviting us to question our expectations of the signifier, our notion of the signified and the potential collapse of the two. It might be argued that the individuality which is perhaps preserved to a greater degree in the performance of a non-professional, challenges our notion of the signified social group as a ‘collective body.’

It is perhaps interesting to note here that the various ways in which choreographers like Heggen and (particularly) Bel have challenged virtuosity in the 1990s seem to have been interpreted by dance critics and scholars such as Lepecki, Burt and Steijn as politically progressive, on account of the emancipatory and democratic qualities of these strategies, as well as because of the way these strategies challenge the marketization of dance. That said, Burt is careful to note that the market has tended to appropriate progressive trends which attempt to challenge or evade the market and that it can therefore be risky to make claims about the ‘anti-commercial’ tendencies of dance performances (and, one might add, of other art practices). Nicholas Ridout has turned this more commonly made point around proposing that usually art actually does not set the trend but might be considered to follow it instead. He suggests that arguing otherwise often appears to work toward ‘[reinstating] contemporary art as an avant-garde practice, anticipating rather than following or participating in wider social and economic processes.’ How supposedly revolutionary art practices might actually be seen to be a part of more general (economic) trends is perhaps seen in the parallels between ‘relational art’ (a category which is usually considered to include delegated performances) and certain aspects of post-Fordism.

Post-Fordism & Relational Aesthetics
The term ‘post-Fordism’ is often used to refer to the economic paradigm that developed in many countries since the 1970s - after, as the term suggests, the dominance of ‘Fordism’. Named after Henry Ford, founder of the Ford Motor Company, the term Fordism is used to describe an economy which relies heavily on the mass production of goods. It is associated with

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80 Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 91.
82 Burt, 2017. p. 15.
84 Other terms have also been used to describe the new economic ‘paradigm’, including Toyotism, McDonaldization and Gatesism. All these terms have slightly different specifications, as the theories to which they refer often seem to be applied to more specific sections of industry. Some have even argued that Fordism has been replaced by a several models. See, for example: Janoski & Lepadatu, 2014.
de-skilled labor, assembly-line production and the standardization of goods. In the 1970s this type of industry became problematic, in part because of a decreased demand for mass produced items, an increasingly widespread call for better working conditions and the introduction of new technologies. A new paradigm is seen to have taken the place of Fordism. Post-Fordism is usually associated with customization, flexible labor, the use of new technologies, outsourcing and, perhaps most importantly, service work, as the service industry is often considered the most dominant financial sector in this paradigm.

The type of labor the service industry demands is often described as being ‘immaterial’ as no tangible goods are produced. Instead, an important part of this kind of labor involves interaction, building relationships and inducing a certain mood, in the words of Michael Hardt: ‘a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, passion - even a sense of connectedness or community.’ This component of immaterial labor has been called ‘affective labor’ and is often associated with what was formerly referred to as ‘women’s work’ (child rearing, for example). Hardt and Antonio Negri have noted that when affective labor is performed for a wage ‘it can be experienced as extremely alienating: I am selling my ability to make human relationships, something extremely intimate, at the command of the client and the boss.’ Though affective labor is associated with some professions more than others, numerous aspects of it - especially networking and maintaining relationships - have become increasingly important in diverse areas of work. Take the art world, for example, where the prominence of affective labor is hardly a new phenomenon, and where the demand for affective labor has still managed to become even more stifling as a consequence of reductions in funding, according to Helena Reckitt. The English curator suggests that the atmosphere in the art world has become quite problematic:

in a ‘prestige’ field like art where labour supply exceeds demand and workers accept unstable conditions and low - or no - pay to do what they love [...] The need to stay on good terms with people you might one day work with or for has fostered a culture in which co-operation replaces critique.

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91 As argued, for example, by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, see: Hardt & Negri, 2009. p. 133.
Interestingly, one might say that in the 1990s affective labor had even infiltrated the art itself.\footnote{See, for example: Reckitt, 2013. p. 138.}

Many have observed a shift occurring in art in the early 1990s. Around 1993, Peter Weibel already announced the emergence of a new movement which was focused on the (social) context of art.\footnote{See, for example, the book accompanying the exhibition ‘Kontext Kunst’ (Graz, 1993): Weibel, 1994. See also: Schneider, 1993. p. 49. Schneider, 1995. p. 56.} Not much later Nicolas Bourriaud started writing about what he called ‘relational art’- art in which interaction and intersubjective relations played a central role.\footnote{His essays, the first of which was published in 1993, were bundled in 1998 and translated in 2002. See: Bourriaud [1998], 2002.} In the Netherlands, Rutger Pontzen spoke of ‘a new form of commitment.’\footnote{First referred to as such by the artist Suzanne Lacy, see: Bishop, 2012[a]. p. 202.} And in the United States some perceived a clear break with earlier traditions in public art, emphasizing how ‘new genre public art’\footnote{See: Kwon, 2004. p. 6 and pp. 100-137. See also: Bishop, 2012[a]. pp. 202-206.} focussed more on community engagement.\footnote{Bishop, 2006. More recently Bishop has referred to it as a ‘return’. See: Bishop, 2012 [a]. p. 3.} What these observations had in common was that all seemed to refer to an increasing attention to the social, it is perhaps for this reason that Bishop has referred to this ‘shift’ as ‘the social turn’.\footnote{See: Reckitt, 2013. p. 21.} It has been noted that the prominence of art practices which center on social interactions seems to mirror the concurrent ascendancy of the service industry in many Post-Fordist economies and this industry’s demand for affective labor.\footnote{See: Kwon, 2004. p. 100 and pp. 100-137. See also: Bishop, 2012[a]. pp. 202-206.} This might be seen especially in the way critics like Bourriaud en Pontzen have written about early manifestation of these socially oriented practices.

Bourriaud started writing about ‘relational art’ in the early 1990s and his essays were bundled in the book \textit{Esthétique relationnelle} in 1998 (and translated into English in 2002). The French critic defined ‘relational art’ as: ‘an art taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and \textit{private} symbolic space.’\footnote{Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 14.} As Dirk Pültau has also pointed out, there are some striking similarities between the findings of Bourriaud and those of the Dutch critic, Pontzen, whose book \textit{Nice! Towards a new form of commitment in contemporary art} was published in 2000.\footnote{See: Pültau, 2001.} According to Pontzen, contemporary artists, ‘in the Netherlands in particular,’\footnote{See: Bishop, 2012 [a]. p. 202.} were introducing, as the title of his work suggests, ‘a new form of commitment’\footnote{See: Bishop, 2012 [a]. p. 3.} to the art world, a commitment which was
based less on far-reaching ideologies and more practical in nature than previous politically engaged art. Bourriaud, in a similar vein, claimed that artists were now seeking to create more feasible ‘micro-utopias.’ Both, furthermore, stressed the importance of interaction between viewers (and, often, the artist) in contemporary artworks, noting especially how the viewer was emancipated, and both observed an atmosphere of ‘conviviality’ surrounding many of the artworks they described – hence the title of Pontzen's book: Nice!. The two critics frequently referred to artworks which provided a service to the public, to the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija (who cooked food for the visitors of a gallery), to the work of Christine Hill and Marie-Ange Guilleminot (who on separate occasions provided massages to visitors) and to the work of Alicia Framis (who, on invitation, watched over people as they slept), for example.

It is interesting to note that Bourriaud actually seems to have seen the works he described as challenging the standardized (and alienating) relationships generated by the service industry, of which he paints an gloomy picture:

You are looking for shared warmth, and the comforting feeling of well being for two? So try our coffee… The space of current relations is thus the space most severely affected by general reification. The relationship between people, as symbolised by goods or replaced by them, and signposted by logos, has to take on extreme clandestine forms, if it is to dodge the empire of predictability. The social bond has turned into a standardized artefact.

According to Bourriaud art is able to offer an alternative:

These days, communications are plunging human contacts into monitored areas that divide the social bond up into (quite) different products. Artistic activity, for its part,

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106 Pontzen, 2000. See, for example: pp. 70-71.

107 Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 31. Bourriaud writes: ‘the role of artworks is no longer to form imaginary and utopian relaties, but to actually be ways of living and models of action within the existing real, whatever the scale chosen by the artist.’ p. 13. See also: Pontzen, 2000. pp. 70-71.

108 Pontzen asserts: ‘The artist today feels responsible for his public. The community spirit that artists want to propagate is not just a question of “being together,” but of “being together in a nice way.”’, Pontzen 2000. p. 66. On the subject of emancipation, see, for example: p. 81. Writing about the work of Tiravanija, Bourriaud argues: ‘the purpose is not conviviality, but the product of this conviviality, otherwise put, a complex form that combines a formal structure, objects made available to visitors, and the fleeting image issuing from collective behaviour. In a way, the user value of conviviality intermingles with its exhibition value, within a visual project. It is not a matter of representing angelic worlds, but of producing the conditions thereof.’, Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 83. See also: p. 44 and p. 31, for example.

109 Bourriaud [1998], 2002. See, for example: p. 25. Pontzen, 2000. See, for example: p. 70. They refer to the following works: Tiravanija’s Untitled (Free), Hill’s Massage Piece, Guilleminot’s Le Paravent, and Framis’ Dream Keeper.

110 Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 9. For Bourriaud the rise of digital media has also transformed the realm of inter-subjective relations. While the impact of, for example, the Internet, on art as well as the service industry itself, should indeed not be underestimated, I will here focus more on the influence of the service industry. See: Bourriaud [1998], 2002. See, for example: p. 26. and pp. 70-71.
strives to achieve modest connections, open up (One or two) obstructed passages, and connect levels of reality kept apart from one another.\textsuperscript{111}

As Stewart Martin has pointed out, Bourriaud seems to characterize relational art as ‘a reassertion of social relations between ‘persons’ against social relations between commodities,’\textsuperscript{112} positioning relational practices in opposition to commodity fetishism.\textsuperscript{113} Relations between people have become abstracted, commodified even, and relational art provides an ‘interstice’\textsuperscript{114} according to Bourriaud. The critic borrows this term from Marx, to refer to a context over which capitalist conventions have no hold.\textsuperscript{115} In the eyes of Martin, Bourriaud’s ideas, however, are hopelessly romantic and lead to a ‘fetishism of the social.’\textsuperscript{116}

Martin is not the only one to point out the pitfalls in Bourriaud’s thought-process. It is probably safe to say that, apart from Bourriaud himself, the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija has borne the brunt of these critiques.\textsuperscript{117} Tiravanija was championed in Bourriaud’s \textit{Relational Aesthetics} and is probably best known for what the critic has called: ‘Tiravanija’s itinerant cafetarias.’\textsuperscript{118} One of the first of these ‘eating exhibitions,’\textsuperscript{119} as Pontzen in turn calls them, is the work \textit{Untitled (Free)} (1992), for which Tiravanija cooked curry for visitors of a New York gallery (fig. 3). Where Bourriaud sees this work as an ‘interstice opened up in the social corpus,’\textsuperscript{120} Bishop merely sees the creation of a space which ‘permits networking among a group of art dealers and like-minded art lovers’\textsuperscript{121} - nothing more than an extension of the networking-culture which

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{111} Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 8.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Martin, 2007. p. 376.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Martin, 2007. p. 376. Commodity fetishism is defined by \textit{Oxford Reference} as: ‘The mistaken view that the value of a commodity is intrinsic and the corresponding failure to appreciate the investment of labour that went into its production. […] Commodity fetishism can also be understood in terms of social relations: neither the producer nor the consumer of a commodity has a necessary or full relation with the other.’ - “Overview: Commodity Fetishism,” \textit{Oxford Reference}, Oxford University Press, Website last accessed on: 13 July 2018. www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110810104638104.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 16.
\item \textsuperscript{115} As Bourriaud himself explains: ‘This interstice term was used by Karl Marx to describe trading communities that elude the capitalist economic context by being removed from the law of profit: barter, merchandising, autarkic types of production, etc.’ Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 16.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Martin, 2007. p. 379.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Tiravanija’s work is featured prominently in Bishop’s critique of ‘relational art’, see: Bishop, 2004. Other critics who refer to Tiravanija’s work in their critiques include Walead Beshty and Helena Reckitt. See: Beshty, 2005. Reckitt, 2013. p. 6, 10 and 11. I would like to add here that others have seen certain aspects of Tiravanija’s art overlooked in these critiques. See, for example: Steiner, 2009. pp. 88-89.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 70.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Pontzen, 2000. p. 26.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 70.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Bishop, 2000. p. 67.
\end{itemize}
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according to Reckitt has become so omnipresent in the art world (as well as in other fields).\textsuperscript{122} The Belgian critic Dirk Pültau, furthermore, sees no difference between the ‘escape routes’\textsuperscript{123} offered by relational art and the ‘alternative services’\textsuperscript{124} already offered by the market. He is afraid that relational artworks only mirror and strengthen the ‘“humanising” strategies by which the system [the market] tempers its own omnipotence.’\textsuperscript{125} Walead Beshty goes even further, arguing that relational artworks ‘facilitate the corporatization of the museum itself.’\textsuperscript{126}

**Affective Labor & Delegated Performances**

The broad range of practices which have been seen to fall into the category of ‘relational art’ actually includes the delegated performance.\textsuperscript{127} Bourriaud himself, for example, refers to several such performances: Felix Gonzales-Torres’ *Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform)* (1991)\textsuperscript{128} and Vanessa Beecroft’s *vb09* (or *Ein Blonder Traum*, 1994)\textsuperscript{129}, to name just two examples.\textsuperscript{130} Pontzen, who arguably covers an even wider variety of practices in *Nice!*, also describes delegated performances in this work, performances such as *Hi, how are you today* (1991) and *Celebration* (1994) by Renée Kool.\textsuperscript{131} What appears to interest Bourriaud in these works is the way the artist cedes control to the performers (and the visitors).\textsuperscript{132} Pontzen, on the other hand, describes how a performance like Kool’s promotes ‘being together in a nice way.’\textsuperscript{133}

The piece *Hi, how are you today?* (fig. 6) was performed at the opening of the exhibition *Parler Femme* (23 November 1991 - 6 January 1992, Museum Fodor, Amsterdam), a group exhibition showing the work of five female artists. For this performance Kool hired two American actresses (Christie Thomas and Stacey Whorton) - dressed and groomed to look like

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{122} Reckitt, 2013. pp. 143-144.
  \item \textsuperscript{123} Pültau, 2001.
  \item \textsuperscript{124} Pültau, 2001.
  \item \textsuperscript{125} Pültau, 2001. Translated from Dutch: ‘de “humaniserende” strategieën waarmee het systeem haar eigen almacht ontzenuwt.’ That Pültau is referring to the market is made clear by previous statements in the same article.
  \item \textsuperscript{126} Beshty, 2005.
  \item \textsuperscript{127} To quote Hal Foster: ‘At times everything seems to be a happy interactivity: among “aesthetic objects” Bourriaud counts “meetings, encounters, events, various types of collaboration between people, games, festivals, and places of conviviality, in a word all manner of encounter and relational invention.”’ Foster, 2003. pp. 21–22.
  \item \textsuperscript{128} In *Untitled (Go-Go Dancing Platform)* a man, wearing only sneakers and briefs, dances on a platform in the gallery space, while listening to music on a walkman.
  \item \textsuperscript{129} *vb09* presented thirty young women, wearing similar blond wigs and dressed almost identically, in a room which was closed off to visitors (who could look at the scene inside the room through a peephole).
  \item \textsuperscript{130} Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 39. See also: Ross, 2006. p. 54.
  \item \textsuperscript{131} Pontzen, 2000. p. 66.
  \item \textsuperscript{132} The critic writes: ‘as far as most of the above-mentioned pieces are concerned, their author has no preordained idea about what would happen: art is made in the gallery…’ Bourriaud [1998], 2002. p. 40.
  \item \textsuperscript{133} Pontzen, 2000. p. 66.
\end{itemize}
professional hostesses\textsuperscript{134} - to approach every visitor, welcome them to the exhibition (gently touching their arm) and to salute the visitors again as they left: ‘Thank you for visiting Parler Femme. Have a nice day!’\textsuperscript{135} As the performers Kool hired were actually actresses \textit{Hi, how are you today?} is not a typical delegated performance. Kool, however, often accentuates the staging in her work, usually her performances are not meant to come across as ‘authentic’. At the same time, she does often commission a specific group of people for her work - in this case it seems to have been important that the actresses were American adult women, who could be taken for young female professionals.

Pontzen described his experience of \textit{Hi, how are you today?} as follows:

The language used by the two hostesses may have been highly standardized, like a universally applicable code, but it also had the undeniably salutary effect of a warm bath into which every visitor was plunged. The appearance of the pair of pink ladies was high on the feel-good scale. It was all about putting people at their ease, giving them pleasure. Judging from Kool’s project, the aim was no longer the exchange of ordinary experiences but the exchange of \textit{good} experiences.\textsuperscript{136}

I am not the first to doubt whether this truly is the aim of \textit{Hi, how are you today?}. ‘I am not so sure,’\textsuperscript{137} the artist Maria Barnas wrote in response to Pontzen’s portrayal of Kool’s piece, ‘These people [referring to the ‘hostesses’] know how the world works and invite you to join them. They know the way. But how long are you allowed to stay? As long as a flight? As long as a beauty treatment? A massage?’\textsuperscript{138} As Barnas seems to suggest, the performance appears to comment on the role played by those in the service industry. While Pontzen seems to have felt uplifted by the performance of the two ‘hostesses’, I can imagine that it made others feel uneasy to be approached in this manner, especially in the context of a gallery space. The appearance of hostesses is quite unusual in museums and is generally associated with more transparently commercial venues where a product, service or experience is sold. The behavior of the two hostesses might have been out of place but it also highlighted the social code of the opening, a networking-event which often downplays its more commercial aspects. Kool herself has

\textsuperscript{134} The ‘costume’ was actually borrowed from a hotel (the Grand Hotel Krasnapolsky in Amsterdam). See: Pontzen, 1996. p. 46.


\textsuperscript{136} Pontzen, 2000. p. 66.

\textsuperscript{137} Barnas, 2002.

described the openings of art exhibitions as: ‘the moment of horse trading, of networking, of theater, of staging.’

Like other ‘relational’ artworks, delegated performances might be considered to follow the sway of the service industry and, as Ridout and Bishop have pointed out, these performances also participate in contemporary post-Fordist practices, such as outsourcing. Jen Harvie has even argued that delegated art more generally (including practices of delegation in theatre and dance) may ‘replicate, extend and potentially naturalize exploitative trends in contemporary labour markets more broadly.’ Some delegated performances, however, seem to approach the influence of post-Fordist trends quite differently from the works which have come to exemplify ‘relational’ art. Whereas works like Tiravanija’s *Untitled (Free)* appear to merely mimic the growing emphasis on relationships (and networking), performances such as *Hi, how are you today?* can be seen to confront us with the more problematic demands of the post-Fordist economy. Especially the more unsparing delegated performances of Santiago Sierra - which often involve marginalized people being hired for little pay - are known for the way they bring attention to contemporary forms of exploitation. With *Hi, how are you today?* Kool seems to have commented not just on the superficial nature of many contemporary encounters, but on the ways in which affective labor has been gendered.

Few delegated performances comment on the service industry as directly as *Hi, how are you today?*. Generally speaking, however, delegated performances usually do place less emphasis on ‘emancipating’ the viewer and bringing people together with a joined activity, than other ‘relational’ practices - allowing for a more critical perspective on the role ‘human relations’ play in a Post-Fordist society. Delegated performances, especially the ones described by Bishop, can be more confrontational, forcing viewers to literally come face to face with those excluded from the art world, or with contemporary labor conditions, for example. This is part of the reason why gallery spaces showing delegated performances and artists employing the strategy have frequently been accused of exploitation. Of course the space where the performance is shown contributes to the ways in which it is able to confront the viewer and in this sense it

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139 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, March 29, 2018. My translation of her words: ‘de opening is het moment van koehandel, van netwerken, van theater, van enscenering.’


141 Harvie, 2013. p. 41.


143 For a feminist critique of relational aesthetics, see: Reckitt, 2013.


145 Bishop, 2012[b].

146 Bishop, 2012[b]. See, for example: p. 95 and p. 98.
might be telling that the performances I analyse in my case studies are not (explicitly) confrontational, at least not in regard to the contemporary labour practices they participate in, with the exception perhaps of *The Roof*.

**Disorientation**

Since the 1990s one can walk into a gallery space and be welcomed by two seemingly misplaced stewardesses, stumble upon what appears to be a ‘soup-kitchen,’ or be brought to a halt by a speeding runner. A visitor to the theatre might feel similarly disoriented, as can be seen in the comment made by the critic who felt that the marionettes in Gonnie Heggen’s *Einzelmänger* should display their skills on the streets, not on the ‘much too tiny theatre stage.’ The strategies employed by artists and choreographers in this period have been interpreted as forms of institutional critique - an art practice which responds critically to the workings of art as an *institution*. Institutional critique is often directed at the actual institutions which exhibit art (i.e. museums) - at the way these institutions conceal their ideological underpinnings, for example, or the way institutions accept money from sponsors they appear to be critical of.

In the field of art as well as the field of dance, the critique in the 1990s often seemed to be directed at the institutional context and the relations this space was seen to impose. The curator Barbara Steiner has, for example, called attention to the way Tiravanija’s ‘soup-kitchens’ challenge ‘the boundaries between institutional and social space,’ foregrounding how the ‘white cube’ dictates the way people relate to one another. Similarly, Lepecki, a dance critic, has emphasized how Jérôme Bel exposes the ‘black box’ for: ‘the working space it actually is - a not-so-charming, dusty, rough, grey space waiting for the lighting design to operate its optical metamorphosis of delight and raise the fourth wall to make the stage distant

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148 Van der Jagt, 1998. The opinion expressed by Van der Jagt does not seem to have been his own.

149 Art might be considered an institution as artworks are artworks because they are collectively recognized as such, not because of any intrinsic features. See: Dickie, 1974. pp. 19-52. Searle, 2005. For more on ‘institutional critique’ in the world of dance see, for example: Burt, 2017. pp. 1-29 and p. 38. For more on a new wave of ‘institutional critique’ in the art world see, for example: Meyer, 1993.


153 An art term which is used to refer to the gallery spaces which display contemporary art. Its name derives from the white walls that such gallery spaces usually have, suggesting a supposedly neutral space in which nothing will disturb you from the private contemplation of the artworks. See: O’Doherty, 1986. Grunenberg, 1999. p. 34.


155 The term used to refer to the type of performance space which became popular in the 1960s. It distinguishes itself from other theatre spaces especially in its bareness. Everything from the floor to the ceiling is usually black, hence the name. See: Buck, 2012.
and the dancing body beyond reality."\textsuperscript{156} The critic later even went so far as to say that Bel’s piece presented the black box as ‘a ruin,’\textsuperscript{157} suggesting that the space had to be ‘rethought’ in order to keep up with recent developments in dance and pointing towards another context-swap: the move of the work of choreographers like La Ribot from the black box to the white cube.\textsuperscript{158}

This ‘swap’ implies a very different form of spectatorship, as both Bishop and Lepecki have pointed out.\textsuperscript{159} While dance has become increasingly present in museums, these performances are usually not critical of this new institution and even lead to a ‘depoliticization’\textsuperscript{160} of the museum, according to Bishop. She suggests that when dance leaves the theatre (or the black box) - its institution - it forgoes the contextual criticality that is necessary for institutional critique.\textsuperscript{161}

Part of the new wave of institutional critique in the art world, however, was the exploration of sites outside the ‘white cube’, according to James Meyer:

> The gallery has become one of the many sites of investigation, a site positioned at the intersection of discursive fields, *an institution among institutions*. Indeed, these producers [artists] analyse institutionality itself: classificatory systems and their modes of presentation (architecture, display cases, the media) and the knowledges, identities, and relations these systems produce.\textsuperscript{162}

Meyer claims that earlier forms of institutional critique, which were directed at the white cube, had been appropriated by the art institutions and suggests that this is one of the reasons why artists started to ‘interrogate an expanded site.’\textsuperscript{163} This interest in other sites follows earlier site-specific practices, which first became notable in the 1960s. As the name suggests, site-specific art is meant for a specific location and is considered inseparable from this location.\textsuperscript{164} As Rosalyn Deutsche points out, this type of art was not only concerned with challenging the idea

\textsuperscript{156} Lepecki, 1999. p. 131.  
\textsuperscript{157} Lepecki, 2004. p. 175.  
\textsuperscript{158} Lepecki, 2004. pp. 174-175.  
\textsuperscript{159} In the gallery space the members of the audience are present to each other as well as to the performer, and the viewer is (usually) free to move (and leave). See: Lepecki, 2004. p. 175. Bishop, 2011.  
\textsuperscript{160} Bishop, 2016[b]. n.p.  
\textsuperscript{161} Bishop, 2016[b]. n.p.  
\textsuperscript{162} Meyer, 1993. n.p.  
\textsuperscript{163} Meyer, 1993. n.p. As my supervisor, Wouter Weijers, pointed out to me and as also suggested by Burt, this problem of appropriation is a problem all critical art constantly faces. See: Burt, 2017. p. 15.  
of art’s autonomy, but often also tried to expose the way this idea, in the words of Deutsche, ‘disavows art’s social, economic, and political functions.’

