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Foreword by Ola Mafaalani, artistic director of Noord Nederlands Toneel

Letting creativity lend another perspective

I am a theatre maker. A year ago I took up residence in Groningen, the city that is the best-kept secret in the Netherlands.

My impressions: with her loving common sense, my eight-year-old son's school teacher adapts the school system to the children, and not the other way around. Shortly after moving, everything I hold dear is robbed from my home. I get to know the surrounding countryside of the province – *de Ommelanden* – when I search for a place to live with my family outside the city. Auke, the church carillonneur of the *Martinkerker*, is an extremely sympathetic and helpful man. And as a smoker, I'm gratified by the obstinacy of some of the bars and cafés in my city.

The strongest impressions are those of the underbelly of a community – the losers, the ones who are kept at a distance or go unseen. What do these people think of our well-organised, safe city? That's what theatre is about for me. Offering the murderers, the bewildered and the maladjusted a place in society for two hours. Not to say they're right, but to follow them. Are people being trafficked here? Are children being abused? Just recently, I saw two women in the *Ebbingestraat* yelling at a kid who was about eight, and then the mother pushed him with her bike wheel, spurred on by her friend. I was flabbergasted. Many passers-by walked on, not reacting at all. Groningen is a city that successfully realizes major ambitions – with its Groninger Museum, Forum and UMCG hospital. But at the same time the flip side of life makes its presence felt, in no uncertain terms. 'The streetwalker's zone is an institutionalised and tolerated form of abuse', a prostitute in our city once told me.

I've given a major part of my life to the theatre because I'm convinced that only people count. Because it saves me from nights of television, as it does my audience, filled with endless zapping from reality shows to precious marketing competitions full of cliché talent, from a breathless little chat to the umpteenth expert, who predicted everything ages ago. It's my dream to let creativity lend another perspective.

This city harbours courage, cockiness, dedication and roughness. Whether it always makes use of these qualities, I wouldn't know. I only know that it's possible. I love that Hans Nijland, the manager of the FC Groningen football club, reflects on the city's culture with me. That the province's Royal Commissioner played the role of Kreon. That the mayor gave me his cell-phone number. That taxi drivers know their way to the Machinefabriek theatre. And especially that the city knows, 'The

NNT (The Northern National Theatre Company) is ours.'

TWIST is investigating the meaning of creativity for the city. It shows the city as a fountain of opportunities. It only lifts a mere bit of the veil... This is TWIST II; I can't wait for TWIST III.

P 18-19

From the editors

Reader,

Be forewarned. We're no orthodox lot. We have taken the notions of the 'creative city' and 'creative industry' in their broadest sense. We see the creative city as the sum total of qualities that make a city a city, where not only functions and goods are traded, but also ideas, meanings and energies. Now that Groningen calls itself a creative city like so many others likewise do, we reconsidered what 'creativity' really is and what creativity and the city have to offer one another. Because we, the editors, are from the art world (TWIST I was linked to the last Atelierroute in Groningen – when artists open their studios to visitors), we decided to investigate our own role in the scheme of things. We have given art and culture in the creative city a prime role and have embedded it in what is known as creative industry.

We have found writers prepared to reflect in TWIST FORUM on everything to do with creativity, the creative city and creative industry, and invite you to think along with us. In TWIST INDEX we throw light on the city of Groningen as a creative web. Effervescent, dynamic, inspired. We focus on private individuals, institutions and businesses. Everything that managed to escape our gaze, we'll save for TWIST III.

TWIST II presents creativity as opportunity. And if there is anything that we as editors believe in, it is in the power of creativity as a city's driving force.

P 22-23

Creativity: sense and nonsense

By Frank and Maarten Meester

Maarten: When I think about creativity in Groningen, I'm reminded of the year 1570, when Serenoog was wiped away by the sea. Ever since, the channel between the islands of Schiermonnikoog and Rottumeroog, where once this island must have been, is called the Serendiep.

Frank: I don't understand what this tidbit has to do with creativity. What is it? Does it provide sensible solutions to contemporary problems or

has creativity just become a phrase to be used at will, something that doesn't really signify anything? That's what the editors of TWIST asked us.

Maarten: That's exactly why I'm telling this tale. It just so happens that the answer lies in the journey that the only survivors of Serenoog made, the two sons of the foremost farmer of the island. They decided to find the magic formula with which they could change the Serendiep back into Serenoog. Luckily, the brothers were good at crossing mud flats. After a journey fraught with danger they managed to reach the mainland. Once they were safe, there were suddenly many more roads to choose from. Which one led to the magic formula? The brothers finally decided to follow the tracks of a donkey.

Frank: With which you're attempting to say that creativity is nothing other than following the beaten track. T.S. Eliot proved to be right when he allegedly said that 'creativity is a form of elegant theft'.

Maarten: The story isn't over yet. Lush, fresh grass was growing to the right of the path the brothers were following. But as one of the brothers noticed, only the grass to the left had been grazed. The ass was blind on its right side, he concluded.

Frank: You mean that although everyone is a creative being by nature, we lose our originality and fantasy. The preponderant rational, linear, instrumental thought blunts our creativity. Creatively, we are blind.

Maarten: Just listen, will you. The younger brother noticed that one of every four hoof-prints was less deep. The donkey must have been lame.

Frank: Yes – not only are we blind with regard to creativity, but lame as well. There is no longer any room for the genius who creates from thin air. Uniform schooling has perhaps made us efficient and disciplined, but it has also beaten practically every kind of creativity out of us. The television finished it off: the same old stories, over and over, have taken care of the last shred of imagination – laid it to waste.

Maarten: When they continued on their way, the elder brother saw countless ants to one side of the road eating the food that lay there. On the other side he saw bees busy with a sticky mass. He now knew that the donkey was on its way to the market: loaded on the one side with butter and on the other with honey.

Frank: That's it. Contemporary creativity is both blind and lame, because it has market value. Administrators and developers think that artists contribute to the economic development and urban planning of the city, and bring fresh impetus to the urban living space. 'Creative professionals' – what's in a name – are supposed to make the city attractive to business and inhabitants. But that's no minor misconception. If you choose for commerce, you'll never be creative. Only autonomous art is true art.

Maarten: Shortly thereafter the brothers reached Groningen, where they met a donkey drover who

was missing one of his donkeys. They knew so much about the missing donkey that the drover accused them of theft and had them imprisoned.

Frank: Which is just your way of saying that the market with its uniformity killed off the last genius.

Maarten: The authorities freed the brothers in no time at all. They decided to remain in Groningen and took up residence in an old bathhouse, where soon a group of like-minded people assembled. They never did discover the magic formula, but as a sideline to their quest they did invent the *Post-it*, as well as penicillin, *Viagra*, cosmic background radiation, polyethylene, tissue paper and the psychedelic effects of LSD. That's the way creativity works. Just like the magic formula – it doesn't exist. And even so, creativity has been proclaimed to be one of the most important human qualities. We find the creative process spellbinding. The artist to us is either a sorcerer or a saint. We spend tremendous amounts from the public coffers to promote creativity. While actually we should replace the word 'creativity' with 'serendipity': it's about finding what you weren't searching for. Do you understand at last why I wanted to tell this story?

Frank: I already knew when you mentioned the name 'Serendiep'. I knew the whole time what you wanted to find at the end of your tale, but tried desperately to find what you weren't looking for.

P 24-26

Creative city

Groningen reinvents itself

Groningen presents itself as a creative city. The Ebbingekwartier district has chosen for a future as a creative urban zone. The background, the opportunities and the developments.

By Jeroen Saris

Some cities have the strange quality of reinventing themselves time and again. Not every city can do so. There are cities that have only blossomed once or have had only one distinguishing quality, and then eased off into slumber. Groningen is not like that. You notice as much upon arrival. A never-ending stream of people, young and old, students, sightseers and civil servants move to and fro from the station. The stream doesn't pass through the beautiful station hall, but past the side of the bus station and over a bridge along the Groninger Museum. This is no mistake, but a statement, from the last time but one that the city reinvented itself. The museum is considered such an icon that the stream of visitors was diverted for it. What was the result? The city centre was enriched with a burgeoning neighbourhood, filled with antique shops, culture and restaurants.

In early 2008 I was approached by the municipality of Groningen and asked if I could investigate whether a creative economy could be an option for Groningen and if the *Nieuwe Ebbingestraat* and the *Boterdiep* neighbourhood would lend themselves to providing the proper locale. The *Groninger Gist* event had already shown that the creative sector in Groningen warmed to the idea of a 'creative city'. Etin had just conducted an investigation into the power of the creative economy, which had shown that Groningen had the most potential of all cities in the northern Netherlands. Although no single sector really stuck out, the amalgam of design, creative services, media, and the arts and performing arts was larger than average. A number of joint creative buildings like the *Puddingfabriek* had come into existence and a group of creative people had joined together in Station CS with the aim of promoting the creative economy. They had also come up with the *Ebbingekwartier* district: the future creative hotspot. The question then was: Is this true, and how can a neighbourhood be made creative?

In the discussion about the 'creative city' there are different storylines mixed together. Creative economy is not 'art' but an economic sector. The 'creative city' wasn't invented by an American professor, but is the answer to the disappearance of traditional industrial activity from cities in the most developed countries. People in both the UK and in the USA, like Charles Landry, Sir Peter Hall, as well as Richard Florida wondered what the future would be of former industrial cities such as Manchester, Newcastle, Pittsburgh, Lille, Bilbao and Helsinki. Peter Hall claimed in the early 1990s that a new golden age would emerge for cities that were able to couple economic innovation with culture and new urbanity. Richard Florida investigated the role of talent and tolerance with regard to economic prosperity. Landry experimented with urban strategies meant to lead to developing new urbanity. The Guggenheim in Bilbao, Newcastle's cultural strategy and the light festivals in Helsinki all fit this quest. Groningen was an early contender with the Groninger Museum.

As usual, the answer was not to be found in cities lacking in diversity. The places that had a wider economic and cultural repertoire were the ones where successful experimentation was possible. This is known as the '*SoHo Effect*'. In the 1980s and in the early 1990s experimental activity took place in the rundown industrial districts of Boston, London, Amsterdam, Hamburg, Berlin and Milan. Pioneers such as squatters and temporary inhabitants settled in old buildings and experimented with culture, parties, open source and design. In Berlin the word '*Raumplaniere*' was coined. 'Culture' in terms of lifestyle and nightlife turned out to be an important magnet for these cities.

The rise of the creative economy has yet another component. The industrial economy and science in the 19th and 20th centuries excelled in rationalisation and specialisation that went further and further. Industry produced ever more products on an ever larger scale and against falling costs. The rise in prosperity has led to an increased need for quality and sustainability. Consumers' desire for meaningful and well-designed products has grown. Meaning and perception are exactly what

the creative economy is good at. The demand for creative disciplines is growing in every field. Some of the creative professionals are hired directly by the producers, but an increasing proportion is being hired from outside. A flourishing sector of creative service providers has come into being, that deals with perception, communication, design, industrial design, marketing, research and technical design.

This sector has grown quicker in some parts of the country than in others. On the northern wing of the Randstad region, employment in the key creative professions and in IT, together with related organisation, distribution and application, makes up 20% of all employment. In other parts of the country it is just 6% of jobs, on average. The growth in these sectors doesn't seem set to fall off in the near future. Its proportionate size is also on the rise because there are less and less traditional white-collar jobs and jobs in industry. The current economic crisis hardly seems to influence this. Rather, rationalisation in industry and administration will take on an even quicker pace. The creative economy does not seem to have reached its limits yet.

The temporary developments in the creative economy that came about spontaneously were a good lesson. Developers, space makers, building corporations and municipalities have in recent years attempted to translate these lessons into new strategies for creative economy development in the city. Together with *Habiform*, my company *De Stad bv* has developed such a learning process and documented it in the book *Nieuwe ideeën voor oude gebouwen* (New Ideas for Old Buildings). Contrary to what is often stated, a creative climate can very well be 'manufactured'. Creativity isn't the far cry from manufacture it's made out to be. Creativity has everything to do with imagination, with being able to conjure up and seeing new opportunities, with the many layers of reality. Manufacturing a creative urban environment has little to do with laying bricks, but everything to do with exploiting the new urban vitality – the flow.

Groningen has already done this before. At the close of the 19th century the city also reinvented itself – at the gas factory lot and on the *Boterdiep* canal. The 1903 exhibition of industrial and artisan production drew international attention. The brands *Gerzon* and *Simplon* gained national renown. The gas factory catapulted Groningen into the age of modern cities providing energy and lighting. The combination of public and private enterprise that existed at the time should inspire us today. Groningen now again needs innovative entrepreneurs to broaden the economy and modernise it. The city can't survive on the merits of large knowledge institutions and a university medical centre alone, however important they may be. Transforming knowledge into innovative products and enterprise is the challenge of the day. A number of necessary conditions are met in Groningen and in the Ebbingekwartier district in particular: knowledge institutions, creative entrepreneurs, space, history and a distinctive environment. But how prepared are parties to mutually invest in the Ebbingekwartier district?

We interpreted the bench of Mayor and Aldermen's

query as a request to test whether the primary stakeholders in Groningen would be able to produce enough flow and vitality to bring about a creative neighbourhood. The test we carried out in the two events *Ebbinge Gist 1* and *2* resulted in a doubly positive outcome: there were twelve projects that were worthy of attention and the intended partners demonstrated the necessary energy. The existence of Station CS is much more than a nice circumstance. CS is a source of the energy and inspiration for the projects needed to create the creative environment. *Het Paleis* is proof enough. There also turned out to be all sorts of other groups who were able and willing to set up projects for the Ebbingekwartier. The Business Association (*Ondernemersvereniging*) came up with what later became known as *Open Lab Ebbinge* (OLE). The University of Groningen, building corporation *Nijestee* and the Ciboga development coalition (AM) are also contributing. OLE has taken a broader view of itself – not just a temporary village made of shipping containers for factory outlets, markets and events – but as a ‘Laboratory for the Meantime’. The concerted action between the knowledge institutions, the entrepreneurs and the creative activity can only be guaranteed when enough synergy between parties involved in the Open Lab emerges to draw the public to the area. The connecting theme is innovation. The public will come to gain knowledge of innovation in various fields. In the *Groningen Agreement* the Hanze University Groningen, the University of Groningen, the University Medical Center Groningen and the City of Groningen have decided to focus on Healthy Aging, Energy, City of Talent, Entrepreneurship and on internationalisation. What creative economy has to add is: design, significant experiences, meaning, identity and lifestyle. In essence, creative economy will add symbolic value and creative enterprise. By tying in the OLE programme to the themes of the *Groningen Agreement* the Ebbingekwartier district will become the Laboratory for the Meantime: the workplace and testing ground where the new economy and the new urbanity of the city will be invented. In the Ebbingekwartier Groningen will reinvent itself.