By the end of the twentieth century ‘site-specific’ had become a popular term for artists, curators and critics alike. Both Deutsche en Miwon Kwon, have pointed out, however, that the term was often misused by this time, taking on a much broader (and less critical) meaning. In Europe especially, it seems, the word ‘context’ was particularly popular in the 1990s. Suffice is to say for now, that there was a revived interest in the relation between art and its location. What has distinguished this new generation of artists from many earlier movements, according to Bishop, is the way in which artists have responded to the selected locations. Whereas previously the site was usually approached as a ‘formal or phenomenological entity,’ in the 1990s the focus came to lie more and more on ‘site as a socially constituted phenomenon.’ According to Bishop, this shift can be seen especially in the exhibitions that were organized in the early 1990s, seemingly suggesting that this change of focus happened mostly on the initiative of curators.

Bishop refers to exhibitions like ‘Project Unité’ (Firminy, 1993) - which was held in an apartment building - and ‘Sonsbeek 93’ (Arnhem, 1993) - an outdoor sculpture exhibition (held occasionally since 1949) which in 1993 sought to engage with sites outside the Sonsbeek park. For ‘Sonsbeek’ this was not the first time that the exhibition had included spaces outside the park. ‘Sonsbeek 71’, which was appropriately named ‘Sonsbeek buiten de perken’ (‘Sonsbeek Beyond the Pale’), also included works made for specific sites located in various parts of the Netherlands. According to the artist Tom Burr, one of the artists selected for ‘Sonsbeek 93’, the focus of this edition was different, however. Whereas in 1971 artists had concentrated on ‘placement’, artists now paid close attention to ‘bringing forth place(ment).’ This specifically involved asking: ‘By whom is the place to which [the artist] relates with his work used and in what way does that user differ from the person who uses a similar place or

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166 As noted by others, see for example: Kwon, 2004. p. 1.
174 Burr, 1993[b]. p. 10. My translation of the following text (in italics): ‘Het [gaat] niet langer om aandacht voor de plaatsing van een werk zoals dat in 1971 bij de ‘minimal-art-bezetting’ gebruikelijk was, alswel om het voortbrengen van die plaatsing.’
space elsewhere?’ Burr himself, for example, recreated the landscape of a section of New York’s Central Park as it was designed in the 1870s, placing information signs with texts about this area as it was described in the 1970s when it was a secluded gay cruising area, as well as an area frequented by bird watchers, vagrants and delinquents - an area deemed dangerous by the New York City Police. An American Garden (fig. 7) was situated near a gay cruising area of Sonsbeek park, layering sites separated in time and space in order to question our notions of ‘crime and security, privacy and sexuality in public.’ For both ‘Project Unité’ and ‘Sonsbeek 93’ the curators had expected selected artists to engage with the surrounding community. Valerie Smith, the curator of ‘Sonsbeek 93’, asked Burr, for example: ‘Why not interview the gay community here? I think you should have some contact with them, let them support your ideas, involve them.’ More than anything, perhaps, these exhibitions show a desire to engage a broader audience.

The concern for site and context was not only seen in art exhibitions in the 1990s. Site-specific theatre productions and festivals, such as the Festival a/d Werf (of which Celebration was a part in 1994), also became increasingly popular in this period and remain popular to this day. Whether inspired by these exhibitions and festivals or not, artists in the 1990s made similar attempts to involve people outside the gallery space on their own accord. When the artist Jeanne van Heeswijk was asked to propose a series of sculptures for the district of Westwijk in 1995, for example, she attempted to involve the community in a series of ‘projects’ instead, by organizing events for the community for instance. It is in the context of these developments in ‘site-specificity’ that we must place Renée Kool’s Celebration and Alicia Framis’ Walking Monument.

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175 Burr, 1993[b]. p. 10. My translation of the following text: ‘Door wie wordt de plek waartoe hij [de kunstenaar] zich met zijn werk verhoudt gebruikt en in welk opzicht verschilt die gebruiker van degene die een soortgelijke plek of ruimte elders gebruikt?’


180 This was an important goal, according to Bishop. See: Bishop, 2012[a]. p. 206. It is also suggested by Kwon, who claims this desire was ‘borne out of institutional critique, and identity politics.’ Kwon, 2004. p. 172, n. 18. See also: p. 24.


182 This resulted in the work Until we meet again. See, for example: Basualda et al., 2007. pp. 283-284.
From Public Space to Public Sphere

The sudden interest in public locations in the 1990s might be seen as part of the democratizing impulse that many recent art trends exhibited. The ‘public space’ was the perfect place to reach a broader audience and involving the surrounding community was seen as an anti-elitist act.\(^{183}\)

What concerned critics such as Deutsche, and Camiel van Winkel in the Netherlands, was that the many art projects developed at this time fostered an image of harmony and consensus, veiling exclusions, power relations and the general status quo.\(^{184}\)

The public space has always been a contested area and public art has often served as a way of designating this space - claiming the authority of a certain entity and defining what kind of behavior is desirable in the area. This is seen especially in public art commissioned by states, organizations and corporations.\(^{185}\) In the Netherlands, however, individuals have also increasingly demanded a say in the commissioning and placing of public art.\(^{186}\) In the eyes of Jeroen Boomgaard, this has lead commissioning bodies to prefer projects like that of Jeanne van Heeswijk - projects which emphasize community participation and do not run as much risk of sparking public protests.\(^{187}\) Temporary projects, such as performances, are popular for similar reasons.\(^{188}\)

Boomgaard also points out, that it has lead to the proliferation of animal-sculptures, which are unlikely to offend anyone.\(^{189}\) The problem with such ‘agreeable’ public art, is that it tends to not only originate from consensus, but that it also gives the impression that the public space for which it is meant is actually an uncontested space of communal camaraderie. In other words, rather than being ‘democratic,’\(^{190}\) community projects and ‘bronze beasts’\(^{191}\) often allow public spaces to be depoliticized.\(^{192}\) It is for this reason that Deutsche argues that truly ‘public’ art, as in art which is meant to function ‘in or as a public sphere’\(^{193}\) (a space in which individuals gather to discuss political issues), is meant to contribute to the constitution of a space for politics - ‘a space where we assume political identities.’\(^{194}\)

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185 Boomgaard, 2008.
186 Especially since the 1970s, according to Jeroen Boomgaard. See: Boomgaard, 2017. pp. 128-129.
188 De Roos, 2017.
189 Boomgaard, 2011.
190 Democratic in the sense that ‘relations of conflict are sustained, not erased.’ Bishop, 2004. p. 66.
following chapter, we assume such an identity in opposition to others and the body plays a fundamental role in the construction of these identities.
One’s embodied, experienced, and structural location in the world matters. This is what we might call a sociology of the obvious, yet it has always been an important corrective to the Enlightenment fantasy of a view from nowhere that was always a view from a dude. It is this dude’s view that now circulates as the “real politics” of the white working class as opposed to the ‘identity politics’ of everyone else.1 - Suzanna Danuta Walters

Claire Bishop has pointed to body art as one of the most important precedents of delegated performance, especially of the first type she distinguishes, the ‘live installation,’2 in which the performance is delegated to a specific group of people who perform their supposed collective identity.3 Because this thesis is focussed on the ways in which delegated performances construct identities and the role the body plays in such constructions, this chapter will briefly delve into some important aspects of body art, which are also of significance for the later performance genre, namely: the way it reacts to disembodied (Greenbergian) criticism and its relation to phenomenology and performativity. Next the historical context in which body art emerged will be discussed as it sets the scene for the so-called ‘identity politics’ of the 1990s. Some important differences between delegated performance and its precedent will be reviewed, before shortly introducing what might be seen as a new trend.

Greenbergian Criticism & Artistic Transcendence
The practice of body art emerged in the late 1960s and, some might say, reached its peak in the 1970s.4 It has been characterized as art which ‘take[s] place through an enactment of the artist’s body’5 and is often associated with ‘nudity and bodily fluids.’6 A well-known example of body art is the work, Interior Scroll (fig. 8) by Carolee Schneemann, who exposed her naked body and pulled a scroll from her vagina, which she read out loud to the audience.7 As Amelia Jones points out, Schneemann presented herself in this work as a ‘fully embodied subject,’8 opposed to the Cartesian disembodied subject that Jones finds is ‘embedded in the conception of modernism hegemonic in Europe and the United States in the postwar period.’9 The latter is

1 Walters, 2017.
3 Bishop, 2012[b]. pp. 92-95. See also: p. 102.
6 Bishop, 2011.
7 Jones, 1998. p. 3.
8 Jones, 1998. p. 3.
referred to as ‘Cartesian’ because it is based on René Descartes’ separation of the mind, or the *res cogitans*, and the body, the *res extensa*. For Descartes, the limits of the body as physical matter - subject to the laws of nature and easily deceived by physical stimuli - can be overcome by the mind, which can not only interfere with the body, but also question what the body senses. This dualism is also seen, according to Jones, in Kant’s theory of aesthetic judgement (especially certain readings of this theory), which inspired influential critics such as Clement Greenberg in the 1950s and 1960s.¹¹

Jones draws attention to Kant’s idea that aesthetic judgements should be disinterested and not based, for example, on our personal desires, quoting Kant’s *Critique of Judgment*: ‘Everyone has to admit that if a judgment about beauty is mingled with the least interest then it is very partial and not a pure judgment of taste.’¹² She emphasizes especially that for Kant aesthetic judgements lay claim to universality, as she quotes Kant again: ‘if [he who judges] proclaims something to be beautiful, then he requires the same liking from others; he then judges not just for himself but for everyone.’¹³ Kant thus discredits ‘embodied, sensate, interested, contingent, and therefore individualized and non-universal judgments,’¹⁴ in the eyes of Jones. She goes on to argue that Kant requires aesthetic judgements to be based not on an emotional connection to what is depicted, but on ‘the purposiveness of the form,’¹⁵ and connects this ‘formalist logic’¹⁶ - paired with the rejection of ‘interested’ viewing - to Greenberg’s championing of formalism.¹⁷

Greenberg not only called Kant ‘the first real Modernist,’¹⁸ but his indebtedness to the eighteenth-century philosopher also came across in his teachings at Black Mountain College.¹⁹ The art critic, whose influence should not be underestimated, famously praised abstract painters such as Jackson Pollock for ridding the painting of its content and writers such as James Joyce for reducing, in the critic’s own words, ‘experience to expression for the sake of expression.’²⁰ Art was to be self-referential and autonomous, the focus was to lie on the *aesthetic* effect the work had on the viewer. It is probably because Greenberg was such an influential figure in the 1950s and 60s that his ideas have come to exemplify the formalist tendencies of the time and

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that his arguments are sometimes simplified and even misrepresented in critiques of these tendencies and his work.\(^{21}\)

The idea that art was to be autonomous and that the aesthetic effect was the prime concern was so pervasive at the time, that one might say that the gallery space became adjusted to it. The white cube we all know from museums of modern art and contemporary gallery spaces became prevalent with the rise of formalism, which suited it perfectly as the pristine white walls made the artworks stand out almost as ‘sacred objects,’\(^{22}\) there to be contemplated without the interference of the outside world, without the intrusion of politics and other worldly matters.\(^{23}\) As Brian O’Doherty has pointed out, the white cube almost seems to require us not just to leave the world behind, but to leave our bodies behind as well: ‘The space [of the white cube] offers the thought that while eyes and minds are welcome, space occupying bodies are not - or are tolerated only as kinaesthetic mannikins for further study.’\(^{24}\) According to O’Doherty, the experience of the viewer in the white cube, is the experience of a disembodied ‘Eye’.\(^{25}\) The experience induced by the white cube can thus be seen to allow for a ‘disinterested’ interpretation on the part of the viewer.

According to Jones, Greenberg and his followers found that the effect of an artwork was intrinsic to the form of the artwork, which suits a supposedly ‘disinterested’ interpretation as the work would have a similar effect on everyone and the critic’s judgement of quality would be generally accepted.\(^{26}\) She also notes how it was important for Greenberg that the artist’s body remained out of the picture.\(^{27}\) As the meaning of the artwork lay entirely in its form, it was not mediated through the artist’s body, ensuring both the artist’s transcendence - which entailed, in the words of Jones: ‘pure cognition and uncompromised intentionality’\(^{28}\) - and, again, the critic’s ‘disinterestedness’ - in part, because disregarding the body meant that the issue of desire was evaded as well.\(^{29}\) Jones is, of course, quick to point out that while Greenberg claims objectivity, his critical strategy ‘disembodies precisely in order to veil the particularities, biases and investments of the body/self of the interpreter; in particular, the masculinist investments of

\(^{21}\) Battaglia, 2008. pp. 5-10.

\(^{22}\) Brian O’Doherty, one of the most well-known critics of the white cube, has noted how: ‘In this context [of the white cube] a standing ashtray becomes almost a sacred object, just as the firehose in a modern museum looks not like a firehose but an esthetic conundrum.’ O’Doherty [1976], 1986. p. 15.

\(^{23}\) Grunenberg, 1999. p. 34.

\(^{24}\) O’Doherty [1976], 1986. p. 15.

\(^{25}\) O’Doherty writes: ‘Presence before a work of art, then, means that we absent ourselves in favor of the Eye and Spectator, who report to us what we might have seen had we been there.’ O’Doherty [1976], 1986. p. 55. See also: McEvilley, 1986. pp. 9-10. Grunenberg, 1999. 28.

\(^{26}\) Jones, 1998. p. 76.

\(^{27}\) Jones, 1998. p. 75.


Greenberg’s judgements.’ Body art, like other prominent movements in the 1960s and 70s, undeniably challenged Greenberg’s system of criticism.

Needless to say, body art insists on the embodiment of the artist and therefore draws attention to the particularity of this body. Jones stresses that especially when the body of the artist was not White, straight or male, the staging of their body made the exclusions of the art world - which were downplayed by the way in which art criticism was practiced at the time - clearly visible. But body art went much further than that, in the eyes of Jones. First of all, the presence of the body of the artist in a performance immediately involves the viewer in a personal manner: the viewer does not only see the body of the artist, the artist looks back, which means that ‘we are exposed in our desire to frame [the artist].’ This also means that it becomes harder to claim objectivity as the viewer can no longer circumvent issues such as desire, a feeling which is deeply personal: ‘each subject of viewing interprets the body art work in a manner specific to her or his particular desires, which in turn have developed in relation to her or his psychic and social contexts.’ Many of the works that Jones brings to our attention, for example, are feminist in nature and exposed the female body precisely to provoke an objectifying gaze and force the viewer to acknowledge ‘his or her inexorable implication in the othering of the female body as “art”.’ This brings us to an important point that Jones tries to make, in her eyes body art enacts what she calls the ‘intertwining of self and other.’ She bases this idea on the theories of the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Self & Other

In “The Intertwining - The Chiasm” (1964), Merleau-Ponty describes how being able to see implies that the seer can also be seen, just like touching implies being touched (when we touch something it also comes into contact with us). It is important to Merleau-Ponty that our vision and our touch also inform each other, our touch and our movement can be seen and our seeing is embodied and therefore part of the physical world: ‘It is a marvel too little noticed that every movement of my eyes - even more, every displacement of my body - has its place in the same visible universe that I itemize and explore with them, as, conversely, every vision takes place somewhere in the tactile space.’ This means that we are both object - ‘a thing among things’

- and subject - ‘what sees [these things] and touches them’\textsuperscript{39} - at the same time, and, again, the subject (or ‘self’) and the object (or ‘Other’) - inform each other: ‘there is reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other.’\textsuperscript{40}

Merleau-Ponty goes on to explain what he calls ‘scattered visibility,’\textsuperscript{41}: what we see is always fragmentary and caught in the moment, we never see something from all angles simultaneously and always see something at a particular time.\textsuperscript{42} Furthermore, we all have our own perspectives, the way we see and touch is always personal: we can not know if the Other sees the same colors as we do and if the textures he feels are felt the same way by us. According to Merleau-Ponty, this cannot be entirely so, however, as when we talk about what we see we are able to help each other see what we see and recognize things from the descriptions given of these things. In other words, we influence each other in what we see (the same is true, of course, for touching).\textsuperscript{43} Others can, therefore, also help us to ‘see’ ourselves, indeed we need Others to see ourselves, Merleau-Ponty argues:

As soon as we see other seers, we no longer have before us only the look without a pupil, the plate glass of the things with that feeble reflection, that phantom of ourselves they evoke by designating a place among themselves whence we see them: henceforth, through other eyes we are for ourselves fully visible; that lacuna where our eyes, our back, lie is filled, filled still by the visible, of which we are not the titulars.\textsuperscript{44}

What Merleau-Ponty seems to suggest here is not so much that Others can give us an indication of what we look like from the angles we can not see, but rather that we see ourselves reflected in Others - in Others we are able to see our own otherness.\textsuperscript{45} It is perhaps for this reason that the phenomenologist argues that all vision is, essentially, narcissistic. As vision itself is only seen when it is cast back upon itself - with the help of a mirror, for example, we can see ourselves seeing ourselves, but also with the help of another person who through seeing us reflects our own objecthood or otherness - the seer can not escape his own objecthood and must, therefore, always implicate him or herself when looking at another.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{39} Merleau-Ponty [1964], 2007. p. 398.
\textsuperscript{40} Merleau-Ponty [1964], 2007. p. 399.
\textsuperscript{41} Merleau-Ponty [1967], 2007. p. 398.
\textsuperscript{42} Merleau-Ponty [1967], 2007. p. 398.
\textsuperscript{43} Merleau-Ponty [1967], 2007. p. 403.
\textsuperscript{44} Merleau-Ponty [1967], 2007. p. 403.
\textsuperscript{45} Torlasco, 2008. p. 82.
\textsuperscript{46} Merleau-Ponty [1967], 2007. p. 400. See: pp. 399-400.
Like live body art performances, live delegated performances can be seen to implicate the viewer, confronting them with their objectifying gaze and casting it back upon them. Renée Kool’s *Veertig mooie vrouwen*47 (‘Forty beautiful women,’ 1991) did this quite directly. For this work, which was Kool’s graduation-piece at the Rietveld School of Art & Design, the artist had asked forty women to walk through the halls of the school, which had been transformed into exhibition spaces. The women had been equipped with a headset and were instructed to comment on everything they saw, including the visitors of the show.48 Unsurprisingly, perhaps, this work lead to quite a few confrontations, according to the artist.49 The ‘hostesses’ of Kool’s *Hi, how are you today?* (fig. 6, discussed in Chapter 1: De-skilling, Dancing and Disorientation), were also instructed to touch the arms of the visitors of the exhibition ‘Parler Femme’, breaking the so-called ‘fourth wall’ very directly and frustrating the objectification of the actresses.50

From the theory of Merleau Ponty one can deduce that our sense of self, or our identity, is always dependent on the Other, never entirely coherent or fully formed. If we rely on Others to define ourselves, this also means that identities are always constructed in opposition to an Other and not formed independently.51 This is true also for the construction of a collective identity which, as Chantal Mouffe has noted, ‘always implies the establishment of a difference,’52 and leads to ‘we’ versus ‘them’ relations.53 How such oppositions are formed can be seen in the emergence of identity-categories, categories in which we are placed by others and often place ourselves. It has frequently been noted, for example, that the English term ‘homosexuality’ was coined before the term ‘heterosexuality’ was first used, even though heterosexuality was deemed to be ‘originary.’54 This demonstrates, in the words of Cressida Heyes, that ‘heterosexuality comes into existence as a way of understanding the nature of individuals after the homosexual has been diagnosed; [and that] homosexuality requires heterosexuality as its opposite, despite its self-professed stand-alone essence.’55 Identities are, of course, always more fluid than their oppositional constructions suggest. ‘We’ versus ‘them’ relations may, furthermore, always be defined differently and are dependent on context.

47 The full title of this work is: *Veertig mooie vrouwen observeren en rapporteren de eindexamenexpositie van de Gerrit Rietveld Academie* (‘Forty beautiful women observe and report on the graduation show of the Rietveld School of Art & Design’).


49 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, March 29, 2018.

50 As explained by Renée Kool in a recorded conversation with author, March 29, 2018.

51 This is a commonly made claim, see for example: Mouffe, 2007.

52 Mouffe, 2007.

53 Mouffe, 2007. See also, for example: Bishop, 2004. p. 66.

54 Heyes, 2016.

Identity & Space

Many identities are considered to be tied to specific places, this is most clearly demonstrated by national identities, but one may also identify with a certain neighborhood, for example. Kevin Hetherington has also noted that ‘certain spaces act as sites for the performance of identity.’ It might be argued, for example, that the Dam Square in Amsterdam figures as a site for the performance of the Dutch national identity on the 4th of May, when the casualties of the Second World War are commemorated (as will be discussed in Chapter 4: Fragile Structures on the Dam Square). While spaces are often associated with specific identities and social groups (as also shown by Tom Burr’s *An American Garden*, discussed in Chapter 1: De-skilling, Dancing and Disorientation), they are also, as Rosalyn Deutsche has noted, shaped by the exclusion of other social groups. Deutsche’s prime example is the displacement of homeless people from public spaces in New York City.

The Dutch artist Hans van Houwelingen, has drawn attention to the way computer generated images of construction plans (or ‘artist’s impressions’) often show exclusions quite explicitly. The example he referred to was an image made to give an impression of a square to be constructed in Amsterdam-West, an ethnically diverse neighborhood. The image showed, in the words of the artist: ‘a sun-drenched square with a large green tree and a terrace full of White people in summer clothes.’ Often the design of particular spaces also discourages certain behaviors - behaviors which might be associated with particular social groups. Sometimes users of a specific space adjust design-elements in order to prohibit certain ‘uses’ of this space. When Jaap van der Meij’s saucer-shaped sculpture *Aardschotel* (1974), in the Frisian town of Ureterp, started to function as a hangout spot for local youth, for example, nearby residents filled the ‘saucer’ with earth and plants so that the sculpture would no longer invite such behavior and, arguably, the gathering of this group in this place (fig. 9).

Exclusions permeate the spaces which exhibit art. One of Bishop’s main criticisms regarding the ‘relational art’ characterized by Nicolas Bourriaud (discussed in more detail in Chapter 1) is that these works, while dependent on context, often fail to define this context. Following the theories of Ernesto Laclau and Mouffe, who reason that the delineation of a context implies that there is an outside (as well as outsiders), she argues that when the context of a ‘relational’ work...

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58 Deutsche, 1996. See, for example: p. xiii.
59 Deutsche, 1996.
60 Van Houwelingen, 2017. See also: Van Muiswinkel, 2015.
61 Van Houwelingen, 2017. My translation of the following text: ‘een zonovergoten plein met een grote, groene boom en een terras vol zomers geklede, witte mensen.’
63 Bishop, 2004. See, for example: p. 54.
remains undefined or ‘open-ended,’ the exclusions that underlie this context will stay unaddressed. In the eyes of Bishop, it seems, relational art often appears to be oblivious to the specificity of its audience - usually a privileged art audience. Bishop contrasts works like Rirkrit Tiravanija’s *Untitled (Free)* (fig. 3, first discussed in Chapter 1), with Santiago Sierra’s *133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Dyed Blond* (fig. 10), a delegated performance which took place at the Venice Biennale and involved paying illegal street vendors with naturally dark hair 120,000 lire (today that would be just over 50 euros) to dye their hair blond. Sierra subsequently invited the street vendors to sell their wares at the exhibition, leading to an uneasy encounter, in the words of Bishop: ‘Sierra’s action disrupted the art audience’s sense of identity, which is founded precisely on unspoken racial and class exclusions, as well as veiling blatant commerce.’ *Untitled (Free)* offers no such disruption. Even if Tiravanija’s ‘soup-kitchen’ were to be visited by those who were actually in need, which according to Bishop did not happen, the space this work constituted is unlikely to have provided much room for an evaluation of its exclusions, as it relied, in the eyes of Bishop, on an idea ‘of community as immanent togetherness.’

Bishop also discusses Thomas Hirschhorn’s *Bataille Monument* (fig. 11), which brought the visitors of ‘Documenta11’ (2002) to an ethnically diverse lower-income neighborhood of Kassel, making the visitors feel, in her words, ‘like hapless intruders.’ This work, a monument to Georges Bataille as the title suggests, included roughly constructed sheds containing books, videos and information about the philosopher, as well as a bar managed by residents of the neighborhood. According to Bishop, some found this work ‘patronizing’ towards the local community and the sense of discomfort felt by many visitors ‘revealed the fragile conditioning of the art world’s self-constructed identity.’ The performances I discuss in my case studies might similarly be seen to bring ‘the art world’ to alien contexts, to some degree. Aside perhaps from *The Roof*, the selected performances seem less focused on the art world’s sense of identity, however, though all show the significance of space in the way we ‘see’ identities.

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64 For Bishop ‘open-endedness’ is one of the main characteristics of Bourriaud’s ‘relational art’. Bishop, 2004. See, for example: p. 53 and p. 72.


66 Bishop, 2004. See, for example: pp. 67-68.

67 Bishop, 2004. p. 73.

68 Bishop, 2004. p. 73.


73 Bishop, 2004. p. 76.

74 Bishop, 2004. p. 76.
Also important in ‘seeing’ identities is the way we expect people to, in the terms of Judith Butler, ‘do’ their bodies.75

Performative Identities
Butler has explained that when she, famously, claimed that gender is performative, she did not simply imply that we all perform a gendered ‘role’, but that we all continuously bring forth our gender ‘through a stylized repetition of acts’,76 these acts might be seen to include, for example, our gestures and our speech patterns.77 Butler derives her definition of the term ‘performativity’ from the linguistic philosopher, J.L. Austin (1911-1960), and characterizes it, firstly, as ‘that characteristic of linguistic utterances that in the moment of making the utterance makes something happen or brings some phenomenon into being.’78 Speech-act theorists like Austin showed how language is not necessarily descriptive or completely referential, but that ‘speech acts’ - such as promises and declarations - in some ways determine the way we see our surroundings.79 For Butler, bodily acts have a similar power.80

Butler describes the body as ‘a continual and incessant materializing of possibilities.’81 The ‘possibilities’ we have are determined by the historical and social context in which we find ourselves.82 This context provides, for example, the (gender) norms which we are expected to conform to and which, thus, influence the way we act.83 Usually we, unintentionally, emulate and thus ‘reproduce’84 these norms, to the extent that we actually believe that we naturally enact our gender and contribute to the maintenance of gender norms, according to Butler.85 Though Butler has focussed especially on the performativity of gender and sexuality, others have suggested that our conceptions of, for example, race and ethnicity, are similarly performative.86

Jones argues that body artists, such as Vito Acconci, Yayoi Kusama and Hannah Wilke, often performed their particularity - their gender or their ethnicity, for example - in an exaggerated

75 Butler often uses this phrasing. See, for example: Butler, 1988. p. 521.
77 Butler, 2011.
79 Jackson, 2014.
80 See, for example: Butler, 2015. p. 8.
fashion, highlighting how they were performing a fiction, or showed, through repetition, the
ritualistic nature of their body acts.\(^{87}\) As art, these performances brought to the attention of their
audience how these ‘identities’ can be seen as ‘intersubjectively determined construct[s].’\(^ {88}\) The
same might be said for delegated performances, though for such performances the viewer is
often confronted with a group of people, which leads to a different experience. When artists
hire, commission or invite a specific group of people for a delegated performance the
performers usually assume a collective identity in our eyes and we might expect them to act in
certain ways.\(^ {89}\) As Bishop has pointed out, however: ‘the phenomenological experience of
confronting these performers always testifies to the extent to which people relentlessly exceed
the categories under which they have been recruited.’\(^ {90}\) In this way, it might be argued that it is
precisely the grouping of individuals which undermines our notion of this supposed ‘collective
identity’, as it can in some ways foreground the individuality of the performers. Some
performances, such as *Celebration*, accentuate that the performance shown is rehearsed,
undermining our notion of identity (as ‘authentic’ and unmediated) in other ways.\(^ {91}\)

**Historical Context**

Body art was informed by, and emerged concurrently with, second wave feminism, the Civil
Rights Movement, as well as various other rights- and independence movements around the
world which focussed on the exclusion and oppression of specific social groups.\(^ {92}\) Jones has
even claimed that ‘body art enacted the activist particularized body of the rights movements
[…] within the structures of art making and reception.’\(^ {93}\)

The feminist slogan ‘the personal is political’ might be seen to have been especially influential
for body art.\(^ {94}\) American feminists like Carol Hanisch and Betty Friedan argued that the
problems that many women coped with - such as spousal abuse - were not just personal issues,
to be dealt with individually, but political issues caused by patriarchal structures of power.
These issues thus needed to be addressed publicly, in order to bring about change.\(^ {95}\) This idea
was not just expressed by American feminists. In 1970 the Dolle Mina’s, a Dutch feminist

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\(^ {89}\) Bishop, 2012. [b]. p. 110.

\(^ {90}\) Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 111.

\(^ {91}\) This argument is also made by Bishop (though not in relation to *Celebration*), she has seen, for
example: ‘an amplification of artificiality, where artists employ actors to perform in ways that serve to
generate ambiguity and complicate the boundary between fiction and reality, authentic and staged.’


\(^ {95}\) Kelly, 2017.
group, published the personal accounts of women with unwanted pregnancies (abortion was still illegal at the time, with few exceptions) in a pamphlet, distributed in particular to physicians.96

Jones links the feminist act of broadcasting the personal, to the performances of female body artists who exposed their sexualized bodies, ‘[exacerbating] to the point of absurdity the Western fixation on the female body as object of a masculine “gaze”.’97 Though Jones refers to American artists as examples, feminist artists in Europe, such as VALIE EXPORT, Kirsten Justesen and Lydia Schouten, made their art personal in similar ways. It was important for these artists that they posed themselves: that they were both the object (the model) and the subject (the artist). For some this seems to have been an ethical issue, as evidenced by the statement by the Belgian body artist, Lili Dujourie: ‘The woman has always been ‘the model’, and I wanted to do away with this - as a woman I could hardly manipulate another woman! […] If you want to evoke the intimacy of the female nude, then you have to do it yourself, you can’t ask a model to do it for you.’98 Some emphasized the narcissistic aspect of their self-display, intentionally presenting themselves as sexual objects, without the intervention of someone else (presumably a heterosexual male subject), while at the same time demonstrating that in presenting themselves they are always already dependent on the other, on a viewer.99

In the 1980s feminists started to criticize earlier feminists for their generalizing claims, for not considering, for example, that the experiences of a Black woman were often very different from the experiences of a White woman.100 Female body artists were similarly seen to represent, in the words of Jones: ‘their body/self through an assumed, idealist conception of the female body as conveying the truth of female experience.’101 Body art, especially when it involved the female nude, was additionally criticized at the time for the gaze that it purposefully solicited - the pleasurable gaze of desire.102 The solicitation of this gaze was seen to make body art easily consumable, while art had to alienate the viewer in order to break down ‘the dominant structures of cultural consumption.’103 Especially in the U.S., body art became less popular during the

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96 Denijs, 2015. The pamphlet can be found online at: <http://www.vrouwenuvoorlater.nl/dollemina_abortus/>.
100 See for example: Heyes, 2016.
1980s, which Jones not only connects to the feminist backlash, but also to the politics of Reagan and Thatcher.104

The body returned in full force, however, in the art of the late 1980s and 1990s, a period which has become known as the ‘heyday’ of ‘identity politics’.105 The term ‘identity politics’ is usually used to refer to feminist, anti-racist and queer social movements, as well as movements which focus on the oppression of ethnic or religious minorities. Furthermore, it is often used in a derogatory manner.106 In the art world, for example, it has reportedly been used to dismiss the work of marginalized artists who, some claimed, were only invited because of their presumed ‘identities’.107 Here I follow the definition of ‘identity politics’ given by Nancy Whittier, for whom the term ‘refers to organizing around the specific experience or perspective - or the collective identity, in sociological terms - of a given group as well as to organizing that has identity visibility as a goal.’108

In 1995 Hal Foster noted that a shift had occurred in the art world. He first refers to Walter Benjamin’s influential text, “The Author as Producer” (1934), in which Benjamin appealed to artists ‘to intervene, like the revolutionary worker, in the means of artistic production.’109 By the 1990s, a new dictum had emerged, according to Foster, the progressive artist was no longer asked to identify with the proletariat, but with the marginalized: ‘The object of contestation remains, at least in part, the bourgeois institution of autonomous art, its exclusionary definitions of art, audience, identity. But the subject of association has changed: it is now the cultural and/or ethnic other in whose name the artist often struggles.’110 Foster stressed the role art institutions played in this phenomenon.111 The tendency he described is also seen in Dutch art exhibitions organized at the time. In the Netherlands shows like ‘Ik + de Ander’ (1994) were seen to challenge ‘Western identity and superiority,’112 according to critics like Rutger Pontzen.113 Other shows, such as ‘Parler Femme’ (1991) and ‘From the Corner of the Eye’ (1998) focussed on the art of a specific social group. From the American perspective shows

112 See, for example: Pontzen, 2000. p. 57.
like the 1993 Whitney Biennial shook the art world at its core, some even claim that this particular show ‘changed art forever.’

The 1993 Whitney Biennial, which was not well received at the time (to put it mildly), is often called the ‘political’ biennial. Not only was a videotape of the Rodney King beating shown in the exhibition, but many artworks were accompanied by texts which seemed to carry explicit political messages. The organizers of the show had selected a diverse group of artists and foregrounded issues of gender, race and sexuality. Even though body art had already broached similar themes and practices, Jerry Saltz has credited the Biennial for introducing a new movement:

For the first time, biography, history, the plight of the marginalized, institutional politics, context, sociologies, anthropology, and privilege have been recognized as “forms,” “genres,” and “materials” in art. Possibly the core materials. The shift put the artistic self front and center, making it perhaps the primary carrier of artistic content since the 1990s.

Though body art was included in the Biennial, the body of the artist did not necessarily take center stage in the artwork itself, many works instead seemed to focus on the experiences of a specific social group to which the artist was seen to belong. In this way, the ‘identity’ of the artist appeared to be central to the work exhibited at shows like the 1993 Whitney Biennial, as Hal Foster has also suggested: ‘I sense an implicit interpellation - in the work and in such shows - that you are this identity and this only, and that all else follows: what art you make, what politics you support, and so on.’

Of course many artists felt this kind of essentialism to be very limiting, especially those who were considered to belong to marginalized groups, as it was assumed that they were ‘automatically political because of their skin color [or] their sexual orientation’ and they felt pressured to make work about their racial identities or sexualities. It seems that the work made by those with specific ‘identities’ was considered to be more authentic, as Miwon Kwon has argued: ‘certain people are seen to be closer to the real, to real experiences of life. And they tend to be black, gay, women - closer to having direct contact with socially oppressive situations

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and therefore thought to be closer to being able to communicate directly.’ Rosalind Krauss has even spoken of ‘a strange return to primitivism.’

As also mentioned in Chapter 1, in relation to ‘presence’, Delegated performance, a genre which emerged concurrently with the art world’s fascination with identity politics, might be seen to submit to a similar notion of ‘authenticity’. As artists often hire people from a specific social group - a group they do not necessarily belong to themselves - Claire Bishop has claimed that such performances ‘outsource authenticity.’

The Body in Delegated Performances

Though delegated performances rarely include nudity, there are definitely aspects which the genre shares with body art, namely: the attentions such performances often draw to the particularity of the performing body, the implication of the viewer and the emphasis it places on the performativity of identity. Here I would briefly like to focus on an obvious difference between the two genres: while body art stages the body of the artist, delegated performances stage the bodies of others. Some performances might still be considered to explore the artist’s own identity or the artist’s own experiences with how they are identified. Kool’s ‘Hi, how are you today?’ (fig. 6, discussed in Chapter 1), for example, focussed on the expected mannerisms of a young female professional and the artist has even stated that she saw the two actresses she hired as ‘extensions’ of herself. Delegated performances, however, also allow the artist to stage an ‘identity’ which is not their own, enabling the artist, in the words of Bishop, to explore identity-related issues ‘with a cool irony, wit and distance.’ It is here that Bishop notes a difference between the mostly European practice and the art which addressed identity-related issues in the United States. In her eyes, American art, particularly in the 1980s, was more ‘earnest’ in tone.

Bishop also points out that while the body art of the 1960s and 1970s, which often depended mainly on the body of the artist, did not require an enormous budget, the practice of delegating performance ‘tends to be a luxury game,’ mostly because the group of performers needs to be

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123 Bishop, 2012[b]. See, for example: p. 110.
124 This is of course also pointed out by Bishop, see for example: Bishop, 2008. p. 111. Bishop, 2012[b].
125 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 29 March 2018.
126 Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 94.
paid (sometimes for an extended period of time if the performance is staged repeatedly).\textsuperscript{130} Though body art is often considered to have challenged the commodification of artworks, no such claim can be made about delegated performances.\textsuperscript{131} While early performance artists (and perhaps especially their proponents) often vehemently opposed reproduction in any form, delegated performances are frequently documented (also for commercial purposes) and re-staged, which is made possible, in part, because the performers are interchangeable.\textsuperscript{132} Sven Lüticken, has pointed out, however, that even earlier performance art has not really managed to evade some forms of commodification. He, furthermore, finds art performances comparable to services in some ways, and services - Lüticken stresses - ‘are still commodities.’\textsuperscript{133}

Another difference between body art and delegated performances might be that while body art often addressed the exclusion of female artists (in particular), many delegated performances seem more concerned with the visibility of constituencies who are not represented in the typical art audience, as seen in Sierra’s \textit{133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Dyed Blond}.\textsuperscript{134} In other words, it seems that in some ways the focus has shifted from the exclusion of certain artists to the exclusion of certain audiences, this is perhaps particularly the case when artists stage their work outside the gallery space.\textsuperscript{135}

\textbf{The end of identity politics?}

When Julia Austin interviewed Claire Bishop in 2009, both noted that identity-related issues had come to play a less important role and that artists had started to draw attention to other and arguably more universal concerns, such as globalization.\textsuperscript{136} Interestingly, Bishop suggests that the practice of delegating performance lent itself to this turn away from identity politics as: ‘issues of globalization, economics, representation, and exploitation (to name but a few) are hard to articulate by the singular artist using his/her own body.’\textsuperscript{137} The shift that Bishop and Austin observe is reflected in works such as \textit{The Roof}. Though social categories still play a role in \textit{The Roof}, this later performance project appears to be less concerned with critiquing identity than Renée Kool’s \textit{Celebration} or Alicia Framis’s \textit{Walking Monument}, focussing more on how certain economic policies have affected various social groups and the formation of potential alliances.

\textsuperscript{130} Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 102. See also: p. 105.


\textsuperscript{133} Lüticken, 2005. My translation of the following text (in italics): ‘Diensten \textit{zijn nog altijd waren}.’


\textsuperscript{135} Both Benjamin Buchloh and Jerry Saltz have considered the desire to address a broader audience as a typical tendency of art institutions and artists at the end of the twentieth century, see: Foster et al., 1993. Saltz & Corbett, 2016.

\textsuperscript{136} Bishop & Austin, 2009. p. 106.

\textsuperscript{137} Bishop & Austin, 2009. p. 105.
Dance can be seen as a recurring theme in the early work of Renée Kool (b. 1961, Amsterdam). Her career appears to start off with a number of delegated performances, quite a few of which involve dancing. One of her earliest pieces, “Never can say goodbye” (...) “Goodlife” (fig. 12), consisted of a group of around ten to twenty girls, all around the age of fifteen, dancing to old disco hits (such as the ones named in the title) at the opening of the exhibition ‘Parler Femme’ (23 November 1991 - 6 January 1992, Museum Fodor, Amsterdam).\(^1\) For another work, Nienke/Tjalde-Martine\(^2\) (1992), Kool recorded a conversation between three young ballerinas.\(^3\) An additional example would be the performance au-delà (fig. 13-14), a work Kool made for the first Manifesta exhibition in 1996 (in Rotterdam), which consisted, in large part, of security monitors showing, among other things, a young woman dancing in front of a mirror, seemingly unaware that she is being filmed.\(^4\)

What these works have in common is that all the dancers involved are female. All three works can, furthermore, be seen to have autobiographical undertones. The girls in “Never can say goodbye” (...) “Goodlife” are, notably, not dancing to songs from their own time, but to disco hits from Kool’s childhood in the 1970s. Kool has even said that the young performers had to learn to dance to these hits because the way they danced did not match the music.\(^5\) As a young girl Kool had been a dedicated dancer, following an intensive program at the Scapino Dansacademie during her teens.\(^6\) Kool was thus quite familiar with the world of the three ballerinas in Nienke/Tjalde-Martine. The dancer in the work au-delà was chosen for this piece specifically because she looked a lot like the artist.\(^7\) The uncertainty caused by this likeness was very much part of the work, as Kool has stated: ‘I played with that ambiguity, it was never revealed whether it was me or not,’\(^8\) which makes me wonder even now whether this ‘look-alike’ is perhaps made up.

There is another work which involves a man dancing, 15.3 - 18.3.95/Strasbourg (1995). For this film, Kool asked students she had taught in Strasbourg to teach her something new and one

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2 The full title of this work is: Nienke/Tjalde-Martine, 10 september, 1992, van 14.30 tot 16.00 uur. It is in the collection of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.
6 Renée Kool, e-mail to author, 18 February, 2018. See also: Pontzen, 1996. p. 46.
7 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018. See also: Pontzen, 1996. p. 47.
8 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018. My translation of the following statement: ‘Ik heb ingespeeld op die ambiguïteit, er is nooit uitgesproken of ik het was of niet.’
student decided to teach her how they danced in clubs in Strasbourg (fig. 15). Her work *Celebration* stands out, however, as it focusses on a group of young men hip-hop dancing, a style which according to Kool became popular ‘after my time.’ Hip-hop culture and the dance styles related to it (particularly breaking or b-boying) famously developed among the (predominantly) African-American youth of the Bronx (New York City) in the 1970s. Newspaper articles suggest that hip-hop dancing started to become popular in the Netherlands in the early 1980s. By this time Kool, however, was already in her twenties while hip-hop was especially popular among a younger generation and practiced almost exclusively by boys and young men, as newspaper articles already noted at the time. This was precisely what fascinated Kool and what she wanted to reflect on in *Celebration*:

> It is about manifestations of masculinity in the public domain. A masculinity that has not been able to express itself that way until that moment. The nice thing about battling and the like is that it is something that can be done in the public domain. They do not actually fight each other, no, it's a kind of ritualized showdown. Which can be seen by others.

*Celebration* consists of three parts: radio-impressions of the preparations for the performance, the performance itself (fig. 16) and a videoclip which was repeatedly aired on a local television network (Stadsomroep TV). The square on which the performance took place, namely the ‘Amerhof’, is of course not unimportant to the piece. This square had recently been given a new look by the artist Hans van Houwelingen (b. 1957, Harlingen).

The ‘Persian’ Carpet of the Rivierenwijk in Utrecht

According to the art critic Ingrid Commandeur, the square which the artist Van Houwelingen designed for the Rivierenwijk (a neighborhood in the city of Utrecht) in the early 1990s, is ‘generally regarded as one of the most successful examples of art in the public space.’ The

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10 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018.


14 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018. My translation of the following statement: ‘Het gaat over manifestaties van mannelijkheid in het publieke domein. Een mannelijkheid die zich tot dat moment niet op die manier heeft kunnen uiten. Het mooie van battelen en zo is dat het iets is wat in het publieke domein kan. Ze gaan niet met elkaar op de vuist, nee, het is een soort geritualiseerde krachtmeting. Die door anderen gezien kan worden.’


square was called *Het tapijt*, which has been translated to ‘The tapestry,’ 17 perhaps because of what the work was meant to symbolize, but ‘The carpet’ would be a closer translation. Newspaper articles from the 1990s also refer to *Het tapijt* as being ‘highly praised’ 18 and ‘much acclaimed,’ 19 and a catalogue of public art in Utrecht, published in 1998, lists it as one of the highlights, calling it: ‘an exemplary project.’ 20 It might come as a surprise then that the artist himself recently stated on a local radio program, called ‘Wandelingen door West’ (‘Walks through West’), that he would not make such a design again. 21

Van Houwelingen’s design quite literally consists of an enormous carpet made of colored bricks, stretching from the houses surrounding the square to the street and even covering the playgrounds of a kindergarden and an elementary school (fig. 17). The motif for the ‘carpet’ was designed by Hamid Oujaha, a graphic designer, and it is meant to resemble the design of a Persian carpet, sometimes called ‘an Eastern carpet’ in the Netherlands, or simply a ‘pers’. Van Houwelingen carefully determined where the benches, the trash cans, the lanterns, the drainage pits and the trees (rowans) should be placed, even the sandpits of the kindergarden and the school fit perfectly into the geometric design of the ‘carpet’, as Henriëtte Heezen has also pointed out. 22 The design was finished off by seven small bronze lambs, placed on the terrain of the kindergarden (fig. 18).

The neighborhood for which the square was designed was generally described as a ‘working-class district,’ 23 at the time. According to Heezen, the area was characterized by ‘demolition and rough construction’ 24 in the late 1980s. Various sources suggest that the area was being redeveloped in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which was necessary, according to Willem Geijssen (who was involved with the community center De Jutter at the time), because the soil had been contaminated by a demolition company which had previously been located in the area. 25 Geijssen adds that urban decay and criminality in the neighborhood were also reasons for

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the redevelopment project.26 As a part of the project, the municipality commissioned Van Houwelingen to design the square.27

As Van Houwelingen himself explained on the radio program, while walking through the neighborhood, he designed the square in response to the contemporary social context (and conflicts) of the area: ‘I wanted to do something with the social tensions which were emerging at the time. This is an old working-class neighborhood, where immigrants [allochtonen] were starting to settle and that led to tensions.’28 In 1994, when the square was officially revealed, a journalist wrote that the neighborhood contained ‘a high number of allochtonen and a high number of CD[Centre Democrats]-voters.’29 The term ‘allochtonen’ was used to refer to those who were born outside of the Netherlands or had at least one parent who was born outside of the country.30 By this definition the king of the Netherlands (whose father was German) is also an ‘allochtoon’, as is often pointed out. The term, however, is usually not used to refer to White citizens, sometimes the label ‘non-western’ is added so that the term refers specifically to people of African, Asian, Latin-American or Turkish descent.31 Since 2016 the word is no longer used by the Dutch government, neither is its counterpart ‘autochtoon’ - referring to people whose parents were born in the Netherlands. ‘Allochtonen’ was deemed ‘imprecise and stigmatizing,’32 though some argue that it was not so much the term itself which was problematic but the negative context in which it was often used.33

By ‘CD-voters’ the journalist Robbert Roos referred to those who voted for the political party called ‘Centrumdemocraten’ (‘Centre Democrats’), a party which was founded in 1984 and dissolved in 2002. Despite its name, the party was considered by most to be far-right, running campaigns with anti-immigrant slogans like ‘vol=vol’ (‘full=full’) and using nationalist one-liners such as ‘eigen volk eerst’ (‘own people first’).34 The popularity of the CD reached its height in the mid-1990s.35 Several newspaper articles from the 1990s suggest that the party’s

26 Geijsesen, 2015.
28 Van Houwelingen in: Van Muiswinkel, 2015. My translation of the following statement: ‘Ik wilde destijds iets doen met de toen opkomende sociale spanningen. Dit is een oude arbeiderswijk, daar waren allemaal allochtonen komen wonen en dat leverde allemaal spanningen op.’
30 Sommer & Meijer, 2016. Different definitions of the term exist.
32 Sommer & Meijer, 2016. My translation of the following words: ‘niet precies genoeg en stigmatiserend.’
34 “Centrumdemocraten (CD),” website last accessed on: 08 June 2018.
anti-immigrant rhetoric was often islamophobic, directed in particular at the substantial Turkish and Moroccan minorities of the Netherlands.36

Van Houwelingen has often explained how he looked for something which would speak to both the Turkish and Moroccan community and the so-called ‘autochtone’ residents of the neighborhood: ‘When I walked around [in the neighborhood] I saw a very white lady beating a Persian carpet. I thought: that's it! Even in the most racist family one will be able to find a Turkish or Moroccan carpet.’37 As can be seen in this statement the artist does not really seem to distinguish between Persian, Turkish or Moroccan carpets (and neither do his critics). In one of the earliest texts about the square, Van Houwelingen refers to the carpet as ‘Islamic’.38 The lambs on the carpet were seen by the artist as a ‘Christian’ element: ‘the Dutch soil may have an Islamic overlay, but the Islamic overlay has seven Christian lambs that graze there.’39 Critics have pointed out that the lambs can also be seen as a reference to both the Christian and the Islamic culture.40

In the radio program Van Houwelingen states that the ‘Persian’ carpet was not just an item that could be found in almost all Dutch households, it was specifically an artifact that had ‘integrated into Dutch society.'41 He goes on to explain that at the time he had believed that ‘integration could take shape in the public space, or at least the ideal of integration could be visualized [there],’42 which seems to suggest that the ‘carpet’ was symbolic for this ‘ideal’. It is at this point during the program, that the artist mentions that his ideas have changed:

then multiculturalism was an ideal, now it has become an exasperating political dogma. I just think that people who immigrated here, that they have the right to live the way they want. So I do not think that they should adjust to the wishes of the supposed


39 Van Houwelingen in: Van Muiswinkel, 2015. My translation of the following statement: ‘de Nederlandse bodem die kan een Islamitische bedekking hebben maar die Islamitische bedekking heeft dan vervolgens weer zeven Christelijke lammetjes die daar grazen.’


41 Van Houwelingen in: Van Muiswinkel, 2015. My translation of the following statement (in italics): ‘een cultuurgood dat in de Nederlandse samenleving is geïntegreerd.’

42 Van Houwelingen in: Van Muiswinkel, 2015. My translation of the following statement (in italics): ‘in die tijd had ik ook het idee dat die integratie in de openbare ruimte vorm zou kunnen krijgen. Althans een manier van het zichtbaar maken van een ideaal van integratie.’
‘autochtone’ population. So I am no longer in favor of that multiculturalism. […] So I would not make such a square today.43

Kool claims she was already critical of the square at the time. As a friend of Van Houwelingen, she had been invited to the official opening of Het tapijt. She remembers that she had an argument at the opening, that she had said that the work was ‘not unproblematic,’44 that she found it a bit of a ‘cliché’45 and ‘aanmatigend’46 (probably best translated to ‘imperious’) to design a ‘carpet’ for a neighborhood with a large Turkish-Dutch and Moroccan-Dutch community.47 She found it troubling, furthermore, that the front-gardens of surrounding homes had (reportedly) been reduced in order to fit the ‘carpet’ and she disliked the general dominance of the design, in her eyes it showed a certain ‘machismo.’48 Kool has also claimed that she was unconvinced by the statement that the square was made ‘with the neighborhood and for the neighborhood’49 and that she found the opening especially disappointing.50 At that time she had already been invited to make a work for Festival a/d Werf, a festival in Utrecht known particularly for its site-specific theatre productions shown at ‘unexpected places in the city.’51 Kool had been looking for a site in Utrecht and at the opening she decided: ‘this is it.’52

Delegation & Collaboration

Renée Kool does not refer to works such as “Never can say goodbye” (…) “Goodlife” and Celebration as performances, associating the term ‘performance’ with the performance art of the 1960s and 1970s which usually featured the artist him- or herself.53 She prefers the term ‘staged event’, which she defines as ‘an event that is performed by instructed individuals in a given art

43 Van Houwelingen in: Van Muiswinkel, 2015. My translation of the following statement: ‘toen was multiculturalisme een ideaal, nu is het een heel vervelend politiek dogma geworden. Ik vind gewoon dat mensen die hier geïmmigreerd zijn, dat die het recht hebben te leven zoals ze willen. Dus ik vind helemaal niet dat zij zich per se naar allerlei wensen van een vermeende ‘autochtone’ bevolking moeten vormen. Dus ik ben niet meer zo’n voorstander van dat multiculturalisme. […] Dus ik zou nu niet meer zo’n plein maken.’