Jeroen Saris is head of De Stad bv, an urban development consultancy. He is consultant to the City of Groningen on the development of the Ebbingekwartier district as a creative quarter.

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Where would creative workers like to work?

A survey of small creative entrepreneurs in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Groningen

A record of a conversation with Annet Jantien Smit. By **Janet Meester**.

Annet Jantien Smit is an urban development and spatial planning researcher and advisor. She is doing PhD research at the University of Amsterdam into the spatial qualities of creative work environments. Her research takes place at the neighbourhood level: which qualities in the direct environment determine whether small creative entrepreneurs establish themselves in a certain place? Elements involved are public space and architecture, facilities such as shops, restaurants, cafés and hotels, whether or not there is a professional network – it also has to do with aesthetics, liveability, security and access. The aim of her research is to provide actual tools for urban policy.

Part of Smit’s research is fieldwork amongst creative workers. Sixty-three artists, architects, interior architects, graphic designers, filmmakers and photographers were asked how they judged the urban area where they worked as work environment. They were creative workers in the Amsterdam harbour area Oostelijk Havengebied, in the Rotterdam district known as the Lloydkwartier, and in Groningen in the Hortusbuurt neighbourhood, which in this case also included the Ebbingekwartier district up to the Bloemsingel street. Three creative urban zones, each with its very own particular personality: new, metropolitan, far from the city centre and either ‘finished’ or nearly finished’ in Amsterdam and Rotterdam; old, small scale, on the edge of the city centre and in the midst of development in Groningen. What is unique to Groningen compared to Amsterdam and Rotterdam, and what can we learn from Smit’s findings in relation to the developments in the Ebbingekwartier?

The first thing that stands out is that the creative work areas in Amsterdam and Rotterdam have a different urban appeal than in Groningen. They are both harbour areas with monumental, distinctive, eye-catching, modern architecture that sets the image of the locale and attracts people to it. The respondents felt that these buildings added to the allure of their working place. Where the Hortusbuurt in Groningen is concerned, it isn’t the buildings people mention, but the quality of the public space: the small scale, the streets, the former almshouses built around courtyards, the area around the church the Nieuwe Kerk, the harbour Noorderhaven and especially the Noorderplantsoen park.

Most of the creative workers in the Hortusbuurt indicated that they particularly wanted a quiet place to work. To be part of hectic urban life is no necessity – yet the remodelled garage in a vinewijk suburb is definitely a frightening thought. The Hortusbuurt is appreciated for being a lively neighbourhood, where a variety of residents lives and works, and where you can get the feeling you’re part of the place – even if you spend the whole day in your studio. The neighbourhood as incubator area. The actual interaction between creative workers in the neighbourhood however, is slightly disappointing – people tend to have their own network and the fact that there are colleagues living around the corner doesn’t influence mutual collaboration. The same goes for creative workers in the Amsterdam Oostelijke Havengebied. In the Lloydkwartier in Rotterdam there is more

collaboration due to the fact that the creative workers are housed in a single building: the former power plant called the Schiecentrale. In general, the opportunity to collaborate is not appreciated to be a quality or a condition. It is considered to be more important to be part of a collection of creative businesses in an area that has a creative image, in order to ‘gain strength through numbers’. As far as the Hortusbuurt is concerned: people hop on their bike if they have to, and the world is at their doorstep thanks to Internet and telephone.

In Amsterdam and Rotterdam the creative urban areas are catered to by restaurants and cafés, which have become places to meet other creative workers and to receive clients. The creative workers in the Hortusbuurt tend to make use of the city centre in this regard, as well as for other facilities. Use of facilities is generally linked to perceived quality. If you have to travel a bit for something good, you do. ‘Creative workers are connoisseurs’, says Smit. While Amsterdam workers appreciate their work environment for its metropolitan charm and the fact that they are close to the national creative cauldron, the Rotterdam workers love the special ‘Rotterdam feel’ besides being close to Amsterdam, and the Groningen creative workers enjoy the city as a place to live. It’s quiet, small scale and safe, yet there’s enough going on. ‘It’s easy to keep in touch with the west of the country’, they say, ‘and if I need to I just go there.’

Although the Ebbingekwartier in Groningen is part of the area Smit is researching, the respondents consider it to be another area than the Hortusbuurt, which is demarcated by the Noorderhaven and the park. The Ebbingestraat is seen as a transit area, where you can pick up a bottle of shampoo, and although shops like the ironmonger Mulders IJzerwaren and the spare parts shop Het Oorderdelenhuis are appreciated, it isn’t considered ‘a place to be’ – the Boterdiep is felt to be a mess, unfinished and unsafe. The last point is important to people who often work on weekends and in the evenings. The creative sector doesn’t necessarily want places to work in far-off industrial areas... Security, good access and a nice, green environment with water are important for creative entrepreneurs too.

The respondents in Groningen have high hopes for Het Paleis, which is under development. This former chemistry laboratory is on the edge of the research area, part of the Cibogaterrein district. Will Het Paleis be able to attract other creative enterprises to the area and signal the beginning of the development of a new creative urban zone? ‘It’s possible’, says Smit, ‘but you need more for that’. As far as the average Groningen resident – or stadjer – is concerned, Het Paleis is far from the city centre – as of yet the Ebbingestraat and Boterdiep roads are still a barrier. Smit’s research has shown the importance of distinctive architecture and public space. The Ebbingekwartier has its work cut out in this regard. Architecture and public space can lend allure to the neighbourhood, and they also can reduce the psychological distance between the city centre and Het Paleis. Groningen has a strong tradition of tending to its public space and erecting striking buildings, so this gives plenty of opportunities to the municipality and developers. The Oosterhamrikkade quayside lends itself to using water as a quality. And otherwise festivals and

events can draw in the public, like they often do in Amsterdam. Groningen has a fine past to build on where this is concerned: the Blue Moon event and the Noorderzon festival are just a couple of examples. Finally, a flash place to eat and drink could work, welcoming to all, either inside Het Paleis or nearby. There still isn’t such a place in the city, that the creative crowd can call its own. It could become a meeting ground for creative workers that helps the image of the neighbourhood and that inspires its customers:

‘Wow, what a great place to be...’

P 30-33

The creative industry avant la lettre: Frans Haks’ Groninger Museum

By **Steven Kolsteren**

For the past fifteen years, the Groninger Museum – conceived in the late 1980s and built in the early 1990s – has been an example of a creative impulse for the city.

Outwardly: the building’s exterior is a combination advertising pillar and public exhibition area, for instance under the drawbridge. It emanates towards the station area, with the blue gate shaped like a magnet pulling visitors into the city, as well as towards the city centre shopping area. That the museum is partly a public pathway is no accident.

And inwardly: the museum buzzes with its sensational programming – art, including theatre, plus music, food & drink in the museum’s restaurant.

Design

It is exactly the blend of sensual experience that former museum director Frans Haks (1979-1995) envisioned. Just before he passed away in 2007, he was busy writing about how he had arrived at his point of view. His notes clearly show how he set about things during the genesis of the museum, with regard to both building and programming. Haks gave a great deal of thought to how he designed an exhibition (his words became legendary: ‘I am not to be bothered – I’m busy designing.’ In Dutch (*‘Ik wil niet gestoord worden, want ik zit in een inrichting’*), the latter part of the sentence also means he was in a mental institution. Instead of ‘neutral white boxes lit by daylight’ he introduced curving and coloured walls, (coloured) artificial lighting, scaffolding, fencing for the *Gedekte Tafels* (Decked Tables) exhibition (‘changing fending off to focusing’ and an alternative to expensive display cases, because you also had to be practical) and straw for an exhibition of De Ploeg art. This led to miniature architecture; rooms completely decorated by artists and designs showing a bath cubicle, a football field, peep-show cabinets (*‘What a Wonderful World!’*) and even a shop in the exhibition itself (*Australia Now*).

Commerce

Haks also sought a way to intentionally programme advertising. From typography (posters and record album sleeves), via graffiti (trains, paintings and T-shirts), to advertisements (his farewell exhibition in 1995) – he arrived at what he called ‘Commerce and advertising integrated into an artistic concept’. This encompasses the projects *Voorbeeldige Industrieën* (Exemplary Industries) in 1992, *Business Art Art Business* in 1993, and the collaboration with Mendini and Alessi. *Voorbeeldige Industrieën* was indeed an exemplary exhibition, which showed how businesses could improve their products by engaging artists. The German rug manufacturer Vorwerk was thus able to create beautiful tapestries as well as the carpeting that still cover the floors of the museum’s offices, auditorium and shop. Alessi received a lot of attention, not just because of the product lines (stainless steel kitchenware, wood, plastics), but in particular for its business philosophy: selling emotion. Utensils, appliances and implements are not only useful – they also stimulate the owner as miniature works of art. To this, Haks added his view concerning *super & popular*: the fact that something is popular doesn’t mean it’s no good; quite the contrary – some products are so popular because they are so very good that their quality can be recognised by all, such as Madonna, Swatch and Disney. Haks was quite taken with the fact that the museum was compared to a Disney amusement park, as well as with a fancy dessert. The very same philosophy led to the category ‘business art’, where companies could present their ware as works of art, which meant everything from a special racing bike, garage equipment, down to the sale of helicopter flights as an experience as well as a work of art (Ingold Airlines).

Ensembles

He considered the miniature architecture, the products of the ‘exemplary industries’ and the Alessi and Mendini creations like the 33 mirrors, 100 vases (*100% Make Up*) and the 11 silver tea & coffee services to be a new exhibition category, namely the ensemble. He included all sorts of things, such as the full range of creative output of artists – not just their major works, but also their advertising work – as well as ensembles put to use: the seating and tables in the museum restaurant, and especially the petit fours there – shaped like the museum building (so you could also taste the museum); and finally the museum’s stationery, envelops and all the printed matter it produced, all in the museum’s hallmark style.

Mendini and Haks, like some sort of twins, pointedly researched museums in the Netherlands and elsewhere and delved into the past, ultimately ending up at for instance ‘Wunderkammers’ and baroque palaces. But the museum’s main success as impulse for a creative environment is not the one-off realisation of the building in the post-modern, eclectic style of the 1980s. It is especially Haks’ idea of a total experience, a blend of every discipline imaginable, not only artistic ones, but also commercial. His initial programming scheme, which he hardly had a chance to realise in the building itself, still lies at the heart of the museum’s approach. This holds true for the exhibitions and

their design, as well as for sum total experience, the Friday evenings, the educational programmes with their various experiences, and the use of Internet and digital media. The museum as a treasure chamber of creative impulses – not just a warehouse.

Steven Kolsteren is head of the Educational Department of the Groninger Museum.

P 34-37

Creativity in business

Acting creative leads to creative thought

By **Mathijs Niehaus**

For the purposes of writing this article, I was asked to come up with examples of how people in the creative sector in business had contributed to matters. I agreed to do so enthusiastically, until I came to realise that I hadn’t seen direct input from the creative workers in the companies I had visited in the past decade. No direct input, I deliberately write. There is an indirect contribution. I could give you examples of brainstorming sessions in environments created by artists. However, the most marked indirect contribution the creative sector makes to business is through techniques for creative thinking.

Many companies are on the lookout for that one creative thinker, the brain that will conjure up a completely new product. This idea is based on one of the greatest misconceptions about creativity in the business world. Supposedly it is a talent, a quality, a rare gift that only few are blessed with, while the truth of the matter is that businesses house tremendous potential within their very walls. Every person on earth has what it takes to be creative: a left brain and a right brain. The big difference is that creative workers use these two parts of the brain in another manner. They either do so naturally or because of the nature of the task at hand.

In order to tap the creative potential within business, certain conditions need to be created, or – as is more often the case – blockades must be dealt with. Another possibility is to train people using so-called creative thinking techniques. Researchers have studied so-called ‘creative’ individuals for years, observing and analysing them. They discovered that creative persons use certain models in solving problems or in thinking up something new. This has led to a complete arsenal of thinking techniques and books describing them. These techniques enable people to think creatively, with or without the aid of a facilitator.

It is important to understand the background of these techniques. Creativity is a means and not an end. It’s also the case that for creative people thinking and acting are closely intertwined: they are part of the same flow, so to speak. Acting creatively is a form of creative thinking. That’s

why acting creatively helps stimulate creative thinking. This insight is of the utmost importance for the successful application of creativity in business.

Roughly speaking, you can divide creative techniques into four main areas. The British company *What If!* has given them the following names: *Breakthrough*, *Look around*, *Exaggerate and Chance*. *Breakthrough* means: breaking through standard patterns. Recognising patterns and linking them to earlier experiences is a technique man is very well versed in. Yet if you want to come up with something unique, something different than existed before, it's important to break the usual pattern.

People in the creative sector often want to experiment, to shift boundaries and to consciously break the mould. Just using other materials or techniques can lead to different and fresh results. Many innovative ideas begin firstly by going beyond set patterns and assumptions. 'Why should we try to tempt people to visit a supermarket, why don't we bring the supermarket to them?' was for instance the thought that led to the birth of the SRV van – the Dutch mobile shop –, which has now been succeeded by the online supermarket.

A fresh idea or the solution to a problem is often closer at hand than you would think. Open your eyes and *look around*. Artists in particular are well trained in looking, in observing and making new connections. There are many companies who have adopted this way of thinking. 'In which other fields of business have cheap competitors been a problem and what were the solutions they arrived at there?', is a question the KPN landline telephone service asked itself. This led to the idea of improving their opening hours, which meant you could have a telephone technician visit in the evening. Within companies in particular you will see that people stick within certain boundaries in their thought processes; they needlessly restrict themselves. In art, *exaggeration* is often used in order to make people look at a subject in another way. A police officer drawn with very many eyes can lead to thinking up a neighbourhood watch group. *Chance* is perhaps the best recipe for creativity, but stands the most risk of clashing with the business culture. Businesses and people in business are after all conditioned to attempt to rule out chance. Especially in companies with a strong scientific background attempts are made to shut out influencing factors. However, many major breakthroughs resulted from chance. 3M's yellow *Post-it* success story was the result of a production mishap. Does this mean that a company should just wait for a chance to strike? No – the creative people show us the way – welcome chance; grab it with both hands. They do things without knowing what the results are likely to be and then observe what happens.