44 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018. For the record: Kool said she had this argument with a critic.

45 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018.

46 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018.

47 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018.

48 ‘Dat er zelfs tuinen zijn opgegeven ervoor en dat gaat heel ver. […] Dat gaat heel ver, vind ik. Ik vind dat nogal wat. Dat is ook een vorm van machismo.’ Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018. My translation: ‘That there were even gardens which had to be let go of and that goes very far. […] That goes very far, in my opinion. I think that's quite something. That is also a form of machismo.’

49 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018.

50 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018.


52 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018.

The performers featured in her delegated performances are often actors or individuals with an affinity for performance, dancers for example. The dancers in Celebration were adolescent amateurs with an interest in dance, who had created the choreography together with Kool and rehearsed the routine intensively with the artist. Kool says she approached the dancers as performers. The artist had wanted to work with young men from the neighborhood, asking them if they would be interested in making a videoclip with her. It turned out to be difficult to find dancers from the neighborhood who were interested in dancing for a videoclip. In the end, none of the dancers were actually from the Rivierenwijk, but most were from surrounding neighborhoods and nearby towns like Nieuwegein. Five of the eleven dancers were members of the neighborhood youth center Aoxomoxoa, where they had already practiced dancing together on a weekly basis. The fact that Kool did not recruit professional dancers might suggest that she wanted to show what the dance historian Ramsay Burt has called the ‘singular virtuosities’ of the amateur dancers, their individuality, which was actually noted by a critic: ‘Every dancer is part of a whole but also maintains his own personal style.’

Kool also commissioned a disk jockey from Utrecht, Arjen de Vreede (then known for having been the DJ of Urban Dance Squad, under the name DJ DNA), and a rapper, Fabian Schlosser, who was part of the hip-hop group called Braineaters (based in Utrecht) at the time. Both De Vreede and Schlosser play a small part in the video-clip, separated from the others in a truck filled with technical equipment (fig. 19).

It was important for Kool that it was a collaborative project. This is perhaps evident from the rap-song, part of which reflects on the collaboration (my translation on the right):

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54 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018. My translation of the following statement: ‘een gebeurtenis die wordt uitgevoerd door geïnstrueerden in een gegeven kunstcontext.’

55 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018.

56 Burt, 2017. p. 60.

57 Schwartz, 1994[b]. My translation of the following text: ‘Iedere danser is deel van het totaal maar behoudt ook zijn eigen, persoonlijke stijl.’

58 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018.

59 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018.
Kool claims she was not that familiar with hip-hop dancing but together with the young men she created a choreography over a number of weeks. The artist had shown them the title sequence of Spike Lee’s *Do the Right Thing* (1989) - in which Rosie Perez dances to the socially conscious rap-song ‘Fight the Power’ (1989) by Public Enemy - to give the dancers an idea of what she had in mind. De Vreede created the soundtrack, listening to the suggestions of Kool, as well as the suggestions of the dancers.

The soundtrack starts with what sounds like Arabic music, wind-instruments (possibly a *mizmar*) and drums. Kool believes the soundtrack was given this intro in relation to the context in which the performance would be staged and filmed, likely referring to the ‘carpet’ of Van Houwelingen, though possibly also to the high number of Moroccan-Dutch and Turkish-Dutch residents of the neighborhood. The soundtrack was not the only part of the performance which was supposed to relate to the neighborhood, even the choice for hip-hop was probably not insignificant in this respect.

**Hip-Hop: A Movement**

Hip-hop can be seen as more than just a subculture, it is often called a social- and sometimes a political- movement. As already mentioned, the phenomenon started in the Bronx in the 1970s. Specifically in the South Bronx, where the main pillars on which hip-hop once stood - dj-ing, breakdancing, rap and graffiti - became popular ways for the predominantly African-American youth to express themselves. Today hip-hop is, of course, known also for its particular fashion style, language, attitude and, by some at least, for its social-consciousness.

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60 Rap-song written by Fabian Schlosser for *Celebration* (1994). See Appendix 1 for the full text.
61 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018.
62 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018.
In music, hip-hop is usually classified under ‘Black music’. Not only did the genre develop in a predominantly African-American community, it has also been influenced by and is related to other genres in this category (such as, jazz, soul and funk) showing, in the words of Mir Wermuth, ‘typically Black musical characteristics such as repetition, polyrhythmic layering, question- and answer-games, creating breakpoints and “versioning”.’ Most important, perhaps, for this categorization is the fact that it is seen as Black music by artists and fans of the genre, as well as by the popular media and the music industry, according to Wermuth, who studied the popularization of hip-hop in the Netherlands.

Rapping, or MC-ing, has become the most celebrated element of hip-hop culture overall, perhaps together with deejaying. As just one of the elements of hip-hop, however, not every rap-song can be classified as hip-hop and there have been many discussions over what makes a rap-song hip-hop. Wermuth suggests that a rap-song can be seen as hip-hop when it also shows other elements of the culture: the unmistakable presence of a dj, for example, but also style-elements (e.g. particular hair- and fashion-styles). When a rap-song is aimed at popular appeal and commercial success it is generally regarded as pop rather than hip-hop. Interestingly, ethnicity sometimes seems to be seen as a factor in this divide between mainstream and hip-hop, as will be discussed later.

The social-consciousness of hip-hop can be heard in early rap-songs like “The Message” (1982), in which Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five rap about growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods: ‘You’ll grow in the ghetto living second-rate / And your eyes will sing a song called deep hate.’ In 2002 Wermuth suggested that socially aware and political rap-songs were particularly popular in the late eighties and early nineties, as exemplified, in her eyes, by the success of Public Enemy in this period. Well-known examples of socially aware and often explicitly political rap-songs from the late eighties and early nineties include: “Fuck tha Police” (1988) by N.W.A, the aforementioned “Fight the Power” and “By the Time I Get to

70 See, for example: Shaw, 2013.
75 Wermuth, 2002. p. 64. It should be mentioned that explicitly political rap songs have again become very popular more recently.
Arizona” (1991) by Public Enemy, “Changes” (1992) by 2Pac (a big hit in the Netherlands when it was released posthumously in 1998) and “Sound of da Police” (1993) by KRS-One. These songs (and many others) addressed numerous problems faced by the African-American community, particularly police brutality and the way the “war on drugs” targeted the Black (and Latino) youth.\(^{76}\)

At first, rappers in the Netherlands mostly imitated American examples. Not only did Dutch groups rap in English - the first Dutch-language rap-album (Osdorp Posse’s *Osdorp Stijl*) was not released until 1992 - but the themes of their texts were often the same as well, which regularly lead to criticism.\(^{77}\) When the Dutch critic Bernard Hulsman saw the performance of Osdorp Posse at the Noorderslag-festival, he commented that the group consisted of ‘four White Amsterdammers who pretend that Osdorp is the Bronx.’\(^{78}\) He was not the only one who seemed doubtful of the authenticity of Dutch rap-music, in 1994 Hester Carvalho, another critic, asked:

> In a country without ghettos, where it is not just the law of the strongest which applies, where weapon possession, gang-battles, drive-by shootings and drug wars are still a rarity - does a rapper, Black or White, have enough subject-matter for his texts in such a situation, or does he, by force of circumstance, lapse into an imitation of American examples?\(^{79}\)

What the comments of these two critics show is that one’s background and ethnicity are not unimportant to hip-hop, as both do not fail to mention skin-color in their criticism of Dutch rap-artists. According to Wermuth: ‘ethnicity is an issue that defines hip-hop to a large extent.’\(^{80}\) This can be seen in, for example, the texts of hip-hop songs, in the subcultures that form around hip-hop, in the discussions about hip-hop in the media and in the way hip-hop is marketed.

**Hip-Hop: Ethnicity & Appropriation**

In 2014 a Twitter feud erupted after a interview with Azealia Banks on a New York radio show. During the interview the American rap-artist was asked about the conflict between her and the Australian rap-artist Iggy Azalea.\(^{81}\) This conflict is often seen to have started in 2011, with the release of Azalea’s music-video of the song ‘D.R.U.G.S.’, in which Azalea, who is White, calls

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\(^{77}\) De Vries, 1992. Carvalho, 1994

\(^{78}\) Hulsman, 1993. My translation of the following text (in italics): ‘Osdorp Posse, bestaande uit vier blanke Amsterdammers die doen alsof Osdorp de Bronx is.’

\(^{79}\) Carvalho, 1994. My translation of the following text: ‘In een land zonder getto's, waar niet slechts het recht van de sterkste geldt, waar wapenbezit, benden-strijd, drive by shootings en drugsoorlogen nog altijd een bijzonderheid zijn - heeft een rapper, zwart of blank, in zo'n situatie wel genoeg stof voor zijn teksten, of vervalt hij noodgedwongen in een nabootsing van de Amerikaanse voorbeelden?’

\(^{80}\) Wermuth, 2002. p. 211. My translation of the following text: ‘Etniciteit is een issue dat hiphop in hoge mate definieert.’

\(^{81}\) Chang, 2014. See also: Banks, 2014.
herself a ‘runaway slave…master.’ This angered Banks and many others, as did Azalea’s accent during her acts: an accent many recognized as African American English (or AAE) and an accent which she did not have during interviews (in which her accent was Australian). When protests erupted after the police officer who killed Eric Garner in a chokehold was not indicted, Banks called out Azalea on Twitter: ‘It’s funny to see people like Igloo Australia silent when these things happen… Black culture is cool, but Black issues sure aren’t huh?’ In the interview by Ebro Darden, Peter Rosenberg and Laura Stylez, Banks clarified her stance on Azalea. What seemed to bother her most was that White rap-artists like Azalea and Macklemore were receiving so many prizes in the hip-hop category, while the work of many Black artists did not seem to be valued as highly, or not at all:

when they give those awards out, because the Grammys used to be accolades for artistic excellence, […] all it says to White kids is like: “oh you’re great, you’re amazing, you can do whatever you put your mind to. And it says to Black kids: you don’t have shit, you don’t own shit, not even the shit you created for yourself.” And it makes me upset.

The point Banks seemed to make was not that White people should not rap but that, just like in the past, the music industry appears to favor White artists who appropriate Black culture and Black music to Black artists. Darden, one of the interviewers, suggests that this happens mostly for commercial reasons - a White audience finds it easier to identify with White artists - to which Banks replies: ‘That’s fine, put her in the pop-category, put her with Katy Perry, put her and Miley Cyrus in the same fucking box together. Don’t put her in hip-hop.’

The discussion over the appropriation of hip-hop is not new, at least not in the United States. Jeff Chang points out in The Guardian that the dispute already started in the 1980s and it was a discussion not just between Black and White fans and artists, but also between Latino, Asian and Native American fans and artists. Banks points to some of the most commonly held frustrations of those involved in the hip-hop community: the ignorance shown by some who associate themselves with hip-hop and misuse it to the point of caricaturing the subculture which many associate with African-American culture more generally; and the way the culture industry exploits the ‘cool’ image of hip-hop and appears to at times whitewash the genre.

83 Guo, 2016.
84 Banks as quoted in: Jinks, 2014.
85 Banks, 2014.
86 Banks, 2014. It should perhaps be pointed out that Miley Cyrus has been denounced for appropriating Black culture and Katy Perry has also been accused of cultural appropriation.
87 Chang, 2014.
In a way Iggy Azalea might be seen to be (at least) twice removed from hip-hop: she is not Black and she is not American. Her use of AAE has been seen as a misguided way of compensating for her position as a White foreigner. From the start Dutch hip-hop artists have run into similar issues, Wermuth suggests that Dutch hip-hop is ‘by definition imitation’ and ‘inauthentic.’ This is perhaps one of the reasons why Dutch rap-songs are usually classified under ‘nederhop’, often considered a genre of its own with its own vernacular which borrows words and accents from local dialects, American English, Papiamento and other languages.

Ethnicity certainly plays a role in Dutch hip-hop as well. According to Wermuth, the first fans of hip-hop in the Netherlands were mostly of African-Caribbean and African descent. Her research showed that for Black fans in the Netherlands hip-hop was a way of expressing their ethnic identity. This of course also counts for Black artists who, Wermuth writes, feel connected to African-Americans because of their history:

Black hip-hoppers also articulate their ethnicity in relation to America, not only the cradle of hip-hop, but also because of the historical triangular relationship that exists between Africa, the Caribbean and America, and Europe [...]. America is inextricably linked to Black artists and part of their ethnic experience. That is why they can more easily call hip-hop ‘theirs’ than White artists.

Of course there are also contemporary issues faced by African-Americans to which Black fans and artists in the Netherlands can relate, such as (institutional) racism. Wermuth’s research shows that both White fans and White artists in the Netherlands often feel that they have to prove themselves in order to become a part of the culture, by for example showing their knowledge of the history of hip-hop. Sometimes White rappers felt they were brushed aside by

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89 Guo, 2016.
90 Wermuth, 2002. p. 76.
91 Wermuth, 2002. p. 76.
certain media platforms. At the same time, some Black artists also felt that the music industry was not interested in what they had to say about issues such as discrimination.

In the Netherlands and the rest of Europe hip-hop also became particularly popular among young people who were not recognized as Black or White. In 1997 the Dutch newspaper De Volkskrant published a series on ‘immigrant children, hip-hop and hate,’ starting every episode with the statement: ‘Hip-hop has conquered allochtoon Europe.’ It should perhaps be mentioned here that according to Wermuth most Dutch hip-hop artists disapproved of the term ‘allochtoon’, finding it derogatory. The journalists of De Volkskrant, Toine Heijmans and Fred de Vries, wrote about how the Turkish-German youth of Kreuzberg (Berlin), the Pakistani-English youth of London and the Moroccan-Dutch youth of Rotterdam embraced hip-hop as a way of expressing their identities and often to show their opposition to both the dominant White culture and the culture of their parents. It will come as no surprise that the rappers interviewed by Heijmans and De Vries can also relate to the racism addressed in American hip-hop songs. Inspired by American rap-songs, Dutch rappers of all backgrounds also address socio-political issues in their songs. Wermuth lists a number of issues Dutch rappers commonly refer to: ‘racism, employment, education, and the unequal distribution of wealth.’

As the performance of Celebration included several key hip-hop elements - namely breakdancing (and other dance styles related to hip-hop), rapping and deejaying - it certainly looks like a hip-hop act. Considering the context of the Amerhof in Utrecht, with Van Houwelingen’s ‘carpet’ and the diverse neighborhood, Kool’s choice for a hip-hop performance does not seem coincidental. In view of the social-tensions that were said to be emerging in the Rivierenwijk, it is interesting that the artist mentions Spike Lee’s Do the Right Thing (1989) as one of the sources of inspiration, as it is a film which is focussed on racial tensions in a neighborhood in Brooklyn. The rap-song of the title sequence which Kool showed the dancers -

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99 See, for example: De Vries, 1992.
100 Wermuth, 2002. p. 78.
Public Enemy’s “Fight the Power” - not only sets the tone for Lee's film, but is repeated throughout Do the Right Thing. The song, which was commissioned for the film, is played on repeat on a boombox by the character Radio Raheem, who carries the boombox around everywhere he goes and refuses to stop the music in the pizza parlor of the Italian-American Sal. A verbal fight erupts on the tune of the song, then Sal violently smashes the boombox with a baseball bat and a fist-fight ensues. In the end, police-intervention leads to the death of Radio Raheem, which in turn sparks an uproar in the neighborhood.107 The film addresses issues which are also pointed out in the song by Public Enemy, mostly issues related to racial inequality in the United States.108 Unlike “Fight the Power” and other socially-conscious rap-songs, the rap-song written for Celebration by Fabian Schlosser, does not address injustices of any kind. On the contrary, the text is very optimistic, many would say naively so, attempting to speak to everyone:

Je ziet deze clip en zegt: ‘wat krijgen we nou?’…
‘Voor wie is dit bedoeld?’ Dan zeg ik; ‘Voor jou!’
Of je nu blank of zwart bent of anders gekleurd,
Heb je een baan, werkloos of bent afgekeurd.
Ziek of gezond, hetero/homo/bi,
Goed gehumeurd of in een manische depressie,
Linkshandig, rechtshandig, onhandig ook,
Een kater hebt, of je rookt of niet rookt,
Gok verslaafd bent of schuld hebt staan,
Je kickboxt of staat op de tennisbaan,
Een rijbewijs hebt of o.v.-jaarkaart,
Glad geschoren bent of behaard.
Arm of rijk, jong of oud, man of vrouw,
Hoe dan ook, dan is dit voor jou!

You see this clip and say: ‘what the hell?’
‘Who is this intended for?’ Then I say: ‘For you!’
Whether you are white or black or of another color,
If you have a job, are unemployed or rejected,
Sick or healthy, hetero/homo/bi,
Good-humored or in a manic depression,
Left-handed, right-handed, unhandy too,
Have a hangover; whether you smoke or not,
Addicted to gambling or are in debt,
You kickbox or are on the tennis court,
Have a driving license or a public transport card,
Are smooth shaven or hairy,
Rich or poor, young or old, male or female,
Anyway, this is for you!

While “Fight the Power” has been described as a ‘call to arms,’110 the rap-song of Celebration is - unsurprisingly - celebratory, in the spirit of Van Houwelingen’s ‘carpet’, which in the words of Pontzen was ‘supposed to promote fraternization in the district.’111 Kool only showed the title sequence to the dancers, however, so it is unlikely that Public Enemy’s “Fight the Power” served as inspiration for Schlosser’s rap-song. If one were to place this rap-song it would likely be placed in the sub-genre of party rap, a genre which sometimes appears to be called ‘old school’, probably because it is associated with, and was most popular in, the early years of hip-

107 Do the Right Thing, 1989.
109 Rap-song written by Fabian Schlosser for Celebration (1994). See Appendix 1 for the full text.
The songs which fall into the category of ‘party rap’ are described by Wermuth as being ‘cheerful’, ‘melodious’ and easy to dance to.

It might be problematic to some that *Celebration* placed hip-hop in an art context, perhaps neutralizing its more radical aspects in a way that is comparable to placing graffiti in an art gallery. Despite its celebratory nature and perhaps because of it, the performance was not altogether apolitical, however, as the lyrics suggest and will be elaborated upon further. Additionally, the performance was in many ways quite literally meant as a celebration for the neighborhood, not just as a ‘theatre-production’ for the festival. Some might also find that Kool’s use of hip-hop is problematic, that she too is appropriating a culture that she is distanced from in several ways being White, Dutch and from another generation. It should be stressed, however, that *Celebration* was a collaborative project involving a very diverse group of people, who all play a part in the performance and are credited for their contribution in the credits of the video clip. In one key aspect the performance is not so heterogenous, however: apart from Kool herself, all of the people she involved are men.

**Hip-hop: Masculinity & Gangsta Rap**

Certainly in the 1990s the majority of fans of hip-hop and the majority of artists in the genre were male, also in the Netherlands. It is often considered to be a misogynist genre due, in part, to the lyrics of rap-songs in which women are often referred to with terms such as ‘bitches’ and ‘hoes’, and the accompanying music-videos in which women are frequently scantily dressed and over-sexualized. The way hip-hop is portrayed by artists of the genre as well as by critics, has been interpreted as ‘a deliberate ploy to keep women off the turf.’ For a long time the music of female rappers was considered more pop than hip-hop, especially by ‘hardcore’ fans. This is, in part, attributable to the way rock music has come to be constructed and framed. Women are not the only ones who are often seen to be kept off the proverbial turf, especially with the rise of gangsta rap which is frequently perceived to position itself in opposition to: ‘gay men and women, white middle-class morality, middle-class African Americans, inauthentic rappers posing as hardcore, and other “fake ass niggas”.’

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114 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018. Also suggested by Nina Folkersma, see: Folkersma, 1996. p. 40.
115 Wermuth, 2002. p. 73.
The rise of gangsta rap is often attributed to the influence of the hip-hop group N.W.A. whose rap-album *Straight Outta Compton* (1988) ‘flipped hip-hop on its head,’ according to Miles White. The album was laced with profanity and described a violent world filled with street gangs, gunplay, drug trafficking and police brutality - it quickly became immensely popular and set a trend (followed in the Netherlands by Osdorp Posse, for example). Not only did songs about violence become increasingly common and popular, many rappers also started to boast about crimes and violence they (supposedly) witnessed or even committed themselves, providing them with respect, or ‘street credibility.’ Though for some these stories were probably part of the performance, there certainly are successful rappers who have been associated with real crimes and violence, such as Snoop Dogg (who is believed to have been a member of the Rollin 20’s Crips gang and was suspected of being involved in a murder in 1993), Flavor Flav (who was arrested for shooting at his neighbor in 1993) and Tupac ‘2Pac’ Shakur (who was charged with sexual abuse in 1993 and was killed in a drive-by shooting in 1996). The crimes in which Snoop Dogg, Flavor Flav and 2Pac were believed to have been involved were also covered by Dutch newspapers in 1993.

The amount of media-coverage the alleged crimes received was seen by hip-hop fans to ‘reek of racism.’ As the rap artists Snoop Dogg and 2Pac, who were frequently reported on in the Dutch media in 1993, were not even that well known for their music in the Netherlands at this time, according to Wermuth, she too finds the extensive media-coverage rather suspicious. Focussing on the coverage of Snoop Dogg in particular, Wermuth suspects that: ‘The moral panic is not really about Snoop and maybe not even about gangsta rap, but about the fact that it concerns a Black subculture.’ Wermuth’s research, furthermore, showed that Dutch newspapers often (implicitly) related gangsta rap directly to actual gangs and criminality, stigmatizing hip-hop in the process. The connection between rap-music and criminality was also made the other way round.

121 White, 2011. p. 64.
Discussing the riots of the early 1990s in the French banlieues, Heijmans and De Vries, suggested that hip-hop played an incendiary role and affirmed that hip-hop- and rap-music had actually been banned from libraries in cities where the right-wing Front National party had gained the majority vote. An article in De Haagse Courant which discussed the emergence of youth-gangs in The Hague, stated the following: ‘Inspired by racist rap music, which unabashedly encourages all forms of violence against White people, more and more allochtone youths are joining tightly organized gangs.’ Statements such as these, which were also recognized as fear-mongering at the time, reveal the underlying racism. De Haagse Courant was not the only newspaper to mention the popularity of rap-music amongst gang-members, however, and not the only paper to explicitly mention the ethnic backgrounds of the youth involved. Interestingly, many of these articles also mention the clothing worn by gang-members: ‘lumberjack shirts, sneakers, baseballcaps and blue or red bandanas.’ Especially bandanas are considered to be items of significance in the context of street gangs, the color is seen to signify which gang the wearer belongs to, and the way the bandana is worn is also supposed to be meaningful.

The clothing which newspaper articles tie to gang-culture, however, is also fashionable among hip-hop fans, as well as among hip-hop artists - 2Pac was known for wearing bandanas, for example. While some fans (and perhaps artists) might have worn particular items - like bandanas - to deliberately unnerve outsiders, for most, fashion choices were purely aesthetic, according to Wermuth. One dancer in Celebration also wears a red bandana (like the ones worn by members of the famous Bloods-gang in Los Angeles, a gang which found young followers in The Hague). It is unclear whether the dancer wore this item because he (or Kool) simply associated it with hip-hop or because he (or Kool) wanted to evoke associations with gang-culture (fig. 20). The bandana is not the only element in the videoclip which might evoke such associations. One article in the NRC Handelsblad also mentions that gangs have a particular sign-language. At the start of the video clip of Celebration the dancers also use sign-language to spell out C-E-L-E-B-R-A-T-I-O-N (fig. 20-24). As the hand gestures of the

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131 Heijmans & De Vries, 1997[b].
132 As quoted in: Van Deurzen, 1994. My translation of the following text: ‘Geïnspireerd door racistische rapmuziek, die onverbloemd aanzet tot alle vormen van geweld tegen blanken, zoeken steeds meer allochtone jongeren aansluiting bij hecht gestructureerde bendes.’
133 See: Van Deurzen, 1994.
138 For more on the Bloods and the Crips in The Hague, see: Donker, 1994.
139 Donker, 1994.
dancers comply with the Dutch finger alphabet, these ‘dance moves’ might actually be part of Celebration’s inclusive message.

The popularity of gangsta rap among White young men is often noted. According to Wermuth, White adolescents were drawn to the subgenre because for them it was ‘a powerful channel through which to articulate oppositional norms and values in relation to the surrounding parent-culture,’ a fascination which the music industry is often seen to have used commercially. In an American documentary exploring the attraction of White youth to the genre of hip-hop, Blacking Up: Hip-Hop’s Remix of Race and Identity (2010), John Leland suggests that men in particular are also pulled toward something else: ‘I think people are looking for this license to be masculine. And I think that’s what a lot of people find in hip-hop, there’s a license to be as macho as you want.’ This argument has also been made by Miles White, according to whom ‘hardcore styles of rap,’ of which gangsta rap is probably the best known variant but which also includes the work of Public Enemy, transformed ‘youth perceptions of masculinity and social behavior on the street.’

White has shown how performances of gangsta rap and other variations of hardcore hip-hop, construct an image of masculinity through facial expressions (unemotional), movement (swaggering), posture (assertive), ‘ritualized aggression’ (rap and dance battles) and objectifying the male body (using fashion, adornments and nudity). Because the masculinity represented by gangsta rap is associated with the Black male body, this has led to a paradoxical situation. While on the one hand, White argues, groups like N.W.A. challenged ‘the historical policing and containment of Black male bodies,’ and their performance can thus be seen as subversive, these hip-hop groups also ‘confirmed historical fears of Black males’ - fears which the media preyed on. Wermuth points out that while White hip-hop fans in the Netherlands also complained about the negative ways in which hip-hop was framed in the media, Black fans were actually affected by these representations outside the context of hip-hop.

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142 See, for example: Should White People Rap?, 2015.


144 White, 2011. p. 69.


146 White, 2011. p. 68.

147 White, 2011. See, for example: pp. 25-26 and 68.


showing how certain portrayals of hip-hop may contribute to negative racist stereotypes.\footnote{Wermuth, 2002. p. 218.} This too makes the appropriation of hip-hop by White youth problematic, as Miles White explains, for when White men copy the styles and mannerisms of hip-hop performances, particularly of hardcore styles, ‘the physical power, sexuality, and ability to inspire fear that Black male bodies have historically conveyed become transferred onto White bodies in ways that usurp agency of the Black body, exploits it as a site of social anxiety, and perpetuates its demonization.’\footnote{Schwartz, 1994[a].}

**A Celebration in the Rivierenwijk**

The Rivierenwijk of Utrecht was seen as a problematic neighborhood, in *De Volkskrant* it was called ‘one of Utrecht’s most criminal neighborhoods.’\footnote{White, 2011. p. 105.} Articles about the Rivierenwijk often mention criminality and vandalism.\footnote{Heezen suggests that Van Houwelingen’s square was also designed with these issues in mind, she writes that the artist ‘took into account social concerns such as cultural integration, social control, and vandalism.’\footnote{Schwartz, 1994[a].} According to Kool, boys and young men bore the brunt of the negativity that was expressed about the Rivierenwijk: ‘everything that boys did was bad.’\footnote{See, for example: Siddiqui, 1991. Schwartz, 1994[a]. “Ontwerp architect Adams,” 1995. Heezen, 1998[b]. Geijssen, 2015.} She criticizes the way the media referred (and still refers) to youth in public spaces as ‘hangjongeren’ or ‘hangjeugd’ (‘youth who laze about or loiter’): ‘pure projection […] a couple of boys between 14 and 18 on a street corner, who says that is not productive? That is the eye of an outsider. But people find it threatening.’\footnote{Heezen, 1998[b]. n.p. My translation of the following text (in italics): ‘hij hield rekening met maatschappelijke vraagstukken, zoals culturele integratie, sociale controle, en vandalisme.’} The artist mentions that this was especially the case when the youth in question was not White and that boys of Moroccan descent in particular were scapegoated, both locally and nationally.\footnote{Van de Roer, 1992. A selection of newspaper articles of the early 1990s discussing youth-criminality in connection to youth of Moroccan descent: “Harde aanpak,” 1992. “Marokkaanse jeugd,” 1992. “Marokkaanse gemeenschap,” 1993. “Marokkaanse jongeren klagen,” 1995.} The latter is also suggested by newspaper articles of the early 1990s, the criminologist and cultural anthropologist Frank Bovenkerk even spoke of a “‘moral panic” about the criminality of Moroccan youth.’\footnote{Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018. My translation of the following statement: ‘Alles wat jongens deden was slecht.’} Such fears of non-White youth can manifest themselves in public spaces, as Kool too seems to suggest when she states that ‘hangjongeren’ are deemed threatening. In 1997, for instance, the rapper E-life (who is of African descent), explained how in the Netherlands the police frequently asked to see his papers and women often held their bags
tightly as he passed them, noting how ‘apparently they want us Black people to behave in a certain way.’

Kool has stated that *Celebration* was a response to the official opening of *Het tapijt*, as well as a response to burning issues in the media and in youth culture, especially the new ways in which masculinity was manifesting itself in the public domain due to the influence of hip-hop on young men of all backgrounds. The artist has said that the performance was made to be ‘explicitly positive’ in this respect. It is clear from the video clip that Kool wanted to show how dance brought the young male dancers (and young boys in the audience) together. The video starts with the young men greeting each other with handshakes and high-fives (fig. 25-26) and ends in a similar manner with handshakes and ‘bro hugs’ (fig. 27-28). The choreography includes a dance battle in which the dancers show off their individual skills while the rest of the crew cheers them on, the mood seems friendly rather than actually competitive (fig. 29-30). Throughout the video clip recordings are shown of young audience members - all boys - showing their dance moves, seemingly showing the influence the performance had on them (fig. 31-32). When girls are shown in the video, they are notably not dancing. Not only had Kool asked them not to dance (which lead to some consternation according to Kool), but the editing seems to have been careful in this regard: this performance was to be about the ways in which masculinity was expressed in hip-hop and its influence on youth culture.

*Celebration* constructs an image of masculinity which is very different from the image constructed in performances of gangsta rap and other hardcore hip-hop styles: the dancers seem cheery, they smile and give the impression that you would be welcome to join in on the fun - as their young ‘fans’ do. In this way it might be argued that *Celebration* showed another side of hip-hop, one which was not shown in the media as often, as the media usually drew attention to aspects which perpetuated negative (racial) stereotypes and fears - fears which also seem to have contributed to the tensions in the neighborhood. At the same time it might also be argued that the performance undermined the subversiveness of the hip-hop performances which were so popular in the 1990s - the way these ‘hardcore’ performances challenged the behavior that was expected of the non-White male body in public spaces. *Celebration* was, furthermore, meant for a theatre festival and can be seen to sublimate hip-hop in ways which might be considered patronizing. There are many other reasons why *Celebration* could have been made more lighthearted and family-friendly, first and foremost: it was made, at least in part, for the community. It might be more problematic that the video-clip, in its cheerfulness and with its inclusive message, actually produces an image of community consensus. Kool’s choice to focus

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159 Heijmans & De Vries, 1997[d]. My translation of the following text: ‘Kennelijk willen ze dat wij zwarten ons op een bepaalde manier gedragen.’

160 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018.

161 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018.

162 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June. 2018.
entirely on young men - the social group which, she suggests, was deemed most problematic in the neighborhood - and a subculture which also received quite some negative attention at the time, is not entirely unambiguous in this regard, however, and neither are her choices in relation to the style, choreography and staging seen in the video clip.

As mentioned before, what concerned Kool was the new ‘manifestations of masculinity in the public domain,’ especially the influence hip-hop had on these manifestations. Though she certainly recognizes that ethnicity plays a role in the manifestations of masculinity, she has questioned what she can say about such complexities: ‘Who am I to say anything about that?’ She has later added that for her Celebration was more about ‘the difference between addressing or the manifestation of cultural identity and being able to identify yourself, recognizing yourself in something or someone or a group of people or ideas.’ This suggests that Kool wished to draw attention to the conflict between representation and identification, or rather, to what Silvija Jestrović has called the ‘tensions between presence and representation.’

The video clip of Celebration does not hide that it shows a well-rehearsed performance that has been carefully staged: Kool is shown giving instructions, the camera crew appears repeatedly and the scaffolding used for the aerial shots is consistently in the frame (fig. 33-36). Kool and the rest of the film crew were very much part of the performance, also on the day itself, she has stated that it ‘was a public performance with more cameras than we were actually rolling and with more technical equipment than we were actually using. […] we all walked around with headsets and headphones some of which did not even work!’ The important role played by the apparatus surrounding the production and the members of the crew does not seem to have gone unnoticed by critics. The first thing that Robert Steijn reports on is the presence of: ‘cameramen, a large construction pier, sound boxes and a truck full of technical equipment.’ According to Nina Folkersma, the performance was ‘a reflection on the role of the media and the influence it has on the public.’ To this I would like to add that the performance reflects

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163 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018. My translation of the following statement: ‘Het gaat over manifestaties van mannelijkheid in het publieke domein.’

164 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018. My translation of the following statement: ‘Wie ben ik om daar iets over te zeggen?’

165 Renée Kool, e-mail to author, 19 June, 2018. My translation of: ‘Het verschil tussen het adresseren/manifesteren van culturele identiteit en het jezelf kunnen identificeren, jezelf herkennen in iets of iemand van een groep mensen of gedachtengoed.’


167 Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June 2018. My translation of the following statement: ‘dat was een publieke performance met meer camera’s dan we in werkelijkheid draaiden en met meer techniek dan in werkelijkheid werd gebruikt. […] we liepen allemaal met headsetjes, met hoofdtelefoons, nou die deden het niet allemaal!’


169 Folkersma, 1996. p. 41. My translation of the following text: ‘een reflectie op de rol van de media en de invloed die deze hebben op het publiek.’
upon the role the media plays in constructing identities and roles to emulate. It is telling, in this regard, that the members of the film crew shown in the video clip are all White and part of a different generation than the young dancers (which might not have been a conscious choice).

While Claire Bishop discusses filmed delegated performances for which ‘participants are asked to perform themselves,’ \(^{170}\) and which are often filmed precisely because they capture ‘situations that are too difficult or sensitive to be repeated,’ \(^{171}\) Kool notably approached the dancers in *Celebration* as performers, as actors for a *rehearsed* performance in which they play a role. This is not to say that the performers were not supposed to *represent* a specific group of people - namely local adolescent men inspired by hip-hop. Though the dancers were not actually from the Rivierenwijk (as Kool had hoped, at first), they were notably recognized as local residents by some critics, supporting the argument that the dancers were also meant to ‘perform an aspect of their identities.’ \(^{172}\) At the same time the clip makes clear that the performances of these ‘roles’ were carefully rehearsed and edited. This is also emphasized by the other parts of *Celebration*: the live performances with the excessive presence of equipment and crew-members, and the radio-impressions of the preparations. To me it appears that the artist foregrounded the staging of the performance precisely to show the instability and inauthenticity of ‘identities’, to accentuate the way they are constructed and framed, while also showing the importance of having a construction to identify with.

In many ways, *Celebration* exemplifies the ‘light and playful tone’ \(^{173}\) of delegated performances. A tone which Bishop contrasts with ‘the more earnest forms of identitarian politics that were so crucial to American art of the 1980s’ \(^{174}\) and, one might add, to shows such as the 1993 Whitney Biennial (see: The Body Exposed). This divergence might reflect a more general difference in mood between Europe and the United States. Cultural appropriation does not seem to have been a much discussed issue in the Netherlands at the time. Both Van Houwelingen and Kool chose to borrow elements from cultures which were foreign to them in their attempts to appeal to and bring together the diverse community of the Rivierenwijk (notably both artists did so in collaboration with others). Van Houwelingen chose to make an enormous ‘Persian carpet’ because this item could be found in almost all Dutch households, in the homes of immigrants, as well as in the homes of residents with right-wing sentiments - it was an item which was fully ‘integrated into Dutch society.’ \(^{175}\) Kool chose to refer to hip-hop

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\(^{170}\) Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 98.

\(^{171}\) Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 98.

\(^{172}\) Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 92. Critics like Domeniek Ruyters stressed that the dancers were from the neighborhood. See: Ruyters [1996], 2016. p. 78.

\(^{173}\) Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 92.

\(^{174}\) Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 92.

\(^{175}\) Van Houwelingen in: Van Muiswinkel, 2015. My translation of the following statement (in italics): ‘een cultuurogoed dat *in de Nederlandse samenleving is geïntegreerd,*’
culture, a youth subculture which on the one hand was very popular under male adolescents of 
all backgrounds and on the other hand was considered dangerous and aggressive towards White 
cultural norms. Though the artist decided to make the video-clip of Celebration ‘explicitly 
positive,’ neutralizing perhaps some of hip-hop’s more subversive elements, the underlying 
tone of Celebration is decidedly different from that of Van Houwelingen’s ‘carpet’. While Het 
tapijt, in its reference to integration, might be seen to emphasize consensus, Celebration in its 
use of hip-hop (which received quite some negative attention at the time) and its focus on young 
men (a social group which, according to Kool at least, was characterized as a nuisance in the 
neighborhood) did not evade issues which were causing friction in the neighborhood and society 
more generally.

\footnote{Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018.}
Walking Monument: Fragile Structures on the Dam Square

‘Building a nation is like building castells.’1 - Castellers

On the second day of Christmas, 1995, a part of the National Monument on the Dam Square in Amsterdam (fig. 37) fell off.2 The fragment which fell down was a part of the pedestal which holds a sculpture of a mother and child (fig. 38) - which could be mistaken for a Madonna and Child - making the timing of the fall somewhat ironic.3 By January that year, temporary fences were placed around the monument to protect passersby, and newspapers reported that the monument was ‘crumbling down.’4 Only a month later scaffolding arose around the monument, which was subjected to a closer inspection.5 It was not until the 23rd of June 1997, however, that the monument was taken apart for its renovation.6

In the mean time a national debate erupted about the monument. Prominent figures in the field of culture, such as Rudi Fuchs, Jan Dibbets and Harry Mulisch (who had even posed for one of the sculptures) denounced the monument, mostly for aesthetic reasons, and argued for rigorous changes and even outright replacement.7 They were not the first to criticize the monument, which had been inaugurated on the 4th of May (the official day on which the casualties of the Second World War are remembered in the Netherlands) in 1956. With their criticism Fuchs, Dibbets and Mulish treaded in the footsteps of other established artists, like Joop Beljon, Willem Frederik Hermans and Gerard Rutten.8 Even before its placement the Centrale Commissie van Oorlogs of Vredesgedenktekens (‘Central Commission of War or Peace Memorials’) had issued a negative recommendation for the monument to the minister of Education, the Arts and Science, Theo Rutten, who would later give his rather restrained approval: ‘I believe that we will have to be content with this design now, which is apparently all the Netherlands has to offer in this area at the moment.’9 The monument would later also

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1 As quoted in: Vaczi, 2016. p. 354.
2 Van Haastrecht, 1996.
3 Ype Koopmans has stated, for example, that the sculpture of the mother and child made him think of a Madonna, especially in earlier versions of the sculpture, and J.C.H. Blom has seen the sculpture as a Christian reference, see: Koopmans, 2006. p. 263. Blom [1995], 2005. p. 207.
8 In 1954, Beljon referred to the scale model for the monument as ‘one of the greatest deceptions I ever experienced in the field of art,’ as quoted in: Koopmans, 2006. p. 267. Willem Frederik Hermans was especially critical of the text inscribed on the monument, see: Der Nederlanden & Verkerk, 1996. p. 23. For the criticism of Gerard Rutten, see: Koopmans, 2006. p. 275.
receive criticism for non-aesthetic reasons, especially for the groups it seemed to attract: dealers, junks, hippies and activists - it was deemed to be too ‘gezellig’\textsuperscript{10} (‘friendly’) for a war memorial.\textsuperscript{11}

The criticism, especially that of Fuchs and Dibbets, was met with outrage from the organizations of the Dutch wartime resistance, for whom the monument was ‘sacred’.\textsuperscript{12} Many felt the opinion of former members of the resistance and those who had lived through the war needed to be respected.\textsuperscript{13} Others argued that the monument needed to be respected for another history: that of the so-called ‘Dam-sleepers’ (‘Damslapers’), hippies who quite literally made the monument their home in the late 1960s and early 1970s and were violently driven away by marines on the 25th of August in 1970.\textsuperscript{14} Still others, found that the monument was a hallmark of the city, comparable to the Eiffel-tower in Paris;\textsuperscript{15} ‘Amsterdam will no longer be Amsterdam without that big erection,’\textsuperscript{16} a resident of the city reportedly told a journalist.

\textit{Walking Monument: A Counter-monument?}
Despite the lack of consensus, a ‘replacement’ for the National Monument did appear on the Dam Square while the monument was being renovated in Germany, it was called \textit{Walking Monument}. Due to the very temporary nature of this ‘replacement’ (it lasted for no more than a few minutes), however, it is unlikely that anyone took offense at the sight of it.\textsuperscript{17}

At around 1 in the afternoon on the 8th of September 1997 (Lilet Breddels has mentioned a specific time, 1.15 pm), a human tower arose on the Dam Square (fig. 39-40), consisting of (reportedly) 160 people standing on each other’s shoulders or, mostly, buttressing the fragile structure.\textsuperscript{18} There to see the performance were the members of the jury of the Prix de Rome and the artist had also invited residents of the area (so at least a number of people were probably

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\textsuperscript{10} Tijmen van Grootheest, director of the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts in 1996, as quoted in: Der Nederlanden & Verkerk, 1996. p. 23.
\textsuperscript{11} See, for example: Der Nederlanden & Verkerk, 1996. p. 23.
\textsuperscript{12} Brandsma, 1996. p. 2. See also, for example: Veldkamp, 1997. p. 3.
\textsuperscript{13} Brandsma, 1996. p. 2.
\textsuperscript{14} “Discussie is losgebarsten,” 1996.
\textsuperscript{15} Der Nederlanden & Verkerk, 1996. p. 23.
\textsuperscript{16} A resident of Amsterdam, as quoted in: Veldkamp, 1997. p. 3. My translation of the following text: ‘Amsterdam is Amsterdam niet meer zonder die enorme erectie.’
\textsuperscript{17} It might be interesting to note here that in a country like the Netherlands, where public art is very likely to cause vehement debates, temporary artworks, such as performances, often appeal to administrators. See: De Roos, 2017.
aware that something was about to happen). The artist, Alicia Framis (b. 1967, Barcelona), would later win the Prix de Rome for what was seen there on the Dam Square that day. To name this performance a ‘monument’ will seem laughable to many: it was fragile, momentary, light-hearted and what did it even commemorate? It is, in part, for these reasons that some might say that it has the characteristics of a counter-monument.

The term ‘counter-monument’ is often attributed to James E. Young and seems to have originated from the German term ‘Gegendenkmal’, first used in 1982. Young started to use the term in the early 1990s in his discussion of recent trends in German monumental art. In a country with a history as troubling as that of Germany, remembrance of the Second World War is likely to take a different form than in countries which were occupied during the war, such as the Netherlands. According to Young, contemporary artists in Germany, painfully aware of the atrocities their country had committed in the past, wanted to challenge the traditional monument, which in their eyes ‘seal[ed] memory off from awareness altogether.’

Young referred, for example, to the Harburg Monument against Fascism (fig. 41), designed by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz. The two artists felt that many of the characteristics of traditional monuments - didacticism, the passive role allocated to viewers, the appropriation of past events - could actually be related to manifestations of fascism, and designed an obelisk-like monument on which viewers could write their names ‘as a pledge to vigilance against fascism.’ Their monument would not endure: it would descend into the ground in stages with the appearance of signatures. The location of the Harburg Monument against Fascism also contrasts that of traditional monuments, it was placed in the commercial area of a ‘dingy suburb of Hamburg.’ Based on this monument, Young lists a number of characteristics of the counter-monument:

- its aim is not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand

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23 Young, 1992. p. 274.


26 Young, 1992. p. 274.
interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own violation and desecration; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town’s feet.27

Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck and Ruth Fazakerley have since named a few other notable features of the counter-monument, such as a tendency to: ‘recognize darker events,’28 to remind people of the dangers of certain ideologies or to recognize those who are often left out of dominant narratives.29 They identify two types of counter-monuments: the anti-monumental kind, which challenges the characteristics of traditional monuments, and the dialogic monument, which challenges ‘a specific existing monument and the values it represents.’30 At first sight, Walking Monument might appear to fall into both categories - one does not rule out the other. It might be considered ‘anti-monumental’ for the qualities already mentioned: fragility, momentariness and light-heartedness. Walking Monument can also be considered dialogic, however: not only was the performance site- and context-specific as it was meant ‘as a replacement for the National Monument,’31 it also appears to echo a number of elements from the original monument - its vertical ‘phallic’ shape, for example, and the way it is topped off by the figure of a child - making the coupling quite apparent. Does Walking Monument challenge the original monument, however?

It should, perhaps, first be noted that the National Monument itself does not conform to all the characteristics ascribed to traditional monuments, this was part of the reason why it was a controversial monument in the first place. In a critical column J. L. Heldring pointed out one of the monuments main ‘shortcomings’: ‘A national monument should, naturally, defy the ages, because it is meant to symbolize the eternal values of the nation. But after forty years, our national monument on the Dam Square already appears to have been affected by the test of time.’32 The cause for the ‘crumbling’ of the monument was the porosity of the stone the designers of the monument, John Rädecker (a sculptor) and J.J.P. Oud (an architect), had chosen - Italian travertine - a type of stone which is deemed unsuitable for the Dutch climate.33 According to the journalist Ruud van Haastrecht, Rädecker and Oud had selected this type of stone precisely to break with monumental traditions, its light color was seen as ‘cheerful.’34

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28 Stevens et al., 2012. p. 955.
30 Stevens et al., 2012. p. 951.
32 Heldring, 1996. p. 11. My translation of the following text: ‘Een nationaal monument behoort natuurlijk de eeuwen te trotseren, want het is bedoeld de eeuwige waarden van de natie te symboliseren. Maar na veertig jaar blijkt ons nationaal monument op de Amsterdamse Dam al door de tand des tijds aangetast te zijn.’
34 Van Haastrecht, 1996.
Both Rädecker and Oud must have been aware of the risks involved in using travertine. The sculptor had at least been warned by the stonemason Van Tetterode, whose son recalled (in 1996) that Rädecker had declared that he did not mind: ‘The monument was allowed to weather a bit.’ That some did mind, however, is perhaps evidenced by the refurbishment that was already carried out in 1965, in 1959 the first cracks had started to appear in some of the sculptures.

As already mentioned, the monument was also considered to be too inviting for a war memorial. Though the ‘Dam-sleepers’ went further than most, they were not the only ones to consider the area around the monument a nice place to sit, even now, on a sunny day one can be sure to find quite a number of people sitting on the monument’s steps. The monument had been designed to be appealing in this way as Oud explained:

> From the beginning I had intended that the monument should be included in the life of the city of Amsterdam. That’s why we have not made a fence or anything like that around it. I would like to see people, provided that they are civil, participate in the monument. Let people sit there and if someone should eat a sandwich in the sun, that would not bother me.

Though certainly not inviting violation or desecration, the monument might be seen to have invited a certain form of profanation. It should be noted, however, that it was not just the monument itself which might be seen as ‘inviting’. Its appeal to hippies, and particularly to activists, can also be ascribed to the monument’s prominent place in the city and, perhaps, to its importance for the Dutch state (as the site of the official commemoration ceremony) - it is a provocative spot, a space to get attention for one’s cause.

Interestingly it appears to have been precisely these ‘anti-monumental’ qualities that attracted Framis to the National Monument, as she indicated:

> Oud and Rädecker wanted to make an accessible monument with a temporary character. The stairs are, for example, deliberately designed to sit on and use. The Dam-sleepers

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35 Van Haastrecht, 1996.


did this in the sixties and the tourists still do that today. The National Monument as a meeting place fascinates me immensely.\textsuperscript{40}

Though Framis overstates the intentions of the designers here (the sculpture might have been ‘allowed to weather a bit’\textsuperscript{41} but it was meant to last), she seems to have wanted to emulate precisely the characteristics she identifies, the vulnerability of the stone, for example: ‘Rädecker opted for a fragile, soft type of stone to give his monument a temporary character. My \textit{Walking Monument} of human building-blocks will only last a few minutes and sways back and forth at the slightest provocation.’\textsuperscript{42} In addition, the newspaper \textit{Trouw}, suggested that \textit{Walking Monument} was made ‘in the spirit of Oud and Rädecker,’\textsuperscript{43} as it was a structure which would actually allow its audience ‘to speak with it or drink a beer with it afterwards.’\textsuperscript{44}

Quite a number of characteristics which \textit{Walking Monument} shares with anti-monumental counter-monuments - the way it invites interaction, its instability, its ephemerality - are thus actually inspired by the National Monument. This, of course, makes its status as a counter-monument rather questionable. Indeed, Framis herself has called \textit{Walking Monument} an ‘homage to the makers of the National Monument.’\textsuperscript{45} The performance therefore does not seem intended to challenge the National Monument at all. Still, when one considers what a ‘dialogic coupling’\textsuperscript{46} does (according to Stevens, Franck and Fazarkerley), namely: draw attention to ‘new meanings beyond those conveyed by each of the works considered individually,’\textsuperscript{47} then \textit{Walking Monument}, in its pairing with the National Monument, does accentuate some aspects of monuments more generally that deserve critical attention. These aspects come to the fore when one looks at both works at what might be considered a more iconographic level.


\textsuperscript{44}“Monument herleeft zwiepend,” 1997. p. 14. My translation of the following text (in italics): ‘Om een monument \textit{in de geest van Oud en Rädecker} op te richten, koos Framis voor een levend sculptuur. Een bouwwerk waar het publiek \textit{mee kon praten of na afloop een biertje mee kon drinken}.’


\textsuperscript{46}Stevens et al., 2012. p. 962.