It is therefore possible to take the same steps in thinking as creative people do by following techniques, and there is evidence that this can also yield results for businesses. But there is something else as well. Isn't it odd that people in a company who have been labelled as 'uncreative', busy themselves with the most fantastic creative processes in their private life? Organising parties, designing gardens, coming up with ingenious solutions for practical

problems, or even creating a wonderful work of art? Does this occur because one is not afraid to make mistakes at home? Or is it due to the fact that the work itself is done alone and one does not have to conform to the same extent as in the workplace? Is it the lack of pressure to perform? Or is it perhaps the nature of the task that engages other parts your brain?

People in the creative sector think differently, and we are capable of training ourselves to do so. But I'm also convinced that acting creatively also leads to thinking differently. Participants of a painting workshop organized by the company Philips, came up with fresh and in particular innovative ideas for developing new products.

Acting creatively leads to creative thought. Unfortunately, most office environments don't make it possible to act creatively, which is possibly the reason why there are so few people from the creative sector employed in businesses.

Mathijs Niehaus coaches innovation processes in businesses

P 38-39

The creative industry and the economy

Crisis or opportunity?

By Frits Grotenhuis

Help, there's a crisis...

The economic crisis today is perceived as a threat by many. The Chinese characters for 'crisis' (sometimes translated as 'conflict' or 'argument') mean 'danger' and 'opportunity'. A crisis offers opportunities, as well as threats. A crisis means that existing institutions, organisations and business models are at risk, or under dispute. Whoever manages to give new meaning to innovative products or services - well ahead of the game - will strike it rich.

That anyway, is the economic pattern – taking risks in uncertain times can result in a very negative outcome as well as a very positive one. It therefore is good thinking to take changes into account and anticipate the fresh economic equilibrium in which the crisis will finally result. Which sector is more fit to do so than the creative industry?

Economic growth is cyclical. Especially in a recession it is wise to invest in innovation. As soon as growth returns together with market demand, the products and services of tomorrow can be launched. This holds true for major businesses as well as for small enterprises. The secret is to take advantage of the changing demands in the marketplace. The current downturn of the American automotive industry is a good example of what can happen when failing to react quickly enough to an increasing demand – in this case the demand for 'green' cars. Small creative companies are often the ones who are able to adapt quickly to changing demands.

Sustainability is one of the major themes of today and tomorrow. The creative sector should be able to profit from this. The creative industry can also use its countless applications to provide added value in the fields of education and care. The ageing population can profit from the possibilities the new media and IT have to offer, which will let them live at home longer. From a preventive point of view, there are also games applications for the elderly, which can help stimulate memory. In order to tackle issues like these, multidisciplinary solutions are needed. Major companies are collaborating increasingly with small (creative) enterprises that have the necessary expertise.

Creativity as a condition for innovation

There is a plethora of definitions when it comes to creative industry, but the heart of the matter is that this industry is an amalgam of different smaller sectors in which creativity plays a crucial role in the development, production and distribution of products and services. Creativity is a basic condition for innovation these days. Innovation, however, is not purely the development of new technologies. The development as well as the market introduction of products and services has undergone tremendous change in recent years. Technology has taken a back seat, the end user has come to the fore. The end user is already a factor during development, or is where a new product or service originates, or the improved versions of existing ones do. Co-creation is the key to success. Consider software (*Linux*) or design, for instance. The *RedesignMe* company is an example of an open community on the Internet where everyone can join in the design or redesign of a product¹. The development of an ergonomic telephone for seniors is an example of this.

But the *Philips* and *Douwe Egberts' Senseo* is another example of co-creation in developing a very successful product. The combination of design and technology turned an existing product in an existing market into a best seller. Another success story was the 'ambilight' television – which was a television that created a new experience by increasing the scope of the image through projecting changing colour hues onto the surrounding wall. And this at a time when everyone assumed it would be impossible to make much money selling televisions, let alone selling a new type.

New combinations

Where such examples are concerned, it is the addition of an experience - the chance to undergo something - that provides the user with added value. Rejuvenation is indeed possible in a marketplace that seems to have ground to a halt. The economist Schumpeter already remarked that new combinations are the key. This holds even more so for the creative industry. In economically trying times consumers will only want to spend money on products and services that provide them with true added value.

New combinations arise more and more often in conjunction. Seen in this context, open innovation is a concept that more and more organizations are beginning to adopt. The underlying idea is that while parties involved continue to innovate independently with regard to their core competencies (where competition plays a strong role), they also

work in tandem with other companies on shared themes. The idea being that the combined means and thinking power will yield more. Such consortiums often consist of knowledge institutions, major businesses and medium-sized ones. Slowly but surely medium-sized creative companies and small creative enterprises are also becoming involved, as well as non-profit organisations like foundations and cultural institutions. An example of this is the *Creative Conversion Factory* where knowledge institutions, major corporations and medium and small-sized creative businesses are collaborating on projects². Smaller parties often have difficulty in protecting their intellectual property rights adequately, or in providing the co-financing necessary to qualify for subsidies. This is in sharp contrast to major companies who have lawyers aplenty and who are often able to cover the co-financing demands, whether in cash or in staff.

From exploration to exploitation

One of the ways to divide up the creative industry with its diversity of smaller sectors, is to use the structure that the Dutch ministries of Education, Culture and Science and of Economic Affairs use – with a division into the arts and the performing arts, media and entertainment, and creative business services³. The arts and the performing arts make up a separate column that is mainly financed through subsidies. The challenge is to find new ways to finance affairs; the existing funds are at ever more risk, due to the present government policies, as well as the economic crisis. Experiments with displaying art by artists young and old in banks and insurance offices continues to the day. It begs the question what the advantage is to the artist. The deal struck is often that the artist has the 'right' to display his work for free. The banks and insurers have provided themselves with art, without any financial recompense. Little work is ever sold, which isn't a problem for the bank, although it is for the artist. Perhaps banks and other organisations could be tempted into paying a basic fee for displaying art, which has nothing to do with any potential sales.

Artists are becoming more and more involved in collaborating with other disciplines for (potential) customers. The *Temporary Art Center* (TAC) in Eindhoven has begun an experiment called TAC Ideeënfabriek⁴. It is an attempt to meet the latent demand of commercial and other organisations in society. These parties can pose a problem to a combination of independent creative entrepreneurs (such as designers, artists and musicians); they then analyse it and address it by furnishing potential solutions or the direction these could take. An example could be for instance an estate agent looking for ways to make his business more visible and viable. The same creative corps can then be hired to work on the solution.

Long live the crisis!

In recent years the creative industry has shown a better rate of growth than other sectors. On an international note, the Netherlands is known as a creative country with a (yes, it's still true!) tolerant climate – where experimentation is possible. The challenge is to move from exploring possibilities to exploiting them, i.e. cashing in.

The quest is for new combinations resulting in co-

creations, which have added value for users. Then, and only then, will the economic crisis yield opportunity, especially now that the marketplace is so unstable. Creative industry has an important part to play with its eager appetite for innovation.

Frits D.J. Grotenhuis, PhD is an independent management consultant. He is also a guest researcher at the Nyenrode Business Universiteit in the Netherlands. Frits@GrotenhuisAdviseert.nl

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Gadgets and identity

On Homo Economicus and style icon

By Gerda Jonker

In the past few years I've seen many changes in my life and somehow these changes kept leading to people taking a different view of me. When I divorced, there were people who viewed me with pity while others suspected I had a temperamental nature. Likewise, I do the same. I feel very at home in a tasteful interior, and find coffee tastes better when drunk from a beautifully shaped cup. I still can't get used to tattoos and piercings. The zenith of personal, subjective experience to me is my new iPhone, the eagerly awaited style icon from Apple. Such a wonderfully designed object – a joy to look at, to listen to and to work with. A product awaited by the whole world to enable or advance – I still don't know which – digital entertainment. The cell phone is now truly becoming the only pocket multimedia epicentre. Whether this fulfils or has created a need, I also still don't really know.

When I told my children I'd been given an iPhone, they were flabbergasted. Crystal-clear analysis of the generation gap was brought to bear on the technical possibilities: I wouldn't make use of everything it had to offer. I was disappointed. At the very least, I had expected my children's support and enthusiasm, but had to deal with an indubitably harsh, collective generational stereotype.

As proud owner of my new gadget, I decided to take 'iPhone lessons'. A few charitable Human Technology students took pity on me and were prepared to help out. My prestige grew thanks to my new style icon and as I got better at using it, it grew even further. It was a huge personal success. I have taken to watching the news again, although I do it in unlikely places and at unlikely times. I listen to music – there are 63 CDs on my new acquisition – and my 'to do' list has become pleasantly well ordered, inviting me to take forceful action. And out in the water in the middle of the *Waddenzee*, I can check whether it really will be a while before the tide comes in, or whether it's already ebbing again.

In our consumer society there is no lack of beautiful products and great brands. Even buying

a simple T-shirt has become a major event these days. Shops inundate us with colours, brands and models, and we often arrive home with a bag full of everything except that one T-shirt.

There is a need for time and energy to consume everything on offer, to bring order and to creatively make use of the opportunities. There is too much choice, and while one person heads for the hills at the word 'shopping', the other stocks up on everything.

The solution to combating the fatigue related to production and consumption is to create shortages in three different ways: not more, but less – not more, but better – or not more, but more original. This is coupled to the rise in *personal, limited or designer* editions. The end of 'design for all' means a new beginning for everything that is unique, one-of-a-kind, real, honest, original or non-paralleled.

This is the paradox of today's economy of experiences: The more artificial the world becomes, the more consumers long for truly real things. Products that are authentic and that prompt the owner to personalise them in a creative manner. In the eternal battle between rationality and irrationality, emotion seems to be gaining ground. The American elections illustrate how by way of authenticity, sensation and creativity can win the day.

Availability, good prices and quality are no longer sufficient. People these days are in search of creativity. We're suffering from a collective burnout, and what would be the cure? Getting back to basics, to what you find truly important.

Let's call it the democratisation of luxury. Exclusivity flirting with low budget. People want *Prada* as well as *H&M*, and nothing in between. Apparently man is no 'Homo Economicus,' his choices can't always be understood rationally. The concept of luxury has changed to a great extent and actually means: taking good care of yourself, eating well and thinking and acting creatively in order to be able to shape your identity and your life.

A new kind of luxury has come into being in the shape of high quality, sustainable products. Products that provide us with time, and with which we can build a relationship of sorts. A product we can love, which is only possible when there is an emotional layer to our perception of it. A product that lays claim to our creativity and thus proves that it can be of personal value, even if there are millions of people who also have it. A product that develops creativity in man to the fullest extent of the word and in doing so intrinsically improves the quality of life in the sweetest of ways.

Gerda Jonker is a lecturer in Trends and Market as part of the Human Technology programme at Hanze University Groningen, the Netherlands.

P 43-47

*The creative city and autonomous art***‘Creative industry – terrific – but what about us?’**

Arjo Passchier and Janet Meester, autonomous artists, held conversations in which they defined the meaning of their profession and regarded it in the light of the creative city. A report on their findings.

By Janet Meester

The creative city

The creative city of Richard Florida and company was thought up as an economic concept. Now that the Western knowledge industry has lost its monopoly, we must come up with something new in order to remain international market leaders. Today's lightning developments call for new insights and solutions; creative thinking supposedly is the answer.

In Florida's model, creativity is deployed as economic capital. Widespread thinking, developing, renewal and selling take place thanks to the mechanism of creativity. The city where this takes place creates the right conditions and profits from the situation. A flourishing economy, an urban planning flow and a vibrant city life are the result of creativity put into action on all fronts.

The creative industry dedicates itself to the market of demand and supply. All kinds of designers get involved in the business world and concern themselves with developing innovative products. Artists are set to work in think-tanks to harness their innate creative thinking for the good of the industry.

However, autonomous art is hardly mentioned at all in connection with the creative city. Art can enhance a vibrant city life, can be used in public relations by, for instance, banks in exchange for sponsorship, can be exhibited somewhere where networking takes place. *‘Hanging out with culture’* (1). Above all else, autonomous artists – as members of ‘the creative class’ – should be cultural entrepreneurs in a creative city, producing innovative culture that brings creative talent to bear in the interaction with environment, public and the business world. Traditional autonomy seems to have been abolished.

When the economy takes centre stage, autonomous art soon seems to lose out. It just manages to survive and seems to escape the economic model time and again. The why of it is easy. Autonomous artists don't think in terms of supply and demand, profit and loss, but in terms of meaning. Creativity to them isn't principally a way to generate money, but it's a goal in itself.

This article would like to direct the focus to autonomous (visual) art that shows the other side of the economic story – and which presents creativity as an opportunity, a mentality and a bonus, as more than just economic goods.

Creativity is no art

Back to the core question: What do we consider creativity to be? The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes it as follows: Creativity is developing something that is truly new and that is seen as valuable enough to contribute to a culture (2). The clarity and applicability of the product in a cultural domain are important and the expert appraisal of the creative value of the product. Creativity must be verifiable and enduring. The creative process, in whatever field, takes place in five steps – from formulating the issue being addressed, via an incubation period, aha-erlebnis and evaluation, towards solution or insight. It's this mechanism of creativity that the creative industry utilises.

The philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes creativity as a basic human stance, leading to meaning (3). To act creatively is to relate personally to the world around you, continually asking new questions and seeking new insights. Every manifestation of meaningful creativity adds to the development of our sense of reality, a development that knows no end, seeing as our reality encompasses an infinite number of possibilities and meanings that are kept hidden from us.

There is a difference between creativity as a meaningful act that has to do with the way people relate to the world, and professional creativity where people have made it their profession to question reality – or a certain part of it – and have developed the skills and opportunities to arrive at interesting solutions that can be passed on. Here, creative professionals are our subject. While the applied artists and the ‘brainstormers’ among them seek answers to the questions the market provides, the autonomous artists take the liberty of thinking about things outside that market and of formulating their own questions, within their own discourse or that of their field, and subsequently are free to develop new products – be it art or something else – and thus to develop new meanings. Of course a demand from the market or society can lead to an interesting work of art. The point is to have the freedom to circumvent applicability and clarity, in order to guarantee your own style. The autonomous artists are the philosophers among the creative. Seeing creativity as meaning is essential to them; they concern themselves with giving shape to content.