\textsuperscript{47}Stevens et al., 2012. p. 962.
The Fragile Structures of National Identity

Monuments are seen by Anthony D. Smith as signs used to bring to mind a shared past and ancestry, stimulating a group of people living in the same region to feel connected to each other, to share an identity.\textsuperscript{48} According to Smith, national identity, is constructed on the basis of five factors: ‘1. an historic territory, or homeland, 2. common myths and historical memories, 3. a common, mass public culture, 4. common legal rights and duties for all members, [and] 5. a common economy with territorial mobility for members.’\textsuperscript{49} The National Monument on the Dam Square might be considered to be tied to the national identity of the Dutch people, providing an epic narrative of the history of the Netherlands during the Second World War and bringing people together once a year for a public ceremony commemorating common ancestors who have fallen for the ‘fatherland’.\textsuperscript{50} That these ancestors are not always held to be as ‘common’ as might have been thought at the beginning is evidenced by the controversies which surround the monument and, especially, the commemoration ceremony which takes place there.

The National Monument on the Dam Square has been seen by Roel Hijink as an example of how the memory of the Second World War and the commemoration of its casualties, was nationalized in the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{51} The monument memorialized the casualties as ‘martyrs’\textsuperscript{52} on what Hijink has called ‘the altar of the fatherland.’\textsuperscript{53} Earth from the eleven provinces of the Netherlands, as well as from Indonesia (still a Dutch colony during the Second World War), had been gathered in urns, which were placed in niches in the wall behind the monument. The sites where earth had been collected were sites where people had been executed.\textsuperscript{54} As Smith has pointed out, the earth of a nation is usually of great value in the construction of national identities: people often see themselves as having been marked by the land as much as the land has been marked by them, in this way, the earth is considered to link a people to its forefathers.\textsuperscript{55} The National Monument is an illustrative example of this and the problems involved, for how does the earth of former colonies figure in such an origin myth?

Notably, the urns of the National Monument had already been a part of a temporary monument established in 1947, also on the Dam Square, and the urn with earth from Indonesia, collected from so-called ‘erevelden’ (honorary cemeteries for those who have fallen \textit{for} the fatherland),

\textsuperscript{51} Hijink, 2011. p. 44.
\textsuperscript{52} Hijink, 2011. p. 45.
\textsuperscript{53} Hijink, 2011. p. 50. My translation of the following text: ‘het altaar des vaderlands.’
was added to this monument later than the other urns. At first the National Monuments Committee had planned for a monument ‘in the most completely Dutch sense.’ However, due mostly to pressures from members of the colonial elite who had returned to the Netherlands, an ‘Indonesian’ urn was added in 1950. The monument of Rädecker and Van Oud included a wall with fourteen niches - two niches were added for Suriname and the Antilles, but the urns for these regions were never placed. As Elsbeth Locher-Scholten points out, the inscription on the wall of urns still suggests that all the earth gathered there originates from the Netherlands, as the territory of the Dutch nation, it reads: ‘Aarde door het offer gewijd, samengebracht uit gans het land, teken tot in verren tijd van heugenis en vaste band. / Earth consecrated by the sacrifice, brought together from all over the country, sign for the ages of remembrance and solid bond.’ This inscription seems to refer only to the Dutch nation, constructing a narrative uncomplicated by this nation’s problematic colonial past.

Especially the commemoration of members of the Dutch resistance would take a dominant place in the National Monument. According to Hijink, the central figure of the monument (fig. 42) was meant to represent the sacrifice of the resistance (for the good of the nation) and resembles the figure of Christ on the cross. This resemblance is strengthened by the chained figures on his side (seen to symbolize the suffering of the Dutch people during the occupation), a positioning which is often called the ‘Golgotha-arrangement.’ Two more male figures can be found on the sides of the monument, one is meant to represent the persistence of the intellectual (fig. 43), the other the persistence of the strong worker (fig. 44). The female figure with a child which towers over the other figures (all male) stands for peace. The narrative constructed is one of sacrifice, suffering, persistence and survival - a narrative that would be rather inappropriate if the monument was meant to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust.

Every year on the 4th of May, the casualties of the Second World War are commemorated nation-wide. The official ceremony of the state (involving members of the Dutch monarchy and other officials) takes place on the Dam Square, in front of the National Monument, where

57 The ‘Nationale Monumenten Commissie’ as quoted in: Locher-Scholten, 1999. p. 197. My translation of the following text: ‘in de meest volstrekt Nederlandsche zin.’
59 Locher-Scholten, 1999. p. 204.
crowds also gather to observe two minutes of silence at precisely 8 pm (fig. 45). To this day, no German official has been invited to be present at this event on the Dam Square, and the mere suggestion that the German ambassador might attend in 2010 led to public outcry. Even the fact that the National Monument was to be renovated by a German company in 1997, was painful to many people.

While for the first commemorations, in the late 1940s, the emphasis was placed firmly on the casualties of the military (including allied forces) and the Dutch resistance (i.e. ‘all who had fought and fallen for the freedom of our fatherland’), over the years a broader range of casualties became included. It was not until the 1960s that more explicit attention was paid to those who had lost their lives in the Holocaust. It was also during the 1960s that ‘all - civilian or military - who have fallen in the interest of the Kingdom since 10 May 1940, wherever or whenever in the world’ started to be commemorated, including, Locher-Scholten suggests, those who had fallen during the Dutch military campaigns against Indonesia (which had declared its independence). The matter of who is commemorated on the day of the ‘Remembrance of the Dead’, and especially who is not, has repeatedly proven to be a controversial issue, however. In 1970, for instance, two activists were arrested for attempting to place a wreath in front of the National Monument to commemorate the persecution of homosexuals during the Nazi regime. Such demonstrations have not been uncommon over the years, in 1993, for example, a banner was reportedly carried during the commemoration on the Dam Square reading ‘And the Slavic dead,’ it is unclear to whom exactly ‘the Slavic’ referred in this case. Most recently, in 2018, protesters argued that the commemoration is ‘racist’ as the Dutch colonial history is mostly ignored and the White ‘culprits’ who were a part of the Dutch military campaign in Indonesia are commemorated while their many victims are not. The


The guidelines of the commemoration committee of 1946, as quoted in: Funnekotter, 2018. My emphasis.


Locher-Scholten, 1999. p. 204.

Raaijmakers, 2018.


See: “Veel jongeren,” 1993. p. 1. Perhaps the carriers of the banner wanted to draw attention to the casualties of the Bosnian War (which started in 1992), to the persecution of ‘Slavic’ peoples by the Nazi regime, to the casualties of the Second World War in Eastern Europe, and/or to the Eastern European armed forces whom had a large share in (and paid a high price for) the liberation of Europe.

protesters announced that they would stage a ‘noise-demonstration,’ during the ceremony on the Dam Square, this was prevented by the Dutch authorities. The planned demonstration led to many angry reactions, on Twitter the protesters were called ‘Respectless non-Dutch people.’ In this way the remembrance day has become a day on which the national identity and especially who is included in this identity and who is not, is continuously re-negotiated and consolidated. The Dam Square, and the National Monument in particular, has repeatedly been the site of both this re-negotiation and the performance of the national identity.

To stage a performance at this site might thus already invite certain associations and those involved in forming the human replacement for the National Monument on the Dam Square were not a random troop of acrobats either, these were castellers (‘castle builders’) from Catalonia, whom Framis had asked to ‘repeat the monument.’ The building of human castles, or towers, is a Catalan tradition dating back at least 200 years and has been recognized as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO, since 2010. Though it seems that the participants in Walking Monument were supposed to blend in and appear to be random passersby (as will be elaborated on later), the building of human castles can be seen as a cultural expression of the Catalanian identity and has even been appropriated by the secessionist-movement in more recent years.

Catalans, like the Dutch, can be seen as a nation, in the eyes of Smith: ‘The Catalans are undoubtedly a nation today […] Not only do they inhabit their historic territory (more or less), they are now able to teach in their own language and fund a mass, public, standardized education system in Catalan and in Catalonia.’ The Dutch, however, have their own state, whereas Catalans do not. Though it has its own autonomous government, Catalonia falls under the state of Spain and thus does not control, for example, ‘foreign and economic policy [or] defense and constitutional matters,’ asMontserrat Guibernau points out. In her critique of Smith (whom, she argues, does not distinguish clearly between nations, states, nation-states and stateless nations), Guibernau suggests that the way national identity is expressed might be influenced by whether a nation is a nation-state (such as the Netherlands) or is considered not to have a state of its own (such as Catalonia). As the Netherlands is an internationally recognized

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state, the contentions surrounding the national identity of its people might be observed to be more inward-looking: who is included, who is not?\textsuperscript{87} For Catalans, the situation is different, especially since quite a number of Catalans demand self-determination. Such a movement requires not just widespread support within its borders (excluding particular groups is therefore unwise), but also requires the recognition of other states.\textsuperscript{88} Guibernau notes that, in order to receive this recognition and remind members of the community of their kinship, nations which are seeking to have a state of their own frequently refer to the continuity of their language, their traditions and other aspects of their culture.\textsuperscript{89} As Mariann Vaczi has shown in her study of Catalanian castles, “Catalonia’s human towers: Nationalism, associational culture, and the politics of performance,” this inclusive activity has proven to be ‘a desirable asset for a political movement that seeks to establish its authenticity.’\textsuperscript{90}

Though there are competitions, the building of \textit{castells} is a mostly non-competitive sport performed mainly at local festivals like the festival of ‘La Mercè’ (an annual festival in Barcelona, known for its traditional processions and performances).\textsuperscript{91} For a long time it was an activity practiced predominantly in rural areas and, according to the anthropologist Mariann Vaczi, it had a ‘rural’ image before regional television broadcasts brought about its popularization in the 1990s.\textsuperscript{92} The motto \textit{castellers} go by is ‘\textit{Força, equilibri, valor i seny,}’ which Vaczi translates to: ‘strength, balance, courage and common sense.’\textsuperscript{93} The last quality in particular, \textit{seny}, is seen as ‘the culturally salient Catalanian trait.’\textsuperscript{94} It is necessary when building \textit{castells}, as Vaczi explains, because the rather risky activity requires its participants to make sensible choices and to ‘fall with good seny.’\textsuperscript{95}

One of the sport’s most appealing features, according to Vaczi, is that it is open to everyone (at least everyone who is able), it does not matter whether one is male or female, big or small, young or old, strong or not, or, for that matter Catalan or not.\textsuperscript{96} Everyone is needed, as Vaczi explains: ‘the strength of a group […] is in neither muscle nor training but in the number of


\textsuperscript{88} Guibernau, 2013. pp. 372-373. Mariann Vaczi has related the secessionist-movement’s desire to affiliate itself with castell-building to the inclusive image of this activity, see: Vaczi, 2016.


\textsuperscript{90} Vaczi, 2016. p. 356.

\textsuperscript{91} Vaczi, 2016. p. 355.

\textsuperscript{92} Vaczi, 2016. p. 358.

\textsuperscript{93} Vaczi, 2016. p. 356. See also: Atwood Mason, 2014.

\textsuperscript{94} Vaczi, 2016. p. 360. See also: Atwood Mason, 2014.

\textsuperscript{95} \textit{Castellers} as quoted in: Vaczi, 2016. p. 367, see also: pp. 360-363.

\textsuperscript{96} Vaczi, 2016. See, for example: p. 358.
This is not to say that *castellers* do not train, but that it does not necessarily require much training to join a group of ‘castle-builders’, anyone can find their place in the ‘castle’.\(^9\) The ones with more muscular and sturdy physiques are placed at the bottom, in the supportive structure of the so-called ‘*pinya*’. This is also where untrained bystanders may help a hand at the edges (so that the weight is shared by a greater body of people) and thus the place where, I suspect, Framis had hoped that onlookers in Amsterdam might have joined.\(^9\) The higher tiers are held by people with lighter weights and the *enxaneta*, the person who tops off the tower and completes it with a wave, is typically a girl, around the age of five.\(^9\) The latter was also the case for *Walking Monument*, where the *enxaneta* was a five-year-old girl named Natalia.\(^9\) The folklorist Michael Atwood Mason claims that traditionally the *enxaneta* makes a particular gesture: four fingers held up in the air - meant to refer to the four red stripes of the Catalan flag.\(^9\)

Though the teams, or *colles*, are open to all political affiliations (attempting to maintain a neutral and inclusive image), it is generally assumed that most *castellers* are *catalanistes* (Catalan nationalists), according to Vaczi.\(^9\) Castle-building is associated with Catalan culture: it is often performed amongst other Catalan traditions, at events where Catalan flags are waved.\(^9\) As Vaczi points out: ‘it remains revealing what human towers still *cannot* represent: Spanish identity,’\(^9\) adding that ‘the absence of Spanish symbols works toward essentializing the world of castell building as Catalanian.’\(^9\) How the building of human castles can be interpreted as a show of Catalanian strength (in opposition to Madrid) is perhaps illustrated by Jennifer Baljko’s description of the final act of a performance - the wave of the *enxaneta* - in her short story for a travel book, “Castles in the Sky,” published in 2008:

> The [*enxaneta*] straddles the five-year-old at the apex. He places one hand on the back of the child. He throws up the other. Victory! He touches the sky. At that moment, Catalonia shakes off Madrid’s economic and political weight. At that moment,


\(^9\) Atwood Mason, 2014.


\(^9\) See, for example: Baljko, 2008.

\(^9\) Vaczi, 2016. p. 365. Her emphasis.

Catalonia stands firm, unwavering in a cultural test of persistence, tenacity, and courage. At that moment, Catalonia is free.\textsuperscript{107}

It is, in part, because of its inclusive premise that castle-building has been used for political purposes, as Vaczi shows in her study of this cultural performance (it should be noted here perhaps, that this supposed inclusiveness does not really seem to be extended to those who wish to express their Spanish identity). Vaczi specifically refers to the performances which took place on the 8th of June in 2014, when human castles arose in several European cities (namely: Brussels, Geneva, Paris, London, Berlin, Rome and Lisbon), as well as in Barcelona, for the event ‘Catalans Want to Vote: Human Towers for Democracy’ (fig. 46). This event was meant to gather European support for, and recognition of, the non-binding referendum on Catalan independence, to be held in Catalonia in November 2014.\textsuperscript{108} Earlier that year, in March, the Spanish courts had ruled that a formal referendum would be unconstitutional and the Spanish government had been vehemently against any referendum on the subject of independence.\textsuperscript{109} In spite of this, an unofficial vote did take place in November and around eighty percent of those who voted (approximately 2.2 million of the 5.4 million eligible to vote) voted in favor of independence.\textsuperscript{110} The \textit{NRC Handelsblad} (a Dutch newspaper) noted, however, that few of those who opposed a secession showed up to vote, due to the unofficial status of the poll.\textsuperscript{111} The campaign for the referendum used the image of \textit{castells} because, as an organizer reportedly put it: ‘they perfectly represent the process that we want to support: together we decide to do great, new, spectacular things.’\textsuperscript{112} In the eyes of Vaczi, other reasons for the appeal of \textit{castells} to the pro-independence movement, apart from their attachment to Catalan culture, include their amateur, non-elitist reputation; their dependence on collaboration and solidarity; the lack of money involved in castle-building (those against Catalan independence often claim that Catalans are greedy); and the risk involved in building \textit{castells} - a risk that has been compared to the risk taken by secessionists.\textsuperscript{113}

It should be noted that some \textit{colles} have refused to participate in events that are explicitly pro-independence, because they do not want to be perceived as leaning towards one side, according to Vaczi.\textsuperscript{114} ‘Catalans Want to Vote’ was deemed not to be on the side of secessionists but on the

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\textsuperscript{107} Baljko, 2008. p. 77. Note: Baljko uses a different spelling of \textit{enxaneta}.

\textsuperscript{108} Vaczi, 2016. p. 359.

\textsuperscript{109} See, for example: “Catalonia Profile,” 2018.


\textsuperscript{111} Greven, 2014.

\textsuperscript{112} As quoted in: Vaczi, 2016. p. 360.

\textsuperscript{113} Vaczi, 2016.

\textsuperscript{114} Vaczi, 2016. p. 365.
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side of democracy. This is not to say that there are no teams which participate in pro-independence rallies and as the cultural events in which castellers customarily participate (events celebrating Catalan culture), are often attended by banner carrying and flag-waving pro-independence groups. The media contributes to an image that castle-building is a pro-independence activity. This is demonstrated, for example, by international newspaper reports which illustrate articles about pro-independence demonstrations during the National Day of Catalonia (la Diada, which commemorates the fall of Barcelona on the 11th of September 1714), with spectacular photographs of castells built on that same day - whether the colles photographed are actually part of the demonstrations or merely there for the celebrations is not always clear (see, for example: fig. 47-48).

Like castle-building, Catalonia’s National Day has gained popularity since around 2012. The rise in popularity of both phenomena has been connected to their politicization and the growing call for independence. There had been an accumulating number of grievances in Catalonia and several trends came to a head in 2012, the most important of which are: the perceived loss of Catalan influence in Spain, the manner in which the Spanish state imposes certain policies, the Spanish state’s indifference to a number of reforms proposed by the Catalan government (mostly regarding the degree of Catalan autonomy), and the (not entirely unfounded) belief that Catalonia contributes more to the public treasury of Spain than it receives in funding (which can be seen to have become particularly painful during the financial crisis which started in 2008). The first major Catalan political party to explicitly campaign for independence since the restoration of the Catalan parliament in 1979 (after the Franco-dictatorship, during which Catalan culture and all forms of Catalan nationalism were repressed), began to do so around 1992. This party, the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya,

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119 For a detailed analysis of the rise of secessionist aspirations in Catalonia, see: Dowling 2018.
123 The figures referred to by the political scientist Montserrat Guibernau do seem to support this claim: ‘According to the latest available data Catalonia’s average contribution to the Spanish Central Administration and Social Security corresponds to 19.40% of the total. By contrast, Catalonia receives 14.03%. After contributing to Spain’s Solidarity Fund, Catalonia is worse off than those autonomous communities subsidized by the Fund and finds itself below average in capita spending.’ Guibernau, 2013. p. 383, see also: p. 381. Andrew Dowling seems to paint a comparable picture, see: Dowling, 2018. p. 79. See also: De Waal, 2012. Vaczi, 2016. p. 357.
gained support over the decade, ‘mainstreaming independence’\textsuperscript{125} according to Andrew Dowling. While in 1999 less than 10 percent had voted for the only major pro-independence party at the time, by the elections of 2017 the parties in favor of independence gained the majority of seats in the Catalan parliament.\textsuperscript{126}

Of course the performance that took place on the Dam Square in September 1997 should not be colored by the later politicization of \textit{castell}-building and the dramatic turn of events in Spain. Whereas the \textit{castells} which arose in London and Berlin in 2014 were built to promote recognition of Catalonia as a nation, the one which arose in Amsterdam in 1997 was built under entirely different circumstances and with different ambitions. As already mentioned, Framis seems to have wanted the performers of \textit{Walking Monument} to blend in, suggesting that she did not want to accentuate their being Catalan. It was her intention to have: ‘monument and audience become one,’\textsuperscript{127} hoping that some audience-members would even help buttress the structure.\textsuperscript{128} She had specifically asked the \textit{castellers} to wear ordinary clothes instead of their uniform which, as Atwood Mason has detailed, usually consists of a colored shirt (each team has its own color), white trousers, a supportive black sash (or \textit{faixa}) and, often, a red bandana.\textsuperscript{129} As the \textit{faixa} is a crucial part of the dresscode - it gives climbers something to hold on to and offers much-needed support for the back - it was not cast aside, but Framis asked the jury of the Prix de Rome to wear blindfolds while the sashes were wound tightly around the \textit{castellers}’s waists.\textsuperscript{130} Though passersby were not blindfolded, it is unlikely that the \textit{faixa} revealed much about the background of the performers. That being so, it did not escape the Dutch media that the \textit{castellers} (and the artist) were Spanish and that the building of human castles is a tradition which originated in Tarragona (a city in the South of Catalonia).\textsuperscript{131} No journalist or critic, however, seems to have mentioned the significance of castle-building in \textit{Catalan} culture.

Considering the place where \textit{Walking Monument} arose and the monument it was supposed to ‘replace’ its use of a cultural performance strongly tied to Catalans as a nation cannot be ignored. \textit{Castell}-building would not have been so readily appropriated by the secessionist-movement, if it had not for a long time been recognized by Catalans as their cultural heritage, passed down by their ancestors. It is unlikely that Framis, being Catalan, did not recognize the activity as such at the time. \textit{Walking Monument} seems to me to be not so much about the national identity of Catalans, however, as about the construction of national identities in itself:

\textsuperscript{125} Dowling, 2018. p. 73. See also: pp. 74-75.
\textsuperscript{129} Atwood Mason, 2014.
the instability of such a construction; its need for popular support; its reliance on tales of strength, heroism and sacrifice; its reliance also on the hope for a better tomorrow - often symbolized by children.\textsuperscript{132} The parallels between the National Monument on the Dam Square and \textit{Walking Monument} accentuate precisely these characteristics. Both structures were \textit{unstable} (\textit{Walking Monument} more so than the National Monument), foregoing the permanence so characteristic of monuments, and both were meant to be \textit{inviting} in some ways - exactly the features of the National Monument which Framis had wanted to emulate in \textit{Walking Monument}. The visual similarities between both monuments are also striking, highlighting the typical components of national narratives: the strong men at the bases of both structures [strength and persistence], the weight carried by the figures in the middle [sacrifice], as well as the figure of the child which rises over the other figures [survival and hope]. Mariann Vaczi claims that when she participated in \textit{castell}-building in Barcelona the \textit{castellers} often asserted that ‘building a nation is like building castells.’\textsuperscript{133} This also seems to be communicated by \textit{Walking Monument} in dialogue with the National Monument in Amsterdam, showing the role which framing plays. The signification of \textit{castells} can be considered to change in different contexts. When a \textit{castell}-building performance is staged at a pro-independence demonstration, certain aspects of it are foregrounded, particularly its significance as a \textit{Catalonian} cultural tradition. The fact that no (Dutch) journalist or critic seems to have commented on this aspect in 1997, suggests that \textit{castells} were framed differently then. With \textit{Walking Monument}, however, Framis can be seen to accentuate not just the supposed instability and approachability of the National Monument, but also its significance for the Dutch identity, precisely by staging the performance of an ‘other’ identity.

\textsuperscript{132} Guibernau, for example, lists ‘a common project for the future’ (Guibernau, 2013. p. 368) as an essential part of nation-building, see: Guibernau, 2013.

\textsuperscript{133} Vaczi, 2016. p. 354.
The Roof: Precariousness & Interdependency

Our institutions are necessary fictions, which we have agreed to treat as real. To maintain stability and power, institutions have to conceal their fictional character. When an institution is at a loss of stability, it can try to cling to its operational patterns or revisit the social agreements at its core … which for many art institutions would probably mean to re-imagine what it means to first and foremost provide a supporting structure for art and artists.1 - Maria Rößler, for Performance Platform.

I first encountered the project The Roof during my internship at the Research Institute for Art and Public Space in Amsterdam (also known as Lectoraat for Art and Public Space, or LAPS). This Research Institute is connected to (and located in) the Rietveld School of Art and Design and about twice a month it organizes a session during which a group of established artists (called the ‘kenniskring’ or ‘knowledge circle’) present their artistic research in order to receive feedback. Occasionally they also invite artists from outside the ‘kenniskring’ to present their work and this is how I came across the work of the artistic collective ‘Moha’. The name of the collective derives from the Hungarian word for moss, which is described on the website of the collective as a particularly resilient and adjustable plant - ‘grow[ing] almost everywhere’2 and under ‘any conditions.’3

Alice Pons (1987, France) and Olivia Reschofsky (1986, Hungary) started the Moha collective when they finished their choreography degrees at the School for New Dance Development in Amsterdam, in 2012. At this time the budget cuts of Halbe Zijlstra, the State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science, had just hit the cultural field and supportive institutions became increasingly difficult to find. Pons and Reschofsky have described starting Moha - which was to be focussed on performances in the public space - as a ‘necessity’. In the words of Reschofsky:

We thought: “Let’s just start making work, even if there is no venue and nothing around it.” So that is why we started to go to the public space and we started to help each other and rehearse in our homes […] So as not to let the structure define if we make work or not. Back then it was a necessity, now it is our ideology.4

Pons and Reschofsky say that their vulnerability has made them more resourceful and it has helped them establish a greater network of collaborating artists and institutions who support

1 Rößler, 2017.
4 Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.
each other on a more equal footing.\(^5\) Both, however, also have other day jobs which, in part, finance their creative work (perfectly normal among artists), and both admit there is a limit to this way of working.\(^6\) Pons has said that they are afraid of ‘[normalizing] a constant precarious state,’\(^7\) and that sometimes they feel that they have to push ‘for a more fair and sustainable way to work.’\(^8\)

Pons and Reschofsky are purposefully unclear about who else is a member of the collective because they collaborate with many people and feel like all those people are at least temporary members of Moha.\(^9\) On the day that Moha was to present their most recent project - *The Roof* - for the ‘kenniskring’, they were accompanied by Zsofia Paczolay (1986, Hungary), who is listed on the website as the ‘relational architect’ of *The Roof*, and Nienke Scholts (1984, the Netherlands), listed as the dramaturg. Also named on the website of the collective is Merel Noorlander (1984, the Netherlands), who was in charge of the ‘design’ for *The Roof*.\(^10\) She, for example, selected the fabric and thought about the shape it would take.\(^11\)

For their presentation the team had laid out on a large table: pictures of what they had done so far, plans, a 3D model and books that had inspired them, for example: books about nomadic architecture and furniture, as well as Rebecca Solnit’s *A Paradise Built in Hell* (2009) - an anti-Hobbesian account of people’s astonishing resourcefulness and altruism in disaster areas. As we gathered around the table we were asked to hold a white tarp underneath which the team would present their work.

The tarp is a recurring presence at performances of *The Roof*. It is supposed to be multifunctional and the team refers to it as a ‘political tool’\(^12\) which can be used as, for example, ‘a blanket, a flag [or] a wall.’\(^13\) It is used in the words of Reschofsky: ‘[To declare a space]...

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\(^5\) Alice Pons has said, for example, that the increased vulnerability experienced by artists after the budget cuts has ‘forced people to talk about it [what makes them vulnerable], to address the problem, find different strategies.’ Recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.

\(^6\) Alice Pons noted, for instance: ‘of course you can also reach the limit of this [way of working]. When, for example, I was working with this very nice curator who was creating a festival in Italy for a few years and she said: “You know, I was so passionate, and we were so passionate, that we could do everything. Our motto was a little bit like: Nothing is impossible. We get this amount of budget and we find our way. Because this is what we believe in.” But after a while she felt that what is supposed to be exceptional, became normal. And then it also justified: because they could do with few, they could not claim anymore to need more. So she said, I felt also for the field, it was not fine to, there was a limit and she quit.’ Recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.

\(^7\) Alice Pons, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.

\(^8\) Alice Pons, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.

\(^9\) Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.


\(^11\) Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.


\(^13\) Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.
when you put up *The Roof*, you put up a separation between what is under *The Roof* and what is outside it [...] it declares a space, because it is not the same under[neath].’ 14 What is important to the project leaders is not so much the object itself but the action it generates: ‘the action of maintaining something.’ 15

The collective has referred to the *The Roof* as a ‘democratic and nomadic art institute.’ 16 Interestingly, when *The Roof* was still in its preparatory phase, the Moha team organized a couple of events or ‘workshops’ at the Veem Theatre (or House for Performance), in Amsterdam, during which people were invited to help shape the project. At the time the theatre had just received the news that they would not receive as much funding as they had hoped, forcing them to close for a large part of the year. According to Pons the director at the time said: ‘Symbolically, it is also kind of a fitting moment that you create this roof [underneath] the roof of [this] institution and [take it outside] because the existing institution is falling apart. So you need to make your own space.’ 17

As I see the precarious situation of contemporary artists (in the broad sense of the term), cultural workers and cultural institutions as an important theme of *The Roof*, I first briefly outline a selection of ideas on the subject of ‘precarity’ and their relevance for contemporary art, before turning to *The Roof* and its relation to space, community art and precariousness.

**Precarity & Neoliberalism**

As Hal Foster has noted, the word ‘precarious’ stems from the Latin word *precarius* which means ‘obtained by entreaty, depending on the favour of another, hence uncertain.’ 18 In recent academic literature the related term ‘precarity’ has come to refer to the state of uncertainty experienced by an increasing group of people with unsteady jobs (e.g. flexible contracts, fluctuating incomes, expected mobility). 19 As Sharryn Kasmir has pointed out, precarity is often presented as a new condition, imposed by ‘the contemporary form of neoliberal capitalism.’ 20 Theories on precarity often suggest that this condition is imposed on a wide variety of social groups and not necessarily tied to a particular class. It is in part for this reason that Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri speak of the ‘multitude’. 21 Judith Butler, who uses the term ‘precarity’

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14 Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.

15 Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.

16 Pons, 2016.

17 Alice Pons, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.


20 Kasmir, 2018.

more broadly to describe the circumstances of those who are disadvantaged in a variety of ways, states that:

Precarity is the rubric that brings together women, queers, transgender people, the poor, the differently abled, and the stateless, but also religious and racial minorities: it is a social and economic condition, but not an identity (indeed, it cuts across these categories and produces potential alliances among those who do not recognize that they belong to one another).22

As Kasmir has noted, Butler distinguishes between ‘precarity’ and ‘precariousness’. Seemingly adhering more closely to the Latin definition of ‘precarius’, Butler regards precariousness ‘as a generalized human condition,’23 a condition of dependence and vulnerability.24

Neoliberalism has been described by the geographer David Harvey as: ‘a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.’25 Harvey suggests that the economic reform of the late 1970s in countries like China (under the government of Deng Xiaoping), the United States (under Ronald Reagan) and the United Kingdom (under Margaret Thatcher), has lead to the widespread adoption of practices that are often described as neoliberal (such as privatization, minimizing budget deficits, deregulation, anti-protectionist or laissez-faire economic policies, and cuts in social welfare).26 It should perhaps be mentioned here that the term ‘neoliberal’ is usually used by those critical of the policies mentioned above, not by those who implement them.27

In the Netherlands the economic policies of Ruud Lubbers’ Cabinet were perhaps the first which could be described as ‘neoliberal’. During Lubbers’ time as prime minister (from 1982 to 1994), formerly state-owned companies, such as the postal and telephone service (‘Staatsbedrijf der Posterijen, Telegrafie en Telefonie’, also known as PTT), were privatized, welfare payments were reduced and budget cuts were introduced in the public health sector, as well as in education.28 Neoliberal practices also affected the arts. During the 1980s, when the worldwide recession was also felt in the Netherlands, the Dutch government first started to look for


alternatives which could make the arts less dependent on government-funding, since then cuts in
government-spending on the arts have been made (most severely in the period during which
Halbe Zijlstra was State secretary for Education, Culture and Science from 2010 to 2012). 29

Individual responsibility and self-reliance can be seen to form the cornerstones of the neoliberal
ideology. 30 The privatization of public services has increasingly made (forms of) health and
elder care (for example), accessible to fewer people and has left those who are not economically
self-sufficient enough with fewer possibilities to sustain themselves. 31 Even so, individuals are,
in the eyes of Butler, increasingly required to ‘maximize [their] own market value.’ 32 This is
seen, for example, in the increased prevalence of flexible and short-term labour contracts, and
the general relaxation of laws protecting employees - encouraging people to take on a self-
sufficient, entrepreneurial role and compete with others on an individual basis. 33 It is here that
Butler notes the paradox of neoliberalism:

Neoliberal rationality demands self-sufficiency as a moral ideal at the same time that
neoliberal forms of power work to destroy that very possibility at an economic level,
establishing every member of the population as potentially or actually precarious, even
using the ever-present threat of precarity to justify its heightened regulation of public
space and its deregulation of market expansion. 34

Butler sees precarity as a common theme of contemporary protest movements, naming the
Indignados movement (Spain, 2011) and the Occupy movement (usually considered to have
started in New York City in 2011), as well as the Gezi Park protests (Turkey, 2013), as
examples. 35 The prevalence of this theme is no coincidence in her eyes at a time when public
services are increasingly disintegrated, public spaces are becoming ever more inaccessible to
certain groups and people are made to feel individually responsible. 36 In her Notes Toward a
Performative Theory of Assembly, Butler suggests that many recent public assemblies have not
only protested against the intensifying precaritization of a growing number of people and the
dissolution of institutional support, but also counteracted these proceedings (however briefly)
by erecting their own structures of support and mutual aid (recent protest camps have included,

31 Butler, 2015. See, for example: p. 12.
35 Butler, 2015. See, for example: p. 182.
36 Butler, 2015. See, for example: p. 182.
for example: kitchens, infirmaries and libraries). In this way, public assemblies can
demonstrate our interdependency and may potentially contribute to a more ‘egalitarian social
and political order in which a livable interdependency becomes possible,’ according to
Butler.

Precariousness in the Arts
Contemporary art can relate to present-day precariousness on several levels: the work of artists
can historically be seen to place them in a precarious position (a position they increasingly share
with workers in other fields); neoliberal policymakers have been accused of using certain art
projects to take the edge off austerity measures (which especially affect those who are already in
precarious situations); and precariousness has been identified as an underlying theme in many
contemporary artworks.

Recently, the precarious position of artists and cultural workers seems to be brought to our
attention frequently, also in the Netherlands. The ‘Call for Papers’ of the Art & Activism
conference (held in December 2017, in Leiden) stated that: ‘A sense of crisis […] is widely felt
among contemporary artists and activists, who experience precarity, marginalization, and
vulnerability on a daily basis.’ De Appel, an art institute based in Amsterdam which lost its
own exhibition space in 2016 (due, in part, to austerity measures), recently organised the event
Why is Everybody Being So Nice? (2017), the program of which was to ‘[provide] horizons to
think through and navigate the broader issues of precarious labor within the [art]field.’ Yates
McKee, an American art historian, also repeatedly refers to artists as ‘precarious workers,’ in his
recent publication Strike Art: Contemporary Art and the Post-Occupy Condition (2016).

Though McKee stresses that the work of artists has rarely been financially stable, and this has
never been unknown (the image of the ‘starving artist’ is not new), he notes that since around
1999 ‘analyses began to develop that were highly cognisant of the lived conditions of working
in the cultural field under conditions of neoliberalism.’

It is perhaps important to underscore the point that the precarious situation of artists is not new.
Very few artists (in the late modern period, at least) have been able to support themselves solely

37 Butler, 2015. See, for example: p. 84, pp. 89-90, pp. 97-98 and p. 153. For a description and analysis of
the Occupy Wall Street camp and its support structures, see for example: McKee, 2016. pp. 106-112. For
a description of the Gezi Park Camp, see for example: Aksoy, 2017. p. 31.
39 Butler, 2015. See, for example: p. 43, p. 84, pp. 156-157, p. 188 and pp. 211-212.
40 For a list of articles on ‘precarity’ in the cultural field see, for example: McKee, 2016. p. 275, note: 5.
41 “Call for Papers,” website last accessed on: 26 June 2017.
42 “De Appel Curatorial Programme,” Website last accessed on: 26 June 2017. See also: Borren, 2016.
43 McKee, 2016. See for example: pp. 17 and 32.
44 McKee, 2016. p. 139.
on the basis of their art. Artists are seen to make work not in order to make money, but mostly because they want to, as the anthropologist Stuart Plattner put it in 1998: ‘The overwhelming majority of artists do not enjoy much, if any, commercial success. These artists make art because doing so affirms their identity as artists, not because they expect to earn a living from it.’\textsuperscript{45} Given the austerity measures introduced internationally, however, the recent attention paid to precarity amongst cultural workers in the art world is not surprising.

The budget cuts of 2012, which according to Reschofsky and Pons led to them starting a collective, had severe effects in the Netherlands, especially for the performing arts (the field in which Reschofsky and Pons have been trained), where funding was cut from 235 to 156 million euros (per year) and where people might be considered to be even more dependent on institutions and organizations.\textsuperscript{46} Some have also felt a shift in the public perception of the arts in the Netherlands and have noted the negative framing of the budget cuts in the arts.\textsuperscript{47} Though the budget cuts ‘necessitated’ starting the collective, Reschofsky and Pons did not explicitly bemoan the measures, only referring to them to explain the origins of Moha. Reschofsky has been careful to point out that in Hungary governmental support has always been scant: ‘I come from a country where it was always like this. I mean there was money for art, but for more traditional art. I know from my friends in the field that collectives were always necessary, they had to exist on their own.’\textsuperscript{48}

The general sense of insecurity, especially since the financial crisis of 2008, probably played the biggest role in bringing the precarity of not just artists but the general workforce to the fore. Many, including McKee, Claire Bishop and Andrew Ross, have noted how the work ethic of artists has been celebrated by neoliberal policymakers, who seem to have cast artists as the ‘vanguard’\textsuperscript{49} or the ‘role models’\textsuperscript{50} of the modern workforce.\textsuperscript{51} Certain qualities ascribed to artists have been especially promoted, namely their independence, individualization, flexibility (or ‘freedom’), entrepreneurial-spirit, passion for their work and, of course, their creativity. In other words, workers in other fields are increasingly encouraged to self-organize and take responsibility for their own misfortunes, to market themselves (think of personal branding), to freelance, to take more risks and tolerate insecurity, to exploit themselves and to be resourceful

\textsuperscript{45} Plattner, 1998. p. 482.

\textsuperscript{46} Fennema, 2014.

\textsuperscript{47} See, for example: Dekker, 2017. p. 6. For a recent example of how contemporary art is referred to as a ‘left-wing hobby’ see, for example: Engelbart, 2017. For a discussion of art being ’left-wing’ or ‘elitist’ around the time of the budget cuts see, for example: Slager, 2010. For an analysis of the term ‘left-wing hobby’ and its validity for the performing arts see: Van Liempt et al., 2014.

\textsuperscript{48} Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.

\textsuperscript{49} McKee, 2016. p. 139.

\textsuperscript{50} Bishop, 2012[a]. p. 16.

while the government cuts back on public services. As McKee has pointed out the image of the ‘creative worker’ sketched by neoliberal policymakers ‘obscured their precarity: their lack of job security, health care, and regular income; public austerity measures; ever-escalating rents; and endless debt servitude through student loans as well as credit card debt to meet basic needs.’ However, while working from one assignment to the next without organizational support or certainty about a source of income is becoming commonplace, Ross suggests that artists might be seen to have chosen for this ‘flexibility’, while this is not thought to be the case for, for example, pilots or people working in retail.

How the Dutch government celebrated ‘creativity’ while cutting back spending on the arts, can be seen in policy documents like *Ons Creatieve Vermogen* (2005). This document, which was also discussed by Bishop, suggested that the so-called ‘creative sector’ relies too heavily on the government and that the sector’s ‘entrepreneurship is insufficiently developed.’ In order to change this, it proposed to connect ‘two worlds’: the business community and the creative sector, as a means of ‘utilizing the economic potential of culture and creativity.’ The government would help businesses find their way to the creative sector (undeniably in the hope that it would lead to more private funding), while encouraging more entrepreneurship in the arts. Referring to the ideas of the American economist Richard Florida, expressed in *The Rise of the Creative Class, and How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (2002), the document further suggests that an injection of ‘creativity’ will boost the economy:

A substantial level of cultural facilities also has indirect economic effects: it helps to make our towns and cities appealing for tourists and the creative class: managers, engineers, entrepreneurs, professional people, etc. In this way, our cultural heritage, and the performing arts in particular, make their contribution towards local economic growth.

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55 Bishop is careful to point out ‘the blurring of art and creativity: two overlapping terms that not only have different demographic connotations but also distinct discourses concerning their complexity, instrumentalization and accessibility.’ Bishop, 2012[a]. p. 16. In *Ons Creatieve Vermogen* ‘the creative sector’ indeed refers to ‘the arts and cultural heritage, media and entertainment, as well as creative business services: design, architecture, computer games.’ Ministry of Economic Affairs and Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, 2005. p. 3.


Not only have the arts been identified as being ‘good for business’ - at the very least by raising property values (gentrification) - but, according to some, the arts have also been used to alleviate the effects of the privatization of public services.

In the eyes of Bishop the emphasis the New Labour government of the United Kingdom placed on social inclusion, from 1997 to 2010, served to ‘allow people to access the holy grail of self-sufficient consumerism and be independent of any need of welfare.’ Social inclusion was also a prominent aim of the government’s cultural policy, which focussed on public participation in the arts. According to Bishop, the cultural policy of the New Labour government was based for a large part on a report by François Matarasso, namely *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts* (1997), which highlights the positive effects of art focussing on the inclusion of diverse audiences. Aside from contributing to social cohesion, public involvement and community building, Matarasso finds that participation in the arts can also, for example, ‘contribute to health and social support of vulnerable people, and to education.’ Matarasso did not forget to focus attention on the impact participation in the arts could have on ‘building the confidence of minority and marginalized groups.’ Even before the release of Matarasso’s report, however, emphasis was already placed on inclusivity and public participation in the cultural policy of the Netherlands.

In the 1990s the Dutch government started to encourage art institutions to reach and engage with a broader audience, attention was given especially to reaching immigrants and the youth. Museums like the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen attempted to comply by organizing special activities, as noted by an employee of the museum at the time:

[During the nineties] the municipality pressured [the museum] to reach new audiences, especially immigrants, who already make up almost half of the population [in Rotterdam]. Projects are [therefore] organized in and outside the museum to build a bridge between different cultures.

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60 Angela McRobbie, as quoted in: Bishop, 2012[a]. p. 15.
66 Hoeven, 2005. pp. 34-35 and 38. See also, for example: Mondriaan Stichting, 1997.
Interestingly, the employee, Erik Beenkers\textsuperscript{68}, felt that the government’s focus on inclusivity was aimed especially at accelerating the integration of immigrants.\textsuperscript{69} Others too have noticed the political agenda behind the cultural policy of the Netherlands at the time. In the eyes of Sandra Trienekens, for example, the policy was aimed at increasing social cohesion.\textsuperscript{70} This goal still sounds innocent enough, but according to Bishop, the logic behind it is rather opportunistic, as so-called ‘social cohesion’ and public involvement (i.e. volunteering) were, in her eyes, meant to make people feel ‘individually responsible for what, in the past, was the collective concern of the state.’\textsuperscript{71}

While institutions might have felt pressure from the government to reach a broader audience, quite a number of artists have been concerned with breaking open the ‘elitist’ art world since at least the end of the 1960s, when, for example, British artists began to collaborate on art projects with members of marginalized communities or less privileged neighborhoods.\textsuperscript{72} Bishop has stressed that for these artists, participation in creative processes was to empower the less privileged and lead to ‘democratic cultural production.’\textsuperscript{73} Most of these art projects came to an end in the 1980s, due to a lack of government funding in this period (during which Thatcher was prime minister).\textsuperscript{74} According to Arie Altena, similar projects existed in the Netherlands in the 1970s, but here such projects were often classified as ‘kunstzinnige vorming’ (art education) or amateur art.\textsuperscript{75} Since the 1990s a renewed interest has been shown by artists to activate the audience and engage with certain communities, as also mentioned in Chapter 1. But while socially engaged artists today often claim to have similar emancipatory aims, the co-option and encouragement of participatory strategies by neoliberal policymakers has lead to accusations of complicity. ‘Community art’, the term used today for art projects that involve engaging with a certain neighborhood or community, has been attacked for not being critical enough.\textsuperscript{76}

One further connection contemporary art might be seen to have with precariousness is its appearance as a recurring theme in contemporary artworks. In 2009, Hal Foster declared that: ‘No concept comprehends the art of the past decade, but there is a condition that this art has

\textsuperscript{68} It has been pointed out to me that his name might be spelled ‘Erik Beenker’ - without the ‘s’. In De Strip 2003-2004: Westwijk, Vlaardingen, however, it was spelled with the ‘s’.


\textsuperscript{70} Trienekens, 2006. p. 27.


\textsuperscript{72} See: Bishop, 2012[a]. pp. 177-191.

\textsuperscript{73} Bishop, 2012[a]. p. 178.

\textsuperscript{74} Bishop, 2012[a]. p. 187.

\textsuperscript{75} Altena, 2016. p. 28.

shared, and it is a precarious one.’

Foster seemed to see ‘precariousness’ as an overarching theme of art in the 2000s, connected to a general ‘state of uncertainty’ and ‘social instability’ felt at the time. Foster wrote that he first came across the ‘condition’ in the work of the artist Thomas Hirschhorn, who frequently uses the term ‘precarious’ when he discusses his own work. The artist uses the term to refer to his work’s impermanence, to the important role contingency plays in his work and to the flimsiness of the materials he uses. Hirschhorn, furthermore, not only exhibits his work in museums but has also frequently constructed work in disadvantaged neighborhoods, with the help of community members, whom he refers to as the ‘precat’, defined by the artist himself as: ‘those who have mobility, they have to invent things, they feel what is necessary and what is not.’

In his discussion of early twenty-first century art Foster, however, focuses on the aspect of entreaty, which lies at the heart of the original meaning of ‘precarius’. The works he highlights all feature this pleading-quality, take the work of Isa Genzken at the 2007 Skulptur Projekte in Münster, for example. Genzken had placed assemblages of dolls and kitschy artifacts underneath cheap umbrellas beside the Liebfrauen-Überwasserkirche (fig. 49). In the eyes of Foster, the precarious constructions seemed to appeal to the neglectful church: ‘Quickly blown apart, the tacky umbrellas signaled the opposite of shelter, and everything else also appeared utterly abandoned. (In this case, Our Lady offered no sanctuary, turning her grim Gothic back on these miserable leavings.)’ To Foster, this pleading, even accusing tone was characteristic of the art of the new millennium.

Foster was not the only one to see precariousness as the concept that binds contemporary artworks. At around the same time as Foster, Nicolas Bourriaud stated that ‘precariousness now pervades the entirety of the contemporary aesthetic.’ For Bourriaud the artists of this ‘precarious aesthetic’ are wanderers and their works are transitory and nomadic in nature.

77 Foster, 2009.
78 Foster, 2009.
79 Foster, 2009.
80 Foster, 2009.
81 Foster, 2009.
84 Foster, 2009.
85 Foster, 2009.
According to Bourriaud the ‘precarious aesthetic’ was first shown in the 1990s, when artworks started to:

oppose the luxurious forms of art of the preceding decade by exalting the precarious against the solid, the use of things against their exchange under the aegis of the language of advertising, the flea market against the shopping mall, ephemeral performance and fragile materials against stainless steel and resin.\(^{89}\)

One of the earliest manifestations of this new ‘aesthetic’ was seen by Bourriaud in Jason Rhoades’ installation for Cologne’s ‘Unfair’ in 1993, *13 Booth Cologne Country Fair*. This installation incorporated the disarray, the cheap materials and the indefinite character that Bourriaud points to as the elementary characteristics of the ‘precarious aesthetic’.\(^{90}\) Bourriaud reports that at the time the installation confused him, but the economic situation seemed to account for ‘the allusions to homeless encampments’ \(^{91}\) he saw in the work.\(^{92}\) The French critic compares Rhoades’ installation to Tiravanija’s *Untitled (Free)* (fig. 3), another early instance of precariousness in art according to his account.\(^{93}\) Like Foster, Bourriaud refers to the work and ideas of Hirschhorn to argue that the ‘precarious aesthetic comes “from below” and cannot be distinguished from a gesture of solidarity.’\(^{94}\)

*The Roof* in Rotterdam

As mentioned in the Introduction, *The Roof* is not a typical delegated performance. Considering Bishop’s definition of the practice, *The Roof* might not be considered a delegated performance at all, as the performance is usually not delegated to a specific group of (non-professional) participants, but to the audience and the artists also perform themselves.\(^{95}\) Others however, like Jen Harvie and Keren Zaiontz, have considered the practice of delegating more broadly and include the delegation of tasks and roles to audience-members.\(^{96}\) Additionally, Moha has attempted to include specific groups in the project, though not consistently in performances of *The Roof*, as will be discussed below.

So far there have been several iterations of *The Roof*, starting with its conception in the Veem Theatre in 2016, briefly mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. One might consider the

\(^{89}\) Bourriaud, 2009. p. 82.


\(^{91}\) Bourriaud, 2009. p. 87.

\(^{92}\) Bourriaud, 2009. p. 87.

\(^{93}\) Bourriaud, 2009. p. 87.

\(^{94}\) Bourriaud, 2009. p. 89.

\(^{95}\) See, for example: Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 91.

presentation Moha gave at the Rietveld School another iteration. Since I started writing about The Roof other performances have been held, mostly in different locations in Amsterdam. For this case study, however, I focus on the performance of The Roof that I witnessed and participated in at the 7th International Community Arts Festival (ICAF) in Rotterdam, which was held from the 29th of March to the 2nd of April in 2017.

The ICAF is a festival which - though open to everyone willing to pay for a (rather expensive) ticket - seems to be meant mostly for artists who work in the field of community art. It is an event that is organized every three years, where those involved with community art can exchange ideas, participate in each others’ work and establish collaborations. The genre of ‘community art’ is defined by the festival itself as:

a constellation of very diverse practices that are characterized by more or less intense, reciprocal collaborations between trained artists and people who normally speaking are excluded from active involvement in the arts. It’s the evolving relationship between ‘artists’ and ‘non-artists’ in the course of a creative process that is often considered central to this work.

In an interview, the director of the ICAF, Eugène van Erven, has said that Moha was invited for a number of reasons. First of all, the chosen theme for this year was ‘movement’. Though Van Erven stresses that ‘movement’ was to be interpreted in multiple ways, including in the sense of ‘social movement or activism,’ one of the reasons this theme was chosen was the fact that within the genre of community art in the Netherlands there were not very many dance-projects. The Roof did not really engage with what Van Erven called ‘formal dance’ but this project was based on movement and participation. What interested the organization of the ICAF as well was the unconventionality of Moha. The collective was seen to be ‘experimental,’ Moha represented, in the words of Van Erven: ‘possibly what you could regard as a newer generation of artists.’

The Roof was listed as a ‘short workshop’ in the information booklet of the ICAF. The performance was meant to give an impression of the possibilities The Roof had to offer ‘as an

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100 Van Erven, 2017.
object and an idea.” Though the program of the ICAF introduced *The Roof* as an art project that ‘reach[es] out to a non-exclusive audience of wo/men from all walks of life, including people in the margins of society,’ the audience, or rather the participants, of *The Roof* at the ICAF consisted of a very specific group of people - all involved or interested in community art - and the performance seems to have been adjusted to this group of people.

The team of Moha had planned what Reschofsky and Pons have referred to as a ‘parkour,’ which started with the unfolding of the tarp on a public green area across from the Islamunda cultural centre, which hosted the festival (fig. 50). From there the tarp would not only be carried to and through a shopping centre, but also to a retirement home, through a private garden and to the balconies of an apartment block, all in the neighborhood of IJselmonde, Rotterdam. In these different locations, the activities set out by Moha consisted of: setting up a ‘complaint office’ in the shopping centre, staging a dancing/singing performance of Whitney Houston’s ‘The Greatest Love of All,’ engaging with residents of the retirement home, picnicking on a public lawn near the retirement home and, finally, unfolding the tarp like a flag from the balconies of the apartment block. The members of Moha also participated in these activities themselves and figured as guides.