This direct linking of form to content is what makes art what it is, compared to other kinds of creativity. While applied artists and the brainstormers validate their products and ideas by their applicability in the marketplace, the autonomous art is judged for meaning, in the first place in the discourse in their field. This seeming self-insemination is necessary to be able to produce quality that can then be introduced to society. If it has to do with creativity that gives meaning, the autonomous artists are the experts, the scouts, and thus the pioneers.

Autonomous art

The meaning that art uncovers is directly linked to the form of the work of art, and doesn't fall within the usual idea of ‘meaning’. The beauty of the matter is that the meaning of art falls outside the boundaries of usual economic thought: outside of thinking in terms of time, efficiency, feasibility and purpose. Where economic thought threatens

to become obsessed with its own principles, art manages to show that there is more than just money flowing about, and catches the eye of ‘the other side’.

‘We want to grasp the ungraspable, and you give shape to it’, someone visiting the studio once said (4). Art as a ‘language’ is capable of appropriating meanings that other languages – such as those of science and engineering – cannot. It bridges the divide between reason and feeling, reality and illusion, knowledge and imagination (5). Art leaves room for what cannot be said, the unnameable, the intangible. While our society prefers to seek conclusive answers to fitting questions, art leaves room for the fact that life is uncontrollable, impossible to encapsulate in an economic system – or any other system for that matter. Instead of just looking for conclusive answers, it constantly raises yet more questions. It upends the obvious and leaves room for amazement, silence, emotion, love, anger, beauty, ugliness, riddles and the open ending. In an age when everything happens on the run, art offers the opportunity to stand still and take stock, to reflect, to connect with things. ‘Art makes us involved in our life’ (6).

Art interrogates reality. It stems from the dialogue with the world and in turn engages in dialogue with the world. This is where art's engagement is encapsulated – a typical type of engagement that isn't necessarily coupled to political points of view, or views in society; in the first place it's linked to its own involvement with the world.

While the creative industry takes heed of the trends of the day and the extent to which our world can be moulded by presenting the idea as a commodity and the brand as a provider of meaning (7), autonomous art – thanks to its place on the sidelines – offers the opportunity to escape the trends of the day and to return to the authenticity of things. ‘I've never been prone to following hypes and fashions, perhaps that's why I'm so well suited to art,’ a colleague said (8).

Our society seems to want to make art ‘understandable’ by fitting it into the economic system, by charging it with innovating culture and relevance to society. The economy and politics are the points of departure, instead of art. The true meaning of autonomous art is ignored, as is the importance of autonomy in bringing about that meaning. Autonomous artists need space and time to ask their questions, to do their research, to create their work, to develop their own meanings, free from others, free from all. That is the essence of autonomy. True innovation in culture is a result of the autonomous artists' expertise. If autonomous artists had to be absorbed by the market of supply and demand just like that, had to tailor their work to the demands of the consumer, had to open their studios, network non-stop, and ‘cross over’ – they would lose the ability to make the work that they do. In order to arrive at ‘engaged’ and innovative art, access to the studio has to be ‘difficult, not easy.’ (9)

In the discussion about the creative city and autonomous art, singularity must be given centre place. Its supposed intangibility is a unique quality. The ‘empty space’, which is fundamental to autonomous art, namely existence and development outside of fixed structures, must also be ensured in the creative city. (10)

Autonomous art and the creative city

In the creative city, creativity is coupled to the economy. It's important not to lose sight of what the essence of creativity is: providing meaning. As a form of creativity, autonomous art lies closest to this essence. It must be cherished, as in the creative city the never-ending temptation is to let creativity surrender to economic thinking and to use it as appealing catchphrase, but one that has lost its true meaning because it's only used to confirm existing – thought – systems. Autonomous art deserves its own place in the creative city, alongside other kinds of creativity. It can keep the discussion going about what we are up to, as a city, as society, especially from its place on the sidelines.

The cultural climate of the creative city isn't only about the embellishment and a cheerful street scene, but also and particularly about accommodating content, searching for openings and new roads – the willingness to face ourselves, our city and our world with an open mind. Creativity is not just an attitude and a skill; it's also a way of being. A creative city that wants to honour its good name will gladly foster the development of autonomous art and find it a place in its policies. To see the importance of intrinsic developments is a matter of civilisation. Although there is much to be said about the current subsidy system, the pursuit of a substantive cultural climate calls for a financial reckoning. Money must be earmarked for research and development, for studios, podiums and exhibition spaces, for commissions, for acquisitions and for art education. This is what the city can offer art, so that art can offer itself to the city.

Art must engage in dialogue with the world – that's what art is about. The city is in itself a stage, which can provide an opportunity to interact with the environment, other disciplines and a wide audience. Not only is creativity needed for development, but also for observing, judging, receiving. In a creative city, creativity has to ‘be in the air’. As a mentality and as an atmosphere of openness, which adds to the dynamics, the liveability and the self-awareness of a city.

What art does is spreading energies. It is society's task – and the economy's – to be receptive. This touches upon the essence of the creative city, that cannot be filled in according to a preconceived notion, but that has to grow organically on the released energies – an organised chaos with openings – spaces in the urban, organisational and social structure (1.1). If the creative city doesn't perpetually make itself the subject of discussion, it is doomed to lose itself in a hip concept, which won't survive in the end. Thinking about creativity is thinking about the meaning of what we do. Autonomous art can play a role in this regard: as stoker, conscience and inspirer; as an agitator and as a pioneer.

Notes

- 1) See Dominiek Ruyters, *‘Asociaal, onrendabel en autonoom’* [Antisocial, Unrewarding and Autonomous] in *Creativiteit en de stad* [Creativity and the City], p 84.
- 2) M. Csikszentmihalyi, *Creativiteit* [Creativity] *Over flow, schepping en ontdekking* [On flow, Creation and Discovery], Amsterdam 1998.
- 3) M. Merleau-Ponty, *L'Oeil et l'esprit*, Le langage indirect et les voix du silence, Le doute de Cézanne, et al. Also see R.C. Kwant, *Mens en expressie in het*

licht van de wijsbegeerte van Merleau-Ponty [Man and Expression, Seen in the Light of Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty], Het Spectrum, 2006.

- 4) *Open atelierroute* [Open Studio Route] Groningen 2005, studio of Janet Meester.
 - 5) Camiel van Winkel, *De mythe van het kunstenaarschap* [The Myth of Being an Artist], Amsterdam 2008, pp 68-69.
 - 6) Faustin Lineykula, *Dancer*, winner Prince Claus Prize. In *Internationale Samenwerking* [International Cooperation], Jan. 2008.
 - 7) See: Rolf Jensen, *The Dream Society*, 1999 & Internet article: *Poëtisch wereldbeeld: ‘De technowetenschappelijke mutatie van de werkelijkheid’* [Poetic Worldview: ‘The Technoscientific Mutation of Reality’].
 - 8) Lucius Bloemen, artist, in a note to colleagues.
 - 9) Ingrid Reynders, HaViK, in a conversation with Janet Meester, 2008.
 - 10) Camiel van Winkel, *De mythe van het kunstenaarschap* [The Myth of Being an Artist], Amsterdam 2008, p 80.
- Also see Rene Boomkens, *‘De stad hoort beschaafde wanorde te zijn’* [‘The City is Supposed to be Civilised Chaos’], *Volkskrant* 29 March 2008.

P 48-49

*Art economy***How to survive as an artist, that's the question!**

Can the creative city have any significance for the economy of the arts? No, says Pim van Klink, art economist, the creative city is a hype and artists have to flog their work.

By Pim van Klink

Economists have concerned themselves with the arts for the past four decades. In some cases this leads to publications propagating government support for art and in other cases to the opposite. This gives rise to doubt about the purpose of an economic approach. To throw out the baby with the bath water would seem to be a logical reaction, but wouldn't be wise. However, that is what's going on in the art sector. Economists are usually viewed with suspicion and often their advice isn't appreciated. That's a pity, not so much for the economists as for the artists, who are selling themselves short.

When I was young I harboured the illusion that I could live the life of an artist. People I knew thought otherwise and never thought to make use of my artistic talents but did want me to help out with my organisational talents. ‘Can you arrange gigs for us?’ or ‘Can you get us funding for this project?’ were questions often put to me. And so an invisible hand helped transform me from artist into art economist. In that role I've shaped policy at the ministry, managed various art institutions and acted as administrator. I have slowly come to

realise that the art market differs from other sectors.

On the supply side, the many artists jostle about, driven by the one ambition to make art, no matter what. Many of them are incapable of earning enough from their art to live off of. Instead of choosing another profession, most of them seek a job on the side, to enable them to continue working as an artist. This is a unique, economic phenomenon, which occurs the world over. Artists distinguish themselves from other professions by their intrinsic motivation to make art, whatever the financial reward. The economic confirmation of this romantic image of artists also has its drawbacks. It implies that although artists have perhaps chosen the best job there is, they have also chosen the most demanding. Nowhere is the competition so strong and so diligent.

In addition to this, the demand side of the market is plagued by tremendous uncertainties. Many people have no idea how to deal with art. Even the self-proclaimed aficionado of art is stricken by doubt, wondering which show or concert to attend. The cause of this consumer uncertainty holds the key to the essence of art production – creating new concepts, forms and meanings. Furthermore, everything new needs time to become accepted and appreciated.

Taken all together, we can certainly say that the art market is extremely complex and that everyone who wants to make their mark, must be prepared to cross a multitude of hurdles. This observation in any case explains why so many artists dislike concerning themselves with the economy. It's unknown terrain to them, fraught with danger and threats, a maze in which they almost inevitably get lost.

Ever so often gurus appear on the scene, presenting theories rich in promise. In 2002, for instance, the book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, by the American economist Richard Florida was published. To the writer's amazement, he was hailed by the Dutch art world as a saviour. This because of his claim that creative work will become the driving force of the Western world. The Minister for Culture at the time, Medy van der Laan, became enamoured of Florida and immediately made culture and economy spearhead of her policy. A 15 million euro budget would place culture in position to jump-start economic development. A minister down the road and five years later, these overwrought intentions are seldom ever heard from and will soon be laid to rest alongside other political whims. Has the subject thus been swept from the table? Not in the least. From the very beginnings of creative man until the end of time, it will never fail to engage the creative mind. To put it precisely, the key question is how creative work – and more in particular art production – can be fairly rewarded, enabling the artist to continue working and to develop. The Florida hype teaches us that the solution certainly isn't to be found in fashionable ideas, taken up by opportunistic politicians.

The solution can be found in the artists themselves, and the secret is revealed by studying successful colleagues. Our country's greatest artist already knew how to do it: Rembrandt was registered as a merchant in Amsterdam. He emphasized in this manner that his life as an artist was dependent on

the extent to which he was able to sell his paintings. He had already shown his commercial acumen by trading his birthplace Leiden for Amsterdam, where many more merchants with spending power were present. And when he realized that his gruff attitude was scaring off potential clients, he used his (second) wife as his envoy. He also took part in auctions, selling his own work, using every trick in the book to maximise his profits. Rembrandt was a cultural entrepreneur long before the term was ever coined in a policy paper. He also was aware of the opportunities the metropolis had to offer him; not because there were many other painters, but because there were potential customers in abundance. This was undoubtedly the reason that colleagues chose to live there. The slogan is simply 'follow the money!'

In our day the spending power with regard to art is concentrated in New York and London, which has made them the creative capital cities of the world. It's superfluous, yet not unimportant to mention that no government policy or Richard Florida was needed to this end. Art history teaches us that an impressive body of work has been created in every field of art without the help of any government policies.

Does this prove that government's support of art is unnecessary and maybe even counterproductive? This isn't necessarily so, given that the art market does indeed have its own pitfalls. Government policy also shouldn't be seen as a cure-all for complacency and self-absorption. This is the case if artists work harder at lending grants than at winning over the public. Only the latter puts art centre stage in society and will lead to a proper reward.

Dr Pim van Klink is an art economist. He was director of the *Stadsschouwburg* city theatre and cultural centre *De Oosterpoort* in Groningen, and head of the Art and Culture Department of the City of Groningen.

P 51-53

Art education

Through art

Should we train young artists for a position in the creative industry? There's no point doing that, Petri Leijdekkers argues. Art and design are at their best when they are completely true to themselves: It is then that they really manage to bring about something. Where artists are trained, there should be room for reflecting on the art culture, and collaboration with universities should lead to an intelligent plying of the trade of artist.

By Petri Leijdekkers

In the at times heated debate about whether the *Koninklijke Academie voor Beeldende kunst* (Royal Academy of Art) should continue to exist, the head of the Graphic Art Department at the time, J.W. Kaiser, uttered the following words in 1868: 'Water

won't come pouring over our dikes, for the lack of an academy; our colonies, trade and industry won't disappear if there is no academy left. However, in order to preserve our dikes and allow our trade and industry to blossom, a mightily enlightened people is necessary, that loves its country, that appreciates the lessons of their ancestors and that doesn't want to depend on the foreigner with regard to art and industry either. Such a people needs a school of art!'

Kaiser was heard. The academy remained in existence under the name *Rijksacademie* (National Academy). But his words still hold true, especially in times of crisis. It no longer is about whether or not training institutes in art are necessary, since they have been created; it's about their mission. Do they serve the market or mental wellbeing? Or even worse: is there a point to them in miserable times?

The visual arts are prone to criticism, much more so than music or the theatre. Its autonomy led to it's being labelled 'inward looking', which previously was disapprovingly called *'l'art pour l'art'*. Institutions to do with contemporary visual art are often the first to lose their grants. Members of parliament recently criticised the number of art academies and the surplus of artists graduating from them.

Unfortunately artists are no good at all at standing up for themselves. Others apparently must do so. In 2002, the American Richard Florida made waves with his book *The rise of the creative class*, by stating that art and its makers are of great economic value. This had been said before, but his book argued and was written in language that city administrators in particular were able to grasp. The result, however, often wasn't very creative. Putting too much emphasis on the economic tradition tranquillises: every city suddenly wanted to hold a festival in which visual art had to play a role, and a strong political tendency took hold that wanted art to be understandable and to sell easily. More and more often, art galleries plying abstract and the more experimental art, when asking for a grant were told that – should they indeed receive one – they would have to take into consideration just how well the average taxpayer was able to understand art.

This fiddling about in the margins of society led to nothing. Art and design are at their best when they are completely true to themselves. That's when they come into there own, economically as well, and when they work the best. The city of Eindhoven has understood that best up until now. The creative rush Florida spoke of led them not to thinking up something 'new' that others had already come up with before, but to studying the mutual potential that the city had to offer: design. The electronics company *Philips*, the University of Technology and the Design Academy were able to provide content in support. A thing of logical beauty came about: the creative city in Eindhoven was concentrated in and around a Design House that opened in October 2007. The city ensured itself of collaboration with industry, academic education and art education that focused on content, with a stage to present its existing creative energy, which was then could be seen and reinforced. The plan came from one of the partners in the scheme, Lidewij Edelkoort, head of the academy.

New York is the mother of all creative cities. The city has at least seven art schools that sometimes are part of a university, and many studios and places for artists in residence. There are multitudes of art galleries, large and small, besides artists' initiatives and a number of very interesting museums. When the textile industry disappeared in the 1930s due to the economic crisis, the tailoring buildings in SoHo and the neighbouring Tribeca (the area in Manhattan west of Broadway and to the south of Houston Street) stood empty behind all their cast-iron facades of pillars and dangling fire escapes. The city district fell into decay. The streets were dark, filled with rats that scurried along with you if you dared to walk the streets at night. In the post-war years it was artists who took up abode in the empty lofts and renovated them into living and working quarters. In the 1960s, in SoHo in particular, art galleries joined them. The neighbourhood flourished, became dynamic and pulled in lots of visitors, and consequently modern shops, expensive bars and restaurants were established. Economically, SoHo was doing well. When the buildings became too expensive, the art world moved on to other city districts such as Chelsea, which had many empty garages and warehouses down by the Hudson, and then on to rundown Williamsburg in Brooklyn – both now are booming. It's an economic wave that rolls through the city, not in a planned fashion but autonomously, with visual art at its crest.

Is it possible to teach something like this? No, it's not. There is no point in doing so since it leads to uncreative, pragmatic thinking that cripples the fantasy. Schooling in art should restrict itself to teaching art, its techniques, and its concepts. It is necessary, however, besides the ABCs of visual processes, to teach methods and thought in projects, presentations and reflections, on interdisciplinary collaboration, artistic research and creative enterprise. Phenomena in New York, as well as in London, Berlin and Beijing, can prove to be stimulating examples in this regard. I feel that it belongs to the structure of art education to reflect on the culture of art. And that is best done in collaboration with a university, since this implies an exchange of cultural ideas, analysis and knowledge, besides the exchange of professions, because art and science are complementary. They work in the same laboratory – the lab of observation, experiment and discovery.

As does the researcher, the young artist works less and less often on his own these days. His art is not just that what is created in the studio. More and more often, he works with others. Together they form a team that approaches a matter from different angles. Designers are already used to doing this – it's nothing new to them.

In the MoMa in New York, I saw the retrospective exhibition of Aernout Mik, born in Groningen and a graduate of its art academy, Academie Minerva. Mik studied philosophy in the early 1980s and then switched to the art academy. During the final academic year of the then five-year course at the academy, he registered himself at *Ateliers 63*. He thus economically brought together all the aspects that make training in art relevant: training in workmanship, building theory, research, and the

practice of and the reflection on art. Using the visual means he has at hand, he visualises the indefinite nature and reciprocity of the status quo of consumer and political habit, the financial markets, refugee camps, illegal immigrants and prisons, with their guards, police and drivers. There are film installations of two or more projections, on low walls, very close up, with the projected images merging with the ground. In a fascinating sequel of repetition, mimicry and rituals, reality and fiction blend. As a viewer you are caught up in it. Such an intelligent mastery of the trade of artist is only possible when it's based on an intelligent schooling in which art and science coincide. Mik had the time to acquire it. In those days it was still possible to go from one course or school to another, one after the other. Now this is no longer possible, it has to be recreated in shrewd projects and in second phase education in which the art academy and the university are the primary partners.

Petri Leijdekkers is an art historian and publicist. He was head of Academie Minerva (1986-2000) and the Frank Mohr Institute (2000-2007).

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Column

A place for creativity

Although provinces, municipalities and environmental organisations are drawing up lists of the ugliest spots and Jacqueline Cramer, Minister of the Environment and Spatial Planning, recently launched the Beautiful Netherlands Programme (*Rijksprogramma Mooi Nederland*) – I feel that the concepts of 'ugly' and 'beautiful' are hardly relevant to the spatial planning of town and countryside. The city is not a topographical collection of paintings, nor is the countryside a slightly oversized statue garden. While knowledge and creativity were concentrated in convents and monasteries in the first millennium, in the second millennium cities became the breeding ground for economic and social innovation, as depots of goods and services. These days' town and countryside are both part of our ever-expanding daily habitat and we are set the task of considering where and how urbanity (in the sense of an exchange for creative thinking, action and objects) can and should be situated in the new millennium.

The 1995 Dutch spelling reform led to more confusion surrounding the field of urban planning – formerly *stedebouw* in Dutch. By introducing an 'n' into the word – *stedenbouw* – and thus pluralising 'city', urban planning has become ever more connected with 'building cities'. Stedebouw however has more to do with the word that luckily still exists in Groninger dialect – 'stee' which means 'place'. Stedebouw has to do with giving meaning to a place. Stedebouw is the art of shaping the manner in which man inhabits the earth, in the

broadest sense. According to the great urban planner Cornelis van Eesteren (1897-1988) this shaping encompasses 'the materialisation of the functions which become apparent as types of occupation when living on earth, such as providing accommodation for humans and animals, foodstuffs and goods, relaxation of the body and mind, intellectual activities, traffic as a distance-bridging entity, and so forth.' This rather ceremonious definition is charming because it consistently names both one as well as the other, but especially because Van Eesteren tries to leave room for creative execution, despite his attempt to create a comprehensive definition, and thus ends with the words 'and so forth'.

Urban planning in Groningen is essentially encapsulated in our never-ending ambition to let the city of Groningen function ever better as a place to live and to organize the various forms of urbanity ever better, for the city's inhabitants and visitors. But the city's development is open-ended – the city as we know it now is just a stage in an ongoing process of changes and improvements, and sometimes deterioration. Recalling the situation in the past is emphatically part of that process, as well as expectations regarding the future. As urban planners working as civil servants, every day we concern ourselves with how best to adapt the city – seen as a concentration of people, functions and buildings – to future desires. Stedebouw therefore is also the ability to foresee an unknown future and knowing how to bring it about. In essence it means the art of shaping the places that man needs in order to live, now and in future.

The 20th century saw this art reduced to regulating mass building, building public housing. Only once this task was privatised were urban planners – in Groningen as well – able to focus on the city as a whole. Seen in the context of course of a cohesive area encompassing cities, villages and hamlets, and the agrarian, infrastructural and natural landscape. The first focus was on designing the city as centre for recreation and shopping (leisure and consumption), but more and more it also concerns itself with shaping the production landscape in and around our abodes. The discovery made by Florida that creativity is a productive factor in an urban economy became the driving force for the redevelopment of the decaying urban fringe, harbours fallen into disuse and empty, old buildings. In the *Puddingfabriek*, the *Boterdiep* area, *Europaparks* and *Eemskanaal* zones we have begun to give shape to the creativity of production – the 'materialization' – but the greater Groninger urban living space is far from finished. A lot of creative urban planning is still called for.

Tjerk Ruimschotel, Senior Urban Planner and City of Groningen Urban Planning Supervisor.

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Column

How to get home

Speaking about

There are many possible ways to speak about culture. One is to take creativity as starting point. There are also many possible theories about creativity. Lately, I sometimes think that it's best not to speak about it, but to experience that creation takes place throughout you. And perhaps to lend that process a voice.

I often find myself writing articles which inadvertently end up in an overly intellectual discourse, as well. Shortcomings: my background as an art historian, my past writing literature. Intellectual and artistic subcultures make up an education that lead away from yourself – undoubtedly so. So how do you head home again?

Through communication? But art doesn't communicate, I was taught. Without a doubt there is a very clever line of reasoning behind this. But I won't go into that here. This column is about what creativity means to me.

Experiencing

Experience has taught me that there are two schools of thought about art with regards to creativity: the one shaped by society which only fosters meaning within culture, and the other one stemming purely from yourself – the 'no-upbringing-background-education-simply-what-you-yourself-create'. Intention is what makes the real difference, since both use materials and procedures.

However: is that which comes intrinsically from within itself unable to form a continuum with whatever is being given shape? Isn't that the true dilemma facing art these days? For me.

The dilemma: creativity or creation. Do I continue to create things or do I allow creation. But if I just let it flow through me, will I still be able to recognize the moment to choose that it's done? Must it otherwise be introduced artificially? No – that would just be angst. Creation only comes into being as a result of the angst.

True artistic calling

In recent years I have concerned myself with personal artistic calling – being a true artist. This is also the level at which the dilemma unfolds. Being an artist as a prospect in society, set in a certain mould. Or artistry reduced to the true creative principle, creation as a universal given that somewhere affects society of its own accord and then blossoms there.

But does this mean that there are two realities? A real and an artificial one? You would be led to believe as much. Just take the word 'art'. Need I say more?

So here towards the end of my column is something resembling a plea for experiencing anew. Although I would have much preferred to avoid just that, a plea: I would much rather write a poem.

Nomadic Drifting Back

*someday I'll even leave this home again,
and all the places my body explored,
I'll take with me in cases in which to dance.*

This part of one of my poems which summarizes something about the role experience plays for me. Someday I'll leave art, the same way I'll leave any

shape or form. But the experience is something I'll take along with me, because it shaped me. Like a nomad I travel onwards towards the next experience. Like the leaf that flutters across a path in the park, returning to the woods, the forest, - back towards nature's heart.

leaves float across the paths here. running along when the wind so chooses. close to the springhead I dangle over from the fallen tree connecting both banks.

Petra Else Jekel, art historian, poet and proser.

P 60-61

Meeting, discovering, developing

The city is in motion

By Rob van Gemert

With background noises of creaking wagon wheels, shouting vendors and barking dogs, you can imagine yourself in medieval Groningen... whilst sitting in front of a flat screen! In 2008 Los Digitalos converted the city plan that was drawn up in 1643 by Haubois, to a three-dimensional journey. Here you can still easily recognize the city as we know it today. The street designs and squares have remained the same for hundreds of years. There are still medieval features visible on the corner of the 'Folkingestraat street and the Vismarkt square.

The structure of streets and squares, the public space, to a large extent determines the essence of a city. It forms a skeleton that keeps everything together. It is the stage on which buildings set up a performance. The public space of a city is where the users of all separate divisions meet. The public space of a city is the breeding ground for city life. What is this 'city life'?

Many people associate a city with terms like 'busy', 'crowded' and 'fast'. It is, however, not the commotion that makes a city a city. A village square can be more city-like than a motorway; a series of workplaces can be more so than heavy industry; the Folkingestraat street more than the Herestraat street. City life is not so much a matter of quantity. Things like dynamics, energy, blending, dualism and unpredictability determine this. In non-urban surroundings affairs take place in succession and alongside one another, according to a pattern that we have agreed on, so to speak. In an urban context so many movements cross each other 'accidentally', which leads to totally new developments.

According to an exploration of Peter de Kan, a graphic designer, many people from Groningen regard the spot where the Folkingestraat street meets the Vismarkt square as the most urban place in town.

This is where the Werkman Bridge brings people ashore - oftentimes obstructed by a confused, foreign motorist or a market salesman. You'll find sun worshippers sitting in the garden of café/

restaurant Zomers, there is the Jewish waxing moon; spectators sit alongside tables of café De Beurs, there are the benches where people eat chips, as well as the imperturbable pigeons, a lot of bicycles, a piano - and individuals asking: 'Can you spare some change?'

This didn't come out of nowhere. The cycle path was not paved red, but it remained part of the square with right angles. The people at café De Beurs can only spot others, and be spotted, from here. Radical inner city regeneration brought the great post-war decline to an end thirty years ago. The many pieces of art keep the Jewish history alive. As early as the 1930s, Berlage already fore-saw the importance of a new bridge on the location of the new Groninger Museum. Revitalizing shop fronts prove that modernization also leads to a greater appreciation of the old.

To put it briefly: the degree of city life of a certain location depends on a number of specific details. If you look at the onset of the Folkingestraat street, you'll find that it is a location with a distinctive character, with several layers of importance, where new developments take place regularly, where there's enough space and where developmental outlines are consciously managed.

Groningen sees itself as a creative city. Judged by the number of young creative companies, artists and art institutes, it is. How does this relate to the qualities ascribed to the urban web? You could say: there's no need to relate, it is all about enclosure. Creativity does not stand alone; it is an intrinsic part of the total structure. Creativity is a result of this. When the structure is developed further, more creative forces are released. They may take root, as long as the city provides sufficient flexibility, small-scale solutions, informality, dualism and identity. Public space shapes the network of this structure. This is where all the different forces meet. This is where you can meet, discover and develop. This is where value is added to the city. Don't allow Groningen to be completed or to be too beautiful. Don't let Groningen believe that it is so creative because if a place is, it is already past it. Creativity is a process, never a fact: a city in motion.

Rob van Gemert is an urban development designer of the city council of RO/EZ (Town and Country Planning and Economic Affairs).

P 64

The city of opportunity: Meeting people

It was the 22nd of August 2005 when I first set foot on Dutch soil to come and study in the Netherlands. I have an Ecuadorian father and a Dutch mother, and my older brother and sister came here before me, a couple of years earlier.

After hearing their stories about this great student city, I just knew: 'Groningen will be my city!'

The first friends I made in Groningen I met at the Noorderpoort College, where I learnt the Dutch language together with students of different nationalities, including Russians, Afghans, Iraqi and Brazilians. Soon after I arrived in Groningen, I found a job as a dishwasher in the restaurant Humphrey's, on the Vismarkt square. Here I met a lot of students, including my girlfriend, who I've been living together with - in the city - for two years now. Nowadays I am a bartender at the same restaurant, and I play football with some of my colleagues at the club Velocitas.

Important meeting places in Groningen for me are the university library, where my fellow students and I study for our exams, and the city park the Noorderplantsoen. Here I play the guitar with friends, or we play a game of football in the summer.

Looking back at the past four years in Groningen, I am certain that learning the Dutch language has been crucial for developing a social life and meeting people. Groningen is not too large, so you don't feel 'lost' here. On the other hand it isn't small either, so there are plenty opportunities regarding work, study and recreation. As a real South American I can now say: 'Grunn is mien stad!' which is Groningen dialect for: 'Groningen is my city!'

Antoni Samaniego Cameron, Psychology student, RUG

P 65-69

Meeting people by chance

Text and photography by Rob van Gemert

It's a glance, a word, a bench in the sun, sharing dog distress, finding shelter from the rain together... meeting people can take on many forms. Because of the unicity of every meeting there are half as many meeting places as there are people. List all possible places and you will find that just about every meeting place is located in urban public space. It's the public space that joins people, and makes them real meeting places.

First time meetings in urban public spaces are frequent and divers, and primarily are not pre-arranged or regulated. Most first time meetings take place incidentally. First time meetings are occurrences, and the public space offers the possibility. Many have described the quality of public space. For a well functioning space it always comes down to diversity, refinement, 'weak borders', diversity, interaction, enchainment, openness, publicity, mobility and experimenting.

In his book The Rise of the Creative Class, Richard Florida describes 'tolerance' as one of the key concepts for urban (creative) development. His prime interest is first time contact between different population groups. If we, however, look at the

qualities of public space as mentioned above, one could say that tolerance in public spaces is a crucial condition for the creative development of a city. Tolerance offers freedom, which leads to people meeting.

How are public space and tolerance connected? Do flexible, neutral surroundings offer space for the development of tolerance? Can we control tolerance by creating a clear structure? A series of photos in search of tolerant places.

P 71-72

Mama Noorderzon

Every year in August, both national and international theatre makers come to the city park the Noorderplantsoen for the Noorderzon Festival. Geke Hankel knows everyone.

'Meeting people at Noorderzon'.

By Stefan Nieuwenhuis

Geke Hankel has been responsible for the catering for both artists and staff at the Noorderzon Festival for seventeen years now. She's the one who arranges the square boxes filled with sandwiches, sweets and fruit. On her 'little island', the dining tent on the edge of the main field in the Noorderplantsoen, she doesn't only prepare the lunches; she also takes care of the laundry. Furthermore, she attends to all in need: for either an aspirin or just a good cry; both artists and staff come to Geke for just about anything, which has earned her the nickname 'Mama Noorderzon'. In everyday life, outside the twenty-one days of Noorderzon ('Noorderzon spans more than ten days, as the festival also has to be set up and broken down, and the builders also need a sandwich'), Geke is a striking and famous artist's model. During our conversation, at an outside table of the café Huis de Beurs, an admirer comes up to her and states: 'I appreciate you every day, I have fifteen paintings of Wout Muller at home; all portraits of you. They are wonderful!'

When Geke Hankel talks about Noorderzon, she fondly speaks of 'her family'. 'You see all the tent builders and the technicians every year. Some are from Groningen, but many come from other places in the Netherlands, and they all know: in Groningen, that's where the best lunches are provided. When they leave they always say: 'See you next year!' which is great; as they see you as a constant factor.' She sees love affairs develop, as one would expect at a large festival, although they never last much longer than a couple of months. 'It's never the same a year later. I only know one couple that met at Noorderzon that are still together after five years. In most cases they are short-term relationships. I remember how a couple of years ago one of the stage managers used to consequently wear a different jacket every day. One day I saw him wearing the same jacket as he had worn the day before, and he looked kind of ruffled up, so I asked whether he'd had a late night. To this he replied that he'd spent the night in one of the dressing

room containers. Ha, I then thought, as that was where I'd seen a harpist leave this morning.'

A lot of men fall for Geke too, like the Russian clown from Saint Petersburg that she'll never forget. 'He was part of the main act and so the company stayed here for about ten days. He would walk into the tent every morning and say things like 'sunshine' this, and 'sunshine' that. He definitely liked the look of me. The staff would pester me by singing: 'He was just a clown' (the first verse of a popular Dutch song). This clown loved melons, and on the last night I injected vodka into one: he loved it. The next thing I knew I was invited to come and sleep in his caravan.'

Geke is always the first person to enter the grounds in the morning to prepare the lunches, and therefore regularly encounters weirdoes, like the homeless asylum seeker that slept in the bushes and ate from the rubbish bins a couple of years ago. One morning I invited him in for a cup of coffee and a sandwich, and after that he continued to drop by, until after a couple of days he said: 'You mustn't think I'm interested in you, because I'm not attracted to older women.' After that he was eating from the rubbish bins again.'

Geke started off in a small tent where she used to provide lunch for about one hundred people. Throughout the years this number rose to 350, and so the tents became more spacious too. 'One time they put me in a Moroccan tent; it was as leaky as a sieve. We then bought a second-hand parasol to keep the sandwiches dry. Nowadays things are perfect, although there are these artists who have special requirements. Especially the last few years there are more and more lacto vegans that don't eat gluten either. They will ask to see the packaging of say butter, and then start a hassle because it contains 0,0001% of gelatine. Well, if they don't want it, they don't get it. Easy. But I never serve things like cheap white rolls; I always have real nice bread.'

'At one time we had this Spanish dancer who complained about everything: the ironing wasn't any good and the food was lousy; there was always something wrong. As it turned out, she thought of herself as a diva. Well, she had herself a problem, as I am a diva too. I told her so, and after that she never complained again.'

In three years time Geke will be celebrating her twentieth Noorderzon anniversary, but she doesn't really think about it. 'I might not even make it to then!' but then she goes on: 'well, you know what it is? Every year after the festival I'll say: 'never again', but when the whole thing begins again in February, it will start to itch again. You see, I cannot disappoint my boys.'

P 73

Station CS: A Creative Hang out

Station CS is the coordinate and executive department of the Creative Industry Groningen Foundation. This is where business people, entrepreneurs, clients, customers and creative people meet.

An interview with Wilma Naaijer, one of the initiators of the foundation.

By Stefan Nieuwenhuis

Wilma Naaijer, a retailer in the Nieuwe Ebbingestraat street established the Creative Industry Groningen Foundation in 2006, together with entrepreneur Bart Kempinga. The aim of this foundation was to give a new impulse to the Ebbingekwartier district, the area between the Ciboga site and the Ebbingestraat, and establish a creative hangout. Three years onward mountains have been moved, the project department 'Station Creatieve Stad' - Station CS - (Station Creative City as well as Central Station) is a fact and everyone is looking in the same direction: the Ebbingekwartier district has become a flourishing site for entrepreneurs and creative souls. This didn't happen overnight, says Wilma Naaijer. 'Initially Bart and I wanted to make the most of the opportunities the Ebbingekwartier had to offer; many buildings were unoccupied and there weren't any concrete plans for the future. As we went along, we realized that there were a lot of creative businesses behind the facades, like in the music venue Simplon, for instance, with its game industries, design and music studios. In order to actually change things, you need to work from the inside, with what you already have. We switched to a more thematic approach and then used the creative industry as a crowbar. Eventually the city council turned out to be susceptible for our ideas, which has led to the foundation of Station CS, a professionally coordinated project department that brings together different parties, that provide solutions and interpretations for the Ebbingekwartier.'

The main job of Station CS is to create a pleasant and more valuable business climate with more activity in the Boterdiep area. Meanwhile, however, the activities of the Creative Industry Groningen Foundation and Station CS have expanded, and plans are being made for outside the Ebbingekwartier district. The project department is located on the ground floor of *Het Paleis*, which is to become the centre core of creative industry in Groningen. This is where creative expertise will come together. The department will not only use this space; it will also be a meeting place for creative souls, business people, entrepreneurs, clients and customers, and there is also room for new projects and future initiatives. Station CS will share the space with a hybrid shop, as an experimental plot; an adventurous shop that combines several market concepts. If this works out well, someone else can take over the business. 'We started from our own strength with these initiatives. We already have so much expertise and know-how ourselves, that we can easily grow from the inside. That's why it's encouraging to see that the city council supports and agrees with our plans. They see the Ebbingekwartier district as a kind of super creative area.'

Naaijer, a retailer herself, who is firmly rooted in the Ebbingestraat, hopes that Het Paleis and the rise of the creative industry will have a positive effect on the business climate in the Ebbingekwartier district. 'That what makes the Ebbingestraat so unique, compared to the Herestraat (the main, commercial shopping street in Groningen) for

instance, is the experience. There you get to choose from a wide range of products, but you won't find anything outstanding. Here the shopkeepers have a more personal, small-scale approach, and they are closer to their customers. With the input of creativity we want to open the shutters even wider, and by doing so we distance ourselves even further from the large chains and mega stores. I sincerely hope that new entrepreneurs will see the potential of mutual stimulation. A creative approach will leave a more lasting impression on customers than anonymous commercial formulas do. If we are successful, then we have created a hangout for creative entrepreneurship for the whole of the northern region. History has proven that this area has had a leading role when it comes to creativity for many years already, as in 1903 the World Exhibition took place here. This extraordinary area deserves a wonderful, creative future.'

P 75-78

Coaching Young Talent: PUB, KOM, AMP Minerva and Maatlab

By Sabine Hoes

The business world is in need of young, creative spirits that contribute to innovative production processes. For young, creative people it is not always easy to switch from working autonomously to working for a client. They have to deal with the client's wishes and have to run a business, which can, in fact, be quite tricky. There are a number of initiatives in Groningen of business professionals that are dedicated to supporting young, creative talent.

PUB

The Probeer en Uitwisselbureau (try and exchange bureau), the PUB, is a breeding ground for students and beginning entrepreneurs that supports them in developing their ideas further, and stimulates innovative and enterprising undertakings. PUB offers them knowledge, experience and networks, and coaching from creative experts and business professionals.

One of PUB's main aims is to stimulate creativity. According to Thea Warringa, initiator of PUB as well as graphic designer and entrepreneur herself, 'Innovation is an important aspect of entrepreneurship, and it is a creative process by definition. Innovation is not only the process of inventing new things; it also includes the art of improving existing products.' PUB also pays attention to the durability of products. 'Creativity and durability go together with new entrepreneurship. If you want a solid base for the future, it is important to consider durability within your business.'

The business trade is deployed in different ways: 'We go in search of a company that is eager to take part in one of the participant's projects. Everyone profits from this: the company supports the development and can then be the first to use the innovation, and the new entrepreneur has its first

client. It turns out to be quite advantageous to involve companies in PUB, as even long-established companies need creative people.'

PUB was set up through the effort of young talent. They, for instance, developed tools that will be used in future: a 'creativity tool' and a 'durability tool'. These tools will support the PUB participants in the development of ideas. All parties work together on this. 'In this way participants are confronted with other views. Everyone can learn from others. PUB spans bridges!'

Kunst op Maat (Art on demand)

Beginning artists that want to work under commission can receive coaching through the Centre for Visual Arts (the CBK), under the condition that they have recently graduated and have not yet worked at a project basis before. The CBK helps to find a client that is willing to give beginning artists the chance to realize a project and that will offer them a platform. It may concern either temporary or permanent pieces of art. The CBK in Groningen will coach these artists throughout the project.

If an order is placed at Kunst op Maat, the client is expected to be actively involved. Didi Loman, project councillor: 'Beginning artists require more guidance, which means that the process might take somewhat longer, but it also means that co-financing is possible.'

Kunst op Maat originated from 'Groningse Nieuwe', which was part of the city council's cultural policy to stimulate new talent. The main goals of Kunst op Maat are: to coach talented artists and designers whose aim is to work under commission, to expand the commissioning market and to stimulate good commissioning. Good commissioning entails: a clear assignment, good communication with the artist and support when it comes to meeting certain requirements, like permits, if necessary.

The artist will have to deal with a committee that will include the client and an external advisor. The advisor will be a renowned, experienced artist that will coach the artist further. A maximum of three artists will draw a sketch under assignment for the client, who will then consult the committee and make a decision.

Kunst op Maat carefully manages the process, which includes the signing of contracts, drawing up an estimate, deciding on a fee and determining a deadline, but dealing with the tension field between working under commission and reasoning within artistic qualities and content also requires attention and support. 'This is where artistic skills and entrepreneurship meet; a lot of things enter into this.'

Project Bureau/ AMP Minerva

In order to gain experience in working under commission during their studies and training, students of the Art Academy Minerva can apply for coaching from the project bureau AMP, Academie Minerva Productions. Work under commission can be realized as a part of the educational curriculum. Students of Academy Minerva were already working under commission before, but they were in need of a central coordination and of assessment by one department. 'It is becoming more and more customary for artists to work under commission', says project manager Frits Hesseling of Academy Minerva.

'For clients, working with us means that it might take longer to get a result, and it may require a greater commitment, but it also includes more involvement and adventure, especially since they get to choose from work by different students, which isn't usually the case.'

Every year about twenty to thirty projects are realized under commission. We work with all kinds of disciplines, from interior design to graphic design and art in public space. We have a number of regular clients, including the Hanzehogeschool (The University of Applied Sciences in Groningen). The projects are realized in conformity with market prices. If, during the realization it turns out that the project analysis is does not meet the requirements, we halt the project. We take final responsibility, so the end result must be satisfactory'.

Academie Minerva's study programme pays plenty attention to entrepreneurship and career guidance. 'Naturally it is a benefit for students to gain practical experience. They learn how to deal with clients and with deadlines. When the project is completed, they evaluate and discuss the project with the client.'

Not everybody is qualified to join the initiative. 'Not everyone is suitable. Some students don't want to work under commission. It is not compulsory – it is a special opportunity for students that are interested in working under commission.'

Maatlab

Maatlab is directly linked to the business 'OpMaat designers and furniture makers'. They started off as the 'Startersatelier' (the beginners' studio) in 2006. A separate space in the company building was made available to a young designer. This worked in two ways, according to Bart Kempinga of OpMaat: 'As a business you want to develop further, and by recruiting young designers, new ideas will be developed. We also want to increase the productivity in the whole of the work field, as unfortunately there are a lot of young designers with good ideas that turn out to be unsuccessful. Because the Startersateliers were quite time consuming, OpMaat decided to take on a different approach. 'Our machines and know-how were available to the young designers, but it turned out that this wasn't sufficient. We only had time to talk their work through during our coffee break.' Right now four designers are being coached, who recently graduated and are now working on a pilot project that is co-funded by both the Provincial Council as well as by the arts council. Together with the VForum time and space were created for coaching, and now external specialists are involved in the coaching. Maatlab has moved from Opmaat to *Het Paleis*, where the young designers have a working space in the new studios for beginners. 'Young designers often encounter a lot of obstacles when developing a product. Coaching is essential when it comes to the realization of an idea. Ideas should be developed in such a way that they appeal to both the producer as well as the consumer, which can be pretty hard at times. Designers must learn to deal with the requirements of the producer and be aware of the opportunities they have to offer. Then there is the financial element: price ratio, marketing, consumer research, etc: They are all elements that you have to deal with when working for a business. We also involve specialists for support and advice.'

P 80-81

Creative people and the business world

Have Lunch with Twist

How do we get people from the creative sector and business people together? The editors of TWIST came up with an idea: we'll have lunch together on a regular basis.

Creative people are invited to the offices of business people, and business people are invited to studios. The following organizations and industries will take part: the catering industry, educational organisations, the banking industry, visual artists, self-employed people, creative consultants and a staff member of Kunststation C.

A carefully prepared lunch (which may include plain organic peanut butter sandwiches or fancy rolls and trendy slimming drinks) and an ingenious game of role-play will contribute to the examination and (non) confirmation of the established images and preconceptions we have of one another, and help place this into perspective.

In a 90-minute session we will get to know one another, we'll enjoy a debate and have a laugh. Afterwards we will exchange business cards...

P 82-83

Brainstorming

DenkDexter is more than just a little blue van

By Tim Fierant

There's a good chance that you will see the following scene sometime soon, somewhere in Groningen: a handful of men dressed in tailor-made suits, leaving their every day surroundings of the office, hopping into a little blue van. The van then heads for a public house in either the city or in the countryside. On arrival a flip-over is opened up, and a heated brainstorm begins. What's happening here?

This is the work of DenkDexter, an initiative – and part of – the Silverroom Foundation.* Carla Wolbers, committee member of the foundation: 'The van is just a gimmick. It's about something else. Dexter is a kind of think tank.' Companies can invite DenkDexter to organize a brainstorm. After a sobering trip through the countryside, work related questions and problems are turned inside out.

Originally the idea was to actually brainstorm whilst on the road in the van. It turned out, however, that the van made too much noise, so

now the trip to is used for clearing the mind, and enjoying the view through the window.

DenkDexter invites small businesses and creative people for these sessions, from writers to architects and visual artist to designers. These people have an open and fresh approach to business related problems. Carla Wolbers: 'If you give us a work related problem, we will start a brainstorm or you can ask us to organize a session so that an appeal can be made to the employee's creativity. Brainstorming can be very inspiring and can be funny and absurd at the same time.' Artists and creative people can profit from this too. Wolbers: 'They might come by for a session themselves. They can benefit from this just as much as others can.'

The city council invited DenkDexter to the first *Ebbinge Gist*, where the projects for the Ebbingekwartier district were presented. DenkDexter came up with a concept that coupled the project's initiators with creative souls, philosophers and economists, as sparring-partners for their own presentation techniques. A city planner was, for instance, coupled with a writer in order to clarify the language used in the presentation. An army of designers helped support the visual aspects of the presentation.

This project with the city council is a good example of what DenkDexter does. Wolbers: 'The essence of DenkDexter goes back to the Silverroom. All the creative people that work for DenkDexter are situated in the Silverroom, or are part of its network. DenkDexter is not about the van; its strength lies in the power and mental capacity of the Silverroom, mainly because we're all situated really close to each other.'

Does DenkDexter operate by the grace of its network in Groningen? Carla Wolbers does not believe this is the case. She can see DenkDexter cross the provincial borders. 'The response of my friends from Amsterdam was very enthusiastic when I told them about DenkDexter. It would be great if other people adopt this concept.'

So there's a good chance that some time soon you'll see the following: a little blue van with a number of men dressed in tailor-made suits on their way to some place in the Netherlands, like the Polder, the Veluwe or the Amsterdamse Bos. Maybe even on their way to the beach. On arrival they will then open up a flip-over, and a heated brainstorm will commence.

• Silverroom is a foundation that realizes affordable working places for beginning entrepreneurs and young, creative workers in locations that also house established professionals. The Puddingfabriek is a good example.

P 84-86

Like knows like: networking places

Text: **Marije Kruis**
Photography: **Robert van der Molen**

Creative people from 'the underground scene' in Groningen meet in café Kult. Here you won't find any laptops or dress shirts; only colourful T-shirts and ripped jeans. Musicians and comic strip artists sit around small wooden tables and enjoy a drink. With their heads together, they philosophize, chatter and brainstorm.

For a good cup of coffee there's no place better than the trendy coffee bar the Coffee Company. Here you can either network 'live', or you can use your Mac Book. Students and working people meet here in the daytime, for a chat – and to be spotted, maybe?

People discuss this evening's performance in the city theatre, the Stadsschouwburg around the large reading table of this dark pub. Here actors meet for drinks after a show. The **Souffleur**: a meeting place for theatre minded people.

You come to '**t Feithuis** for a decent glass of wine. It houses the ICT- café, and the UMCG hospital staff meets here every week for drinks. Civil servants that work in the building opposite the café come here daily for a good lunch.

The **Wolthoorn**: here the bartenders wear a bow tie and drinks are served correctly, with the label facing you. It is the perfect late night networking place for officials, politicians and journalists.

For upper class get-togethers you should head for the Oude Ebbingestraat, but you're welcome on invitation only. Enjoy a good brandy and a strong cup of coffee in one of the lounge chairs in front of the (fake) open fire. Business people network in the **Hanze Sociëteit**.

PUUR was (and still is) the favorite hangout of the Nieuwe Garde pioneers from Groningen (a network group of young creative workers). The name, the interior, the people, the food: the place is all about being trendy, youthful and healthy.

Café de Minnaar: Creative people that live in the Noorderplantsoen area like to pop by De Minnaar for an evening drink. Musicians, artists and journalists of all sorts of kinds and ages frequent this cozy pub. Full use is made of the wireless Internet connection, and the pub even has a Twitter account.

P 88-91

Jungle Warriors: Improvisation, freedom and high spirits

'Mix Africa, with India and Grijskerk, and you get new music'

An interview with **Jan Kuiper**.
By **Ansjje Monkhost**

'New Groningen music' is how Jan Kuiper described 'his music' in an interview with the Dutch newspaper The Telegraaf a couple of years ago. That's nicely said, but 'Groningen music'? The Jungle Warriors Foundation might have its origins in the city, but djembe, groove, tabla, break and belly dancing don't call up associations with the Martini Tower's chimes. I'm sure that if you mix cauliflower with curry powder you get a new flavour, so I'm convinced that if you put people from Africa, India and the small village of Grijskerk together, something new will be created.'

For Jan Kuiper (Grijskerk 1957) it's all about innovation: innovation and improvisation. "That's the only thing I want to convey with my jazz and all of Jungle Warriors' activities. Whether we're performing with the *World Groove Project*, *Five great Guitars*, *India Songs*, or we're in a school with the educational programme *Dance Grooves*, in the essence it's all about freedom and high spirits. I like to live an exciting life; I want to try everything. What I want to do with my life? I want to make sure that I can draw from a large arsenal of influences, images and ideas.'

For Jan Kuiper, who's been playing the guitar since he was 15, the penny dropped ten years ago. A couple of years earlier he was introduced to Buddhism, he went into yoga training, and at 42 Kuiper decided that he wasn't going to do anything else but play music for the rest of his life, and that he would play in a different way, too. Until then he'd always toured with Afro-Americans, like David Murray, Arthur Blythe and famous jazz musicians, like Hans Dulfer and Wim Overgaauw. They were successful combinations that were praised by the media. He was even awarded a prize for 'best live act' in 1985 by the Stichting Jazz Nederland (the Dutch Jazz Foundation). There was a lot of jamming and a lot of power, but Kuiper discovered that what he was looking for, and what he'd always tried to find in jazz, could be found with West African and Indian musicians. 'In that period the first Africans were coming to Groningen. One of them was Pape Seck from Senegal, the 'Eddy Murphy' of djembe, who is considered 'the godfather' nowadays. For me it was a kind of revelation to play with him. Everything then fell into place exactly where I'd thought it would. The roots of jazz music lie in Africa, and I only knew Afro American jazz. USA jazz is indissolubly connected to American history and racial problems, so that's why you often hear black American musicians say: *we are black and we are proud*. Many Afro Americans suffered a great deal, unlike the African musicians who were really unrestricted when playing. There was no hierarchy: only collective open mindedness. Of course I used to play with musicians from all over the Netherlands and Europe, but they were all musicians that were influenced by artists like Miles Davis and John Coltrane. I was trying to find my music. I'd not been raised in the Philadelphia ghetto, you see. With these African musicians I felt at ease. I introduced Pape Seck and two Malinians to jazz café De Spiegel in Groningen. Within a month there was a queue outside by ten p.m., as people knew that a good time was guaranteed.' We needed a name, of course.

We decided on 'Jungle Warriors.' '*Jungle* sort of refers to Africa, and *Warriors*, well, as a musician you always have to fight for your money.'

The music he made with his *World Groove Project* combines elements from India, Africa and America. It are these elements that set the tone in Jungle Warriors' other activities. Tributes to freedom. 'Integration is not fundamental in our music; it's about freedom and high spirits. Living every moment to the optimum, like Zen-masters do.'

Jungle Warriors Foundation

The main objective of Jungle Warriors, lead by managing and artistic director and guitarist Jan Kuiper, is to perform with musicians from different countries. Dance often plays an important role in the performances too.

Productions:

Five Great Guitars: a theatre programme with five top guitarists.

Three of a Kind: Late 2009 Jan Kuiper will be touring with Stochelo Rosenberg en Zoumana Diarra

World Groove Project: from an artistic point of view this is the Jungle Warriors laboratory. Musicians from Africa, India, the Balkans and Western Europe create a new manner of improvisation and playing together, which results in a new kind of music: process music. www.worldofstrings.nl

The Ruigeland Festival: A music and dance festival for the whole family in the NAM park near the village of Grijskerk in June 2010. There will be a lot of talented regional musicians and dancers combined with a number of larger acts. www.ruigeland.nl

Education:

Planet Dance: The Jungle Warriors Band, including street and break-dance, djembe, graffiti, rap, Latin percussion and belly dancing, and workshop programmes for primary and secondary education. *Dance Grooves'* first performance ever was in Hengelo, when the Scapino Ballet had cancelled. The pupils said the acts were 'wicked', and included street dance girls, an African walking on stilts and two break-dancers together with the Jungle Warriors. News spread all over the Netherlands in no time. Jan Kuiper: 'A new group, with an interactive approach; the pupils are keen to join the raps and the belly dancing.'

Guitar master classes: special classes for top talents on guitar.

P 93-97

Artists in residence

The Wall House #2 - new style – displays and facilitates

An interview with **Kie Ellens**, managing director.
By **Arjo Passchier**

In between the ultramarine and cerulean the Wall House gleams a golden yellow, a little grimy at the top, in between buildings and greenery, a residential area and the recreational area the Hoornse Meer. Wall House #2 is a monumental villa that was designed by the American architect John Hejduk (1929-2000). The house was developed as a theoretic model, as an inspiration for his students and as a thought experiment that is to stir the imagination of architects and architectural historians. It is more than a building or a house; it is evidence of a manner of working and it sets architecture in between other art forms.

Wall House #2 is part of a series of 3 designs in which Hejduk researches the function and meaning of one of the fundamental elements of architecture: the wall, both as a boundary as well as a transition. The experiment Wall House #2 became concrete in 2001. Spending time in the Wall House is a three-dimensional experience; it turns everyday living into an experiment.

Wall House #2 offers both national and international artists temporary living and working space, which gives a new impulse to both the location and to the artists' work.

Artists in residence

When Kie Ellens became the new managing director, supported by Benthe van Aalst, a new approach was launched so that the city and province of Groningen could benefit more from the house. Twice a year for a period of about three months, the Wall House facilitates an artist in residence programme. The first new style residency was an instant international success. The new approach immediately became visible to a large audience; the Wall House appeared in both local and national media, and the *New York Times* published an article in the Cultural Supplement. Up until two years ago the Wall House programme did not have much local output. What has changed, and what does this mean for the city and does it work?

Kie Ellens: 'Bianca Cassidy (USA) was the first artist in residence to experience the new approach. Her stay was a good example of how a new approach to working with artists and to reaching an audience can be fruitful. Before, residencies were productive for the artists themselves, but their presentations didn't draw a large crowd. Artists signed up for a residency without knowing where they would end up. Nowadays, when we invite an artist, we expect the artist to come and view the space, and we want them to research the potency the Wall House has to offer, so they can make a well founded decision on whether a residency may be positive for the their work's progress. There is more to it than just the execution of a plan that was submitted. The Wall House architecture is quite imperative; the selection procedure is very important, as well as the artist recognizing the importance of the house. This leads to a better and more professional presentation of the Wall House. We, as programmers, can manage the process more easily and we are less dependent of what's on offer.

Bianca Casady is a visual artist, writer and a musician. This multitude of talents drew a diverse audience, and brought visitors to the Wall House

that wouldn't have come otherwise. I invited Bianca to come and stay here, and asked her to use the house and let her change it to meet her needs. She was very content here. The Wall House was actually used, and was no longer a highly esteemed, remote icon. That her residency subsequently resulted in an exhibition was great.'

The spin off of Bianca's residency was immense and never presented before in the Wall House. Some examples are: 'the collaboration with format GAVA (the audio visual archive of Groningen), the AKI (Academy for Visual Arts and Design) in Enschede, the Frank Mohr Institute in Groningen and the Pop Academy in Leeuwarden. The guest performance with her band Coco Rosie and the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra in Amsterdam led to an invitation to join a project of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. The work Bianca made at the Wall House was exhibited as an installation in several places, including in Brussels (Musée des Beaux Arts), so Groningen and the Wall House owe a lot to Bianca as well.

Another good example of the new approach was the residence of John Bock (Germany) in the summer of 2009. John Bock selected fragments from everyday life and placed them in a different context, randomly it seemed. With a limitless imagination without restrictions, and a gigantic artistic vocabulary resulting in extravagant creations, his work is a turbulent mix of performance, installations and film. A passionate, layered, unstoppable bombardment of artistic stunts and visual impressions, mixed with music and lyrics, like: 'Here is there and now is later and later just ahead of time,' (from the film *Palms*). The absurd is presented in a natural way, as it is in dreams. His demonstration of how people live, and the way in which crazy people can deal with the world, is hilarious.

He is a much sought-after artist who enjoys an international career. Kie visited him in Berlin. 'I presented my idea to him. He thought the concept of the Wall House was so incredible, that he wanted to shoot his new film here, which he did last August. The Wall House generated the content of the film, and they didn't only shoot in and around the Wall House, but also on an island in the lake the Paterswoldsemeer. The film will be screened in the Wall House in 2010, together with an exhibition of his film props, made into installations. The art cinema Images will present one of his films in retrospect at the same time. Besides the fact that he has been working in Groningen, and that everyone can come and see the result, he also brings the Wall House to places where his film is screened. His films are screened all over the world.

Chromodomo

The programme *Chromodomo* is planned for the autumn of 2009. On the initiative of the Arts Council, the Wall House has submitted a project proposal as part of the commission policy, on 'what can you change about living in a space by using colour, to give it a new meaning', which led to the invitation of Laura White, Erwin Wurm and Spencer Finch: three artists that work with colour and light, who will incorporate the qualities of the Wall House in their work.

'Colour can give meaning to a house and define

how you live in it', says Kie Ellens. 'I explicitly invite people to the Wall House. The project does turn out as an exhibition, but the Wall House doesn't only function as an exhibition space. The project gains meaning, because it is created here, so it is more than just presenting the artist's work. I don't want to be an exhibition machine; I want to contribute to a larger context. The space itself is both the exhibition and the theme of the exhibition. Everyone that comes and works here has a different approach to what it means to live somewhere. Everyone lives and everyone has a bed, even if it's in the open air.'

'On the one hand the new approach has led to international exposure, and on the other hand we can now offer the Groningen audience a lot more than we could before. We've demonstrated that if you offer high quality and excellent surroundings, (you can take it that the Wall House offers just that), it is quite interesting for artists to come and work here, and to then present their work to a large audience. It works!'

P 98-99

International encounters

Groningen - Tallinn

By **Marije Kruis**

Every year the European Parliament appoints a European Capital of Culture. Its aim is to demonstrate the wealth, diversity and common features of European culture, and to stimulate relationships between citizens of the European Union. Tallinn has the honour to bear the title 'European Capital of Culture' in 2011. Over the past few years Groningen has been developing an intensive relationship with this amazing city in Estonia.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Groningen wanted to develop contacts with East European countries, and since 1993 Groningen and Tallinn are officially paired cities. Recently several delegations from Groningen have visited Tallinn and have acquainted governmental organisations and several companies and institutions. They included the city council of Groningen, the gas company the Gasunie the Puddingfabriek as well as a number of cultural organizations, like regional services, the University of Groningen: the RuG, the Hanzehogeschool (the University of Applied Sciences of Groningen) and the Prins Claus Academy of Music. In March 2009 we did it the other way round: 21 people from Estonia then came to visit Groningen, accompanied by the mayor of Tallinn, Edgar Savisaar. They visited a number of places in Groningen, all in the field of architecture and the development of public space. Their aim was to exchange information and share experiences. The Estonians, among other things, were struck by the fact that the Puddingfabriek is considered a multi-tenant business property, but when you enter the building, you immediately see it is a lot more than

just that; the ambiance and atmosphere are different, as well as the way in which people go about and communicate with each other. David Inden, owner of consultancy Estheticon and founder and chairman of the Silverroom Foundation and the PuddingLounge Foundation says: 'I once demonstrated some sales figures to a number of people, and they were baffled to learn that a renovated squat like this can be of economic importance.'

People rush through the streets in their thick winter coats, and meet in large shopping centres. The Culture Factory will be a new place where people get together, to, for instance, see a theatre performance or an exhibition, or to take part in a creative workshop. 2011 will be an important year for both this project, as well as for the city of Tallinn: according to the plans, the building must have an adequate infrastructure by then, so that it can function as a large playground for all events that are to take place in 2011. Right now they are still in an early stage of building but, in future, the Culture Factory will become a wonderful legacy of the European Capital of Culture.

The Culture Factory is a good example of an initiative that emanated from the newly established network between the paired cities. Thuur Caris, co-founder of the Puddingfabriek, was in Tallinn in 2008. According to him the direct lines to high-powered people are very short. 'Shorter than in Groningen, so it is relatively easy to set up a business. Megacities like New York and London have abolished locality; don't expect them to be enthusiastic about these kinds of plans. In Tallinn they still are', says Caris. The Estonian artist Andres Loo explains that people in Tallinn are receptive to trying and learning new things. They do sometimes need a push in the right direction. 'Whereas in the Netherlands we have a fully developed creative industry, in Tallinn they've only just started.' Inden: 'The Dutch have the know-how, organizational skills and connections that are advantageous for Estonia.'

Tallinn will seize the opportunity to present itself as the Capital of Culture, as most Europeans don't know much about Tallinn. Tallinn's title for the cultural programme in 2011 is *An Everlasting Fairy Tale*. A promotional leaflet explains that on the one hand it refers to the fact that this year all dreams may become true, and on the other hand it is a reference to the fact that Tallinn is perceived as a fairy tale-like place by most Europeans, instead of as a real city: What does the world know about Estonia, except for the fact that the Estonians invented *Skype*? According to David Inden, the greatest importance is to further develop the 'brand' Estonia. Estonians are still struggling with their culture and identity, which is a legacy of a turbulent history in which the Estonians alternately lived under Danish, Swedish, Polish, German or Russian rule. Estonia has not commercialized as a brand yet, like the Netherlands, for instance. The Dutch are known worldwide as *Dutchies*, and we profit from this both financially and career-wise. Estonians will be able to enjoy these profits in the future too. According to Inden, Estonians should be a little more arrogant; they should step forward more often and say: 'We're from Estonia, and that's something special.'

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*International encounters***Groningen – Hamburg**

By Nienke Dries

All eyes of the European music industry are on Groningen during the Eurosonic/ Noorderslag music festival, which is why this event was the perfect place for the signing of the new, international collaboration, the Declaration of Intent, between Hamburg and Groningen. The age-old, dusty Hanze-connection made place for a network relationship befitting 2009. The document was signed by the Groningen municipal councillor Jaap Dijkstra, his associate from Hamburg, Reinhard Stuth, and Uwe Jens Neuman of the network organization Hamburg@work. They have agreed on eight points that are stated in the document, that include that the cities will make each other's networks available to each other, that exchanges will be facilitated, that a number of projects will be developed together, and that both Groningen and Hamburg will recognize that the creative sector has a positive influence on the economy.

Despite the age-old Hanze connection, this collaboration is not very logical. Hamburg is an international metropolis with a population of 1,7 million people; Groningen's population is only 180.000. Whereas Groningen used to focus mainly on Western Holland, nowadays the eyes are focussed on the east. Hamburg is a city of opportunities: it is a logistic junction; it has a well-developed innovative media industry, a centre for life sciences and has no less than 16 universities. Groningen has been earning itself a good reputation in this German city, by coming up with creative concepts and by being open to innovative, experimental collaborations.

Both cities can profit from one another, which is underlined by the Declaration of Intent. But what does this mean in practice? Achim Quinke (of Quinke Networks), the project manager of *Game City Hamburg*, underlines the importance of the relationship between Groningen and Hamburg: Groningen's city council, for instance, rents offices in Gamecity Port in Hamburg, where they started the pilot project '*Gaming in Residence*', in which students from Groningen and young entrepreneurs can take part. Through this project, important bonds have been established already, and new networks in both cities are now connected. The network organization Hamburg@work is now also available to entrepreneurs in Groningen. Quinke would like to see this relationship develop further in the next few years, by arranging work experience and exchange projects between students of the HAW Hamburg and the Hanzehogeschool (the Groningen University for Applied Sciences). The Handelskammer Hamburg together with the Dutch Foundation Kunst & Zaken (Art and Business) have developed a concept through which they want bring business life and culture together. By joining forces the creative sector can grow and be of a greater importance to the city and its sur-

roundings. Cities are dependent of creative talent, and they support this by arranging a suitable infrastructure, like the realization of centres for beginning entrepreneurs. Quinke sees the realization of breeding grounds as one of the most important projects of the near future. Besides the Gamecity Port in Hamburg, there is also a centre for new entrepreneurs that is aimed at the music industry, named Karostar Musikhaus St. Pauli. Through international collaborations and by exchanging know-how, these centres grow into dependable pillars of the cultural, innovative industry, and become an important city attraction. A first contact has been made, but for a long lasting relationship, more individual contacts must be established. Quinke regards the declaration of intent as an important political signal, and now it's up to the entrepreneurs to make it a success.

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Creative City Challenge

Groningen, Delft, Oldenburg, Deldenhorst, Bremen, Hamburg, Kortrijk, Hooje-Taastrup/ Copenhagen, Goteborg, Dundee, New Castle...

Europe has declared the year 2009 the European year of creativity and innovation. An important aspect of innovative processes is the 'trans-sectoral' and cultural collaboration that take place. The project '*Creative City Challenge*' fits this concept. A number of university cities in the North Sea area take part in the project. The aim of Creative City Challenge is to develop a method that cities can use to intensify their creative policies. If practical knowledge and experiences of successful methods, activities and creative projects in the public space are shared, a 'creative measuring rule' can be developed, that will allow cities to make their own assessments.

The emphasis lies on the collaboration with other cities. All cities will have to think 'out of the box', and they will be requested to look at their own culture critically. An international project of this nature will lead to new collaborations, initiatives and networks. Creative City Challenge will contribute to long lasting city planning methods that will be beneficiary to the whole region.

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*Column***The Art of Creating**

In sweaty, indoor conference rooms the walls are covered with *Post-its*. Men and women clink their glasses and proudly slap each other on the back; it's a buzzing atmosphere. Until reality creeps in through the open door, and the breeze sweeps

away the Post-its into the archive box of unrealized ideas.

The business world is in great need of creative people. Companies enrol their people in creative courses; we are swamped with creative thinking techniques. Is it enough for us to just think? Could a painter create a lifework from just one idea? Would a sculptor be able to get results without a struggle?

An artist understands the art of creation. He gets out his gear, he arms himself for a battle with impossibilities. He is aware of his talents, he is passionately inspired and he experiences growing pains.

The business world is suffering from the Eureka syndrome. We're in a bathtub, and suddenly an idea manifests itself. An idea that is already so perfect, that the only thing left to do is realize it. We think 'that's it', but then when the realization is not at once successful, we abandon the idea. We give up on a lot of potentially good ideas, as soon as we encounter a setback.

Ideas need time to develop and grow. Only then can we see if it will turn out to be a grub, or a beautiful flower instead. Obstacles must be confronted, and then removed.

It's hard to realize an idea. New ideas are susceptible to resistance. The realization of ideas requires stamina, perseverance and courage. It's not the same as a friendly brainstorm.

The art of creating something requires people that have confident ideas. People who are willing to bite the dust and that will stick out their neck; people that are not put off by the first drawback, but who search for a way to get to where they want to go. The business world needs creative go-getters that start off with an idea, instead of them ending with one.

Mathijs Niehaus, owner of WEL customer oriented innovation

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*Column***CHEERS!**

You surely know them, people whose eyes start to glimmer when they hang out with artists. As if they finally get the opportunity to go nuts and to cast away all rules and procedures that usually obstruct creativity. It's a misconception that creativity and amazing concepts come to you through random fantasies that arise when walking with one's head in the clouds and with a beer within reach. Inspiration can come to you anywhere, but a useful, creative product requires hard work, order and a down to earth approach.

Years ago a course instructor sternly said to me: if you give people a camera and an open assignment, it's very unlikely that you'll get an interesting result. I was quite excited about my plan to have ideas just come to me whilst taking photographs in the streets in the city centre, instead of starting off with a brainstorm in a dull conference room. But I had to admit that I was likely to return with a handful of randomly shot pictures. His words stuck with me: if you want a creative result, make sure you come up with a well formulated, exiting assignment and a solid approach. A complex and challenging task triggers the creative mind.

From my experience at the art commissioning practice – with the CBK (the centre for visual arts) as commissioner, process councillor and advisor – I know that boarded up ideas don't lead to anything. Neither do assignments without preconditions or those with explicit demands. Even after a well thought out, good start you cannot sit back comfortably. It is an ancient, romantic illusion to await a good outcome or 'to not disturb the artist in his lonely, creative process'. If you want to contribute to a designing and realization process, you'll have to be a sparring-partner. Be a close observer and be critical; you should be dedicated to supporting artistic, financial and technical issues. So, is freedom the motor of creativity? No, this is neither the case for the artist, or for the commissioner.

People that actually want to contribute to creativity are of great importance, because they can get the best out of inventive thinkers and go-getters; they make them do things that they wouldn't easily have done otherwise, or they set them on a different track. Those who do this professionally – as a commissioner or project manager – should be aware of their role and responsibility. Only if the process develops to everyone's satisfaction and the final result is of interest, then you can walk with your head in the clouds. Cheers!

Ingeborg Walinga, managing director of the CBK in Groningen

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The city as a possibility: Exploration

I moved to Groningen to study at the Hanzehogeschool (the University of Applied Sciences). I wanted to leave Zwolle, and I wanted to move to another city. But why? Zwolle was a great place for me. Maybe I'm always in search of something new, or maybe I just like to explore places. I don't know. I'm still exploring, even now I've found my niche in Groningen. Groningen holds a lot of opportunities for me.

At a professional level I explored and discovered a lot of things last year. My studies, my job, the

Noorderzon Theatre Festival, The Eurosonic Music Festival and the creative city: its businesses, the projects; they inspire me to cross borders and to occasionally take a plunge. I did an internship at a Guardia Productions and at the editorial office of TWIST #1, which arose my interest for the creative city. Seeing creativity as an engine for economical prosperity and innovation within business life, for me, was an exploration and a breakthrough.

To me exploration is all about: thinking outside existing frameworks and going about in a different way than you normally would. Other things that inspire me are things like: a walk over the Vismarkt square, stickers on the wall beside the cash-point, the fishermen alongside the canal, the smell of the tobacco factory and the man that continues to shout 'THANK YOU' five minutes after you have given him some spare change.

Wouter van Beek, student of Communications, Hanzehogeschool

P 109-111

Street Art

Text: **Raymond Frenken**
Photography: **Regina Broersma**

The public space is packed with visual material: advertisements, emblems, and signs. The makers of this material design them with various intentions: they want to inform, convince or they want to mark their territory. Their main goal is to get the message across as clearly as possible. The government makes us aware of where we are and what we can and cannot do through street names, place-name signs and traffic signs. Shopkeepers, state agents and theatre makers tell us what to buy and what to see. Political parties, pressure groups and other socially aware people tell us what the world is supposed to look like. Rowdy graffiti artists have a very clear message: I am here, we are here, and this is our street.

Traditional graffiti is gradually disappearing from the streets. Instead, small pieces of graffiti art are appearing all around: stickers, posters and drawings that seem uncomplicated at a first glance, that are similar to the popular visual images of advertisements, films and cartoons. At a second glance they appear to implicitly comment on just that imagery and the public space where they are depicted. This new, multi shaped work is called 'Street Art', or 'Street Graphics', which indicates that it is two dimensional work in the public space.

Street Artists often deliberately