At the start of the ‘workshop’ participants were given white overalls to wear over their clothing, immediately distinguishing them from other users of the spaces where *The Roof* was ‘set up’. According to Reschofsky this was, in part, done precisely to make the participants feel different: ‘It’s a performance, so you shine out a bit.’ On me it had the effect of making me feel, constantly, as an intruder and I was not alone, a student from Utrecht reported feeling uncomfortable and exposed. Another effect the ‘uniform’ had is that we were immediately recognized as a group by other users of the spaces we passed through.

Reschofsky and Pons see their nomadic public performances as a way of ‘testing a space.’ Moha’s website states that in Rotterdam the performance of *The Roof* was used ‘to measure the existing parameters and potentials of one place.’ What seems to have interested Reschofsky and Pons in particular is how we are expected to behave in certain spaces and to test the

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107 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
108 Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
110 Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
potential for new behaviors to emerge. The overalls worn by the participants can be seen as a part of this investigative approach on two levels: the overalls, like our activities with the tarp, made us stand out as different, and they gave us the appearance of inspectors. Reschofsky has even likened the activity involved in the performance to the activity of a ‘scientist,’ when asked about the role of the overalls - which are indeed reminiscent of the protective overalls worn by scientists working with hazardous materials. In this regard, certain elements of The Roof might perhaps be compared to the dérives of the Situationist International. A dérive involved wandering through a city, usually in small groups, in order to experience the different spaces of the city and contest ‘the representation of space produced within the social relations of capitalism.’ A key difference is that the routes of dérives were not planned ahead and were supposed to be spontaneous.

The activity of ‘declaring a space’ with the tarp, seems to have been part of ‘testing’ the space. Unsurprisingly perhaps, this activity led to some confrontations.

‘The Complaint Office’
The activity of setting up a ‘complaint office’ in the shopping centre - Keizerswaard - involved walking into the shopping centre holding the tarp (fig. 51), then using the tarp and objects in the shopping centre to set up the ‘complaint office’ (fig. 52), asking people about complaints they might have about the space and handing out envelopes containing fragments of The Roof’s ‘manifest’ (see Appendix 2).

The first time that the performance was staged in Keizerswaard, the group was asked to leave, according to Pons and Reschofsky. Of course, the sudden disruption of people’s routines and the general order in the shopping centre could be perceived as bad for business. This sudden deterritorialization of the space could be considered a threat to the shopping centre, especially

112 Reschofsky has said: ‘we have so much space that is not our private space, it is where we are all together. What is happening there? In the spaces, which we pass by, you know people will always stay somehow in their own groups, or when you go to eat outside or have a coffee you still carry your own little private sphere, when does it break? Dissolve into this public? I don’t know and that’s … I think we are interested in this … what to do in this public space… we do very specific things in our daily life, we walk, we sit, we wait for the bus, we smoke, all these kinds of things, but do we take a nap? Do a dance?’. Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.

113 Reschofsky has said: ‘Of course we looked weird but when people asked us what we were doing and we said we were ‘onderzoekers’, scientists, and it was strange but it was believable… and people believed, and that was nice.’ Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.

114 The Situationists were a group of European (mostly French) intellectuals and artists active from 1957 to 1972, most notably Guy Debord, who were critical especially of consumer culture and aspired to transform everyday life. See, for example: Pallardy, 2016.


117 Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.

118 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
since it was unclear what the aim of this group was. The tactics of The Roof could furthermore have come across as quite aggressive. The fact alone that Moha wanted to establish a complaint office to collect complaints about the space in the shopping centre might have been seen as antagonistic, but the participants of The Roof also seemed to establish a new order, not just by their persistent presence as a group, but also by their perhaps rather audacious appropriation of the material environment of the shopping centre.

Moha sees using the materials they come across and repurposing these materials, as part of their nomadic philosophy, in the words of Reschofsky: “instead of bringing stuff outside, you use what is out there […] you make the outside into the things you need. We have The Roof, we have the fabric, and then we transform it with what is outside.”\(^{119}\) At the shopping centre, the participants, for example, used the mobile billboards they found in the area to drape the tarp over. They also used a large pillar in the centre of a hall to display the collected complaints on post-its (see fig. 52).

Like others, the artists of Moha have pointed out that public spaces are becoming increasingly privatized.\(^{120}\) The manifest of The Roof even states that “The Roof is a re-publicization of space.”\(^{121}\) Urban researchers like Elke Krasny and Bradley L. Garrett, to name just two examples, have argued for some time that there is “a global public space crisis.”\(^{122}\) Public spaces, they argue, are endangered by increased surveillance (in the name of anti-terrorism) and neoliberal policies which have lead, for example, to formerly public spaces being sold to private corporations (which are free to police these spaces according to their own rules).\(^{123}\) In the eyes of Garrett, many (seemingly) public spaces have come to support one activity, and one activity alone: consumption.\(^{124}\) Reschofsky and Pons have said that they want to open up the space to more possibilities, to open, in the words of Pons: “little poetic windows in the city and [show] non-economical value,”\(^{125}\) to stimulate people to “think about giving value to things that are not always efficient or things that are not always directly useful… but based on imagination.”\(^{126}\) It therefore seems fitting that the participants in Rotterdam laid claim to a space in a shopping centre and redeployed the objects they found there.

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\(^{119}\) Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.

\(^{120}\) In my interview with Pons and Reschofsky, Reschofsky lamented that “there are no public spaces anymore.” Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.


\(^{122}\) Krasny, 2016. p. 212.


\(^{124}\) Garrett, 2017.

\(^{125}\) Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.

\(^{126}\) Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.
One may wonder, however, if the performance was successful in showing other possibilities for the use of this semi-public space. Perhaps some passersby who were approached and asked about their outlook on the space in the shopping centre, did think critically about how this space made them feel. Most, however, had no complaints or referred to small changes which could be made to the decor. An elderly lady approached by me mentioned feeling unsafe because of the growing number of immigrants in the area. Such standpoints might have been brought into the open during the performance, but they were not brought into question by The Roof. The participants of The Roof, however, might indeed have experienced the space differently. As mentioned before, I personally felt like an intruder because of the way I looked (white overalls) and the way the group I was in conducted itself: we were out of the ordinary, not just in the shopping centre but everywhere we went.

As we moved from one space to another - from a public square, to a semi-public shopping centre, to a private garden, to the semi-private corridors and balconies of a residential building - I, personally, felt the code of conduct change. In the shopping centre I became more aware of the looks we received as a group and sensed that the bearings of the group overall were more subdued. I could not help feeling like we were in transgression, especially in the private garden, where I even felt the need to ask if we had permission to be there (we did). In the garden the entire group became silent, the pace slowed down and the tarp was lowered (fig. 53). In my interview with Pons and Reschofsky, Reschofsky called the atmosphere ‘intimate,’ it was, in her words ‘a silent moment of respect,’ though to some it might have felt more like trespassing. As a privileged White woman who does not have much experience with being excluded, I felt more aware of the unwritten rules that spaces impose, rules which I usually instinctively abide by and which exclude not only certain behaviors, but also specific groups. This awareness of space is part of what Moha attempts to show, it seems. Pons has mentioned, for example, that their performance: ‘underlines the existing ritual of the space,’ which is made ‘more obvious’ by activities which seem out of place, such as a performance of The Roof.

Based on the above, one might say that in the genre of community art The Roof is rather atypical. In community art, artists usually seek to collaborate with a certain community on an equal footing. Usually community artists, therefore, try to integrate themselves into such a community. Though Reschofsky and Pons have also claimed that they want to establish a connection with the people of a certain neighborhood over time and ‘find this sort of equal situation,’ the participants of The Roof in Rotterdam - many of whom were involved in

127 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
128 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
129 Alice Pons, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.
130 Alice Pons, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.
131 Alice Pons, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.
community art - entered the neighborhood unambiguously as outsiders and from a seemingly powerful position, as ‘inspectors’. In some ways it might be argued that the role participants were given in The Roof (in Rotterdam) conflicted with the role of the typical community artist, though it is unclear whether this was one of the intentions of Moha. In other iterations of The Roof so far, participants do not seem to have been given white overalls to wear.

**The Roof: Community Art?**

Like other community artists, the artistic team behind The Roof has certainly tried to engage with ‘non-artists’ in their development of The Roof. In its preparatory phase the core team reportedly visited a homeless shelter in Amsterdam, called Makom, on a weekly basis, to talk about what a ‘roof’ meant for the people visiting this shelter. Pons has said that they wanted to collaborate with homeless people because ‘they are experts in surviving in precarious states, but also experts in public space, in finding spots.’ Their experience at the shelter taught the group to be clear about their purpose, which is not to actually offer a real ‘roof’. Some at the shelter were angered by this, according to Pons and Reschofsky. Others, however, shared their ideas, even contributing drawings, photographs and poems.

The collective also worked with children in this phase, whom they call ‘experts of the imagination.’ The children of ‘Brood en Spelen’ (an after-school program) were asked to imagine a building that they found missing in the city and created 3D models, which were displayed alongside the models of the people from the Makom-shelter, engineering students from the Technical University in Eindhoven, as well as other participants in the workshops given at the Veem Theatre (see fig. 54, for some examples).

Though most participants in Rotterdam were visitors of the ICAF, Moha did actively attempt to engage with local community members, focussing particularly on the residents of a local retirement home - the Sonneburgh. The group did not enter this home (except once, when they were explicitly invited to) but attempted to engage with people entering and leaving the building. The artistic team hoped that on the last day of the festival some of the elderly residents would join The Roof for a picture and follow them to the next activity: a sort of picnic. The tarp was used as a banner to invite the residents (fig. 55). In the end, however, just two people joined

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133 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
134 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
the group on the last day (fig. 56). What might be more important than who actually engaged, however, is who the artistic team of Moha specifically attempts to engage.

So far the artistic team has tried to collaborate and engage with a few specific groups. Apart from a group of engineering students from Eindhoven - whom they contacted for advise on the design of The Roof - they have focussed on: homeless people, children and elderly people. It is probably collaborations such as these that align the practice of Moha with the genre of ‘community art’. Homeless people, children and elderly people might be thought of as groups that are ‘excluded from active involvement in the arts.’ They are, furthermore, often considered more vulnerable in numerous ways and more dependent on care. What they might be seen to share with artists, to some degree, is that homeless and elderly people (in particular) are often deemed to contribute little to the economy and even to weigh upon the economy by depending (too much) on the government for support. Especially since the financial crisis of 2008, the Dutch government has not only introduced budget cuts for the cultural sector, but also for elder care and youth services, among other public services. These austerity measures have been considered to lead to more homeless people in the Netherlands. It is, in part, in Moha’s choice to collaborate with particularly vulnerable (and in some ways dependent) groups of people that one might see ‘precarity’ as a central theme of The Roof. Like contemporary protest movements (in the eyes of Butler), The Roof might furthermore be considered to show our interdependency.

**The Body and the Tarp**

The body and its needs can be seen to play a central role in The Roof. This is demonstrated, first of all, in the name of the project: **The Roof**. Having a roof above one’s head - or some other form of shelter - is a basic bodily requirement. Though it is not the aim to provide actual shelter for those who need it, performances of The Roof have, so far, always included providing a ‘roof’ by means of the tarp. It is here that a second aspect of The Roof comes into play: the tarp needs to be maintained by the active bodies of a group of people, in collaboration - showing people’s bodily dependence on each other. These bodies are, additionally, exposed, at the very least, to

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138 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.

139 These students were connected to the ‘Bouwkundewinkel’, an initiative of the Technical University in Eindhoven. The ‘Bouwkundewinkel’ is run mostly by students and supervised by faculty-members of the engineering department. The ‘Bouwkundewinkel’ advises groups and individuals on matters relating to the field of engineering and was contacted by Moha. At least three students participated in and reported on the events at the Veem Theatre. See: “Bouwkundewinkel.” Bouwkundewinkel Eindhoven. Website last accessed on: 28 July 2018. <http://www.bouwkundewinkel.nl/wat-doen-wij/bouwkundewinkel/>.


141 Silvia Federici writes, for example: ‘At stake in the politicization of elder care are not only the destinies of older people and the unsustainability of radical movements failing to address such a crucial issue in our lives, but the possibility of generational and class solidarity, which for years have been targets of a relentless campaign by political economists and governments, portraying the provisions which workers have won for their old age (such as pensions and other forms of social security) as an economic time-bomb and heavy mortgage on the future of the young.’ Federici, 2012. p. 116.

142 See, for example: Schuurs & Tielbeke, 2017.
the weather and to exhaustion - revealing our bodily vulnerability. Though the tarp is light in weight, maintaining it for a long period of time requires more strength than one might expect, making it necessary to relieve each other, in order to maintain *The Roof*.

The tarp itself plays an important role: it is the tarp that hints at the body’s need for shelter and in a way also provides temporary shelter. It is, additionally, the tarp’s function as a roof that requires people to keep it in the air together - revealing both our interdependence and our vulnerability. As the tarp is used to ‘declare a space’ and provide temporary shelter, it might be compared to the tent of the protest camp. During protests, tents are often used to lay claim to a specific place, which is why tents frequently function as signs to ‘challenge and re-imagine land rights and border controls,’ according to Anna Feigenbaum. *The Roof*, however, is not a protest, of course, and there are some important differences. Whereas the protest-tent becomes significant only when it stays in the same place, *The Roof* moves around and is described by the artistic team as being ‘nomadic’ (though it does return to the same place repeatedly). And, while the disruptiveness of the protest-tent manifests itself especially when it is actually used for shelter, *The Roof* functions more symbolically. Though the continuing privatization of public spaces is seen by Reschofsky and Pons to be a theme of *The Roof*, they do not wish to claim or take back any place. Given the origins of Moha, however, *The Roof* might be seen to lay claim to something else. Reschofsky and Pons have stated that they started the collective for performances in the public space because the budget cuts made it increasingly difficult to find supportive institutions and venues for them as performers (in a sense, they became ‘homeless’ themselves). *The Roof* might, therefore, be considered to lay claim to a performance space and, perhaps more importantly, to an audience.

In its emphasis on interdependency, flexibility and (to a certain extent) inclusivity, *The Roof*, as a ‘democratic and nomadic art institute,’ can also be considered to challenge or ‘reinvent’ the typical art institute. This also seems to be suggested by Rößler, an editor of the website ‘Performance Platform’ (quoted at the beginning of this chapter), who illustrated an article on reimagining the art institution with pictures of the 3D models of *The Roof* designed by children, as well as with pictures of an early performance of *The Roof*. She did not mention *The Roof* in her article, however.

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143 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
146 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
147 The information booklet of the ICAF states: ‘Moha is a homeless artistic collective founded by Hungarian artist Olivia Reschofsky and French artist Alice Pons.’ ICAF, 2017. p. 74.
148 Pons, 2016.
149 Rößler, 2017. A fragment of this article can be found on: Moha collective, “Of Institutions and Fantasies,” website last accessed on: 31 July 2018.
Before I elaborate on the ways in which *The Roof* might be seen to propose an alternative institute, I first wish to address its claim to be ‘democratic’. One may certainly question how ‘democratic’ *The Roof* really is. The artistic team claims that everyone is allowed to participate and also to determine the form it takes, the latter is also suggested by *The Roof*’s manifest: ‘The Roof is moulded by those who - meet, / think, make, build, use, see, need, / reinvent, maintain, care for.. it.’ In Rotterdam, however, there was a parkour and there did not seem to be much room to deviate from this program. As a participant I felt the need to follow the members of the collective and did not really feel invited to ‘reinvent’ *The Roof* or the program. The information available about the ‘workshops’ that took place in the Veem Theater does suggest that there was a more open organization during these events, which according to Moha were attended by a diverse group of people (though an engineering student from Eindhoven has suggested that the majority of participants had a background in the arts). During these ‘workshops’, participants discussed what a roof could mean for them personally, what form a roof could take and how they would need a roof to function. It appears that *The Roof*’s manifest originates from the discussions held at the Veem Theater.

Art institutes, especially museums, are often accused of not being inclusive enough. *The Roof*, on the other hand, not only specifically invites those whom (it could be argued) are often neglected by the standard art institute - homeless people and children, for example - to take part in the formative process, but also takes the performance to spaces where everyone may enjoy it for free. The ‘design’ of *The Roof* with the tarp, furthermore, brings about a non-hierarchical structure, which can be seen to contrast with the structure of the typical art institute. As it is not tied to a specific place, *The Roof*, as an ‘art institute’, might be considered to be less restricted and more flexible than an art institute usually is. Furthermore, in contrast to the monumental building of the archetypal art museum, the design of *The Roof* looks fragile, impermanent and dependent on supporters.

**Precariousness**

*The Roof* demonstrates almost all the characteristics of the ‘precarious’ art described by Foster and Bourriaud. ‘Precariousness’ is revealed in *The Roof*’s impermanence: the ephemeral


154 See, for example: Van Lent, 2016.
performances, the intention to be nomadic, the fragility of its structure and the indefinite nature of the project. *The Roof* also has the quality of entreaty that Foster refers to - it is entirely dependent on support, support it might not always receive. Additionally, the performance is dependent on other factors that can not be foreseen, as Pons has suggested: 'Our work is precarious because [...] it is all about conditions that are there and people who are joining.'

In the formation and maintenance of *The Roof* the artistic team has attempted to bring different groups together: artists, homeless people, children, elderly people, engineers, community members and random passersby. These groups might not seem to have much in common, but *The Roof*, in its fragility, might demonstrate their dependence on each other in a period during which budget cuts have not only been seen to affect the arts, but also, for example, education, care for the elderly and job-security. As Butler, and others, have pointed out, we are increasingly made to feel personally responsible and asked to be self-sustainable. *The Roof*, in inviting participants to maintain a space together, to shelter each other, brings across a different mentality. It may be argued that *The Roof* actually contributes to the displacement of responsibility from the state to ‘volunteers’, but it may also make participants more aware of what privatization might entail. The way the performance in Rotterdam moved from a public to a semi-public space and from a private to a semi-private space - making participants feel the difference - can be seen to contribute to this awareness. It should be remembered, furthermore, that *The Roof* does not provide actual shelter and it would be laughable to suggest that it proposes actual solutions for the precarious state of art institutions, it exposes vulnerability rather than remedying it. Pons and Reschofsky see *The Roof* as a ‘metaphor,’ which ‘inspires the imagination’ - allowing us to imagine alternatives.

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155 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.


157 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.

158 Alice Pons and Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author, 10 May 2017.
Conclusion

As stated in the introduction, the question which has driven the research for this thesis was: what role does site play in exposing and/or destabilizing (a specific) ‘identity’ in the delegated performances *Celebration*, *Walking Monument* and *The Roof*? Delegated performance can frequently be seen to foreground a particular identity as when artists delegate a performance to a group of people, the individuals in this group often assume a collective identity in the eyes of the viewer (especially when these individuals appear to have been selected on the basis of a particular characteristic).\(^1\) One might say this happens irrespective of the site in which the performance is staged, but site does often play a role in the way a certain ‘identity’ is foregrounded. This is certainly the case for the delegated performances *Celebration*, *Walking Monument* and *The Roof*.

*Celebration*, a performance which was delegated to a group of young men, comments on the portrayal of so-called ‘hangjongeren’ (‘loitering youth’) who, according to the artist, were seen as a nuisance in the Rivierenwijk, where Renée Kool staged this performance.\(^2\) Using hip-hop, a youth subculture which (much like the neighborhood) received quite a bit of negative attention at the time, Kool calls attention to the powerful role the media plays in constructing ‘identities’ - mediated images to feel threatened by, but also to identify with. Kool’s performance, furthermore, responded specifically to the square on which the videoclip of *Celebration* was filmed, a square which Kool was critical of and which was designed by the artist Hans van Houwelingen.\(^3\) While Van Houwelingen’s square emphasized integration, Kool’s performance was more ambiguous, focussing on issues which were seen as threatening at the time: loitering youth and the influence of hip-hop.

*Walking Monument* also responds to another artwork, namely the National Monument on the Dam Square, which commemorates the Second World War. This performance, by the Catalan artist Alicia Framis, not only momentarily replaced and replicated the monument, it also highlighted a number of its features. Framis herself focussed attention on how the performance emulated the National Monument’s supposed fragility and inviting character.\(^4\) *Walking Monument* might, however, also be considered to draw attention to the monument’s *national* significance. While the National Monument serves to remind the Dutch people of a shared history, the performance that Framis staged on the Dam Square is recognized as Catalanian cultural heritage - the artist delegated the performance to a group of Catalan *castellers*. I argue

\(^1\) Bishop, 2012[b]. p. 110.

\(^2\) Renée Kool, recorded conversation with author, 10 June, 2018.

\(^3\) Renée Kool expressed her criticism of Van Houwelingen’s square in a recorded conversation with the author, 10 June, 2018.

that, in dialogue with the National Monument, *Walking Monument* comments on the construction of national ‘identities’, particularly on the instability of such identities and their need for recognition and support. One might see these two aspects reflected in the form of both ‘monuments’: in their fragility (significantly heightened in *Walking Monument*) and their appeal to passersby (Framis notably invited local residents to buttress the fragile human tower).

The quality of fragility is also central to performances of *The Roof* which, though not tied to a specific space, do respond to the sites in which they are staged. Unlike the other delegated performances discussed here, Moha, the collective behind *The Roof*, does not usually delegate performances to specific groups of people, relying on audience members instead. The collective has attempted to engage with specific groups for this project, however. In its preparatory phase, the artists, for example, specifically appealed to homeless people, children and engineering students for advice on what they would require of a ‘roof’. As the name of the project suggests, *The Roof* reflects on the issue of shelter, in a very broad sense of the term. For the artists, who have called *The Roof* a ‘democratic and nomadic art institute’, The Roof seems to serve as a tool for imagining an alternative art institute which, one might say, they themselves required after the (Dutch) budget cuts in the arts of 2012.

The performance of *The Roof* which I have focussed on was part of the International Community Art Festival in Rotterdam in 2017. Like in other performances of *The Roof*, a white tarp was used during this performance to ‘declare a space’ within other spaces. The space that is created with the tarp needs to be maintained by a group of people. In this way *The Roof* demonstrates our dependence on each other. Our interdependency is also accentuated by Moha’s tendency to involve vulnerable social groups, particularly: homeless people, children and, in Rotterdam, elderly people. These groups might be considered to be, in some ways, dependent on support and more vulnerable to the neoliberal tendencies which have so negatively affected cultural institutions (and those who depend on these institutions), as well as, to an increasing degree, public space itself.

In Rotterdam, the tarp was first unfolded on a public green space in the neighborhood of IJsselmonde, from there it was taken to other places, such as: a shopping centre, a retirement home, a private garden and the balconies of an apartment building. As a participant one could feel the unwritten ‘codes’ that these different spaces imposed change and during the performance these ‘codes’ were tested in site-specific ways. In the shopping centre, a place which is meant to induce consumptive behavior, a ‘complaint office’ was set up, for example, which was seemingly intended to make passersby more critical of the environment they were in.

The passage through different spaces, from public to semi-public and private to semi-private, can be seen to have made the participants more aware of the effects of privatization in spatial

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5 Pons, 2016.

6 Olivia Reschofsky, recorded interview with author. 10 May 2017.
terms. In this way, The Roof does not foreground a particular identity, but rather brings to the fore a particular condition which, though it affects vulnerable social groups more than others, makes us all dependent on each other.

The Roof might be seen to react to a more universal concern for the welfare of an increasing group of people who, due to neoliberal austerity measures, find themselves in rather insecure situations. On that account, this much more recent performance reflects the trend observed by Claire Bishop and Julia Austin, who noticed a distancing from identity politics in contemporary art by the end of the 2000s, in favor of issues such as globalization and its side-effects.7 Walking Monument and Celebration correspond with the tendencies of the 1990s, when ‘identity politics’ played a key role in the art world.8 Both these performances can be seen to foreground the expression of a specific identity and both relate the expression of this identity to a specific space. This ‘site-specificity’, or interest in ‘context’, has also been seen as a primary concern for many artists and art-institutions at the time, so much so that the term had come to be misused according to Rosalyn Deutsche and Miwon Kwon.9

My choice to study performances which have been staged outside ‘the gallery space’ was not meant to suggest that performances which are staged inside a gallery space do not respond to the social context of this (specific) space. It might be argued that in order for a delegated performance to be in some way disruptive it needs to take its spatial context into account. A performance like Kool’s Hi, how are you today? (fig. 6, discussed in Chapter 1) would not have had the same effect if it had been staged at an airport, where the behavior of the two ‘hostesses’ would not have been so incongruous. Like Santiago Sierra’s 133 Persons Paid to Have Their Hair Dyed Blond (fig. 10), which was discussed in relation to its context by Bishop (see Chapter 2), Kool’s performance was intended for a space where it confronts an art audience with its own social codes, codes which are, in part, determined by the spatial context of the gallery space.10 The staging of a delegated performance outside the gallery space, enables an artist to address the codes and tensions which mark other spaces, relational oppositions which are less specific to the art world. Had Celebration not been staged on the Amerhof in Utrecht, had Walking Monument not been staged on the Dam Square, and had The Roof not been taken through different spaces, then the codes and constructions that these works brought into question would not have been communicated as acutely.

8 See, for example: Saltz & Corbett, 2016.
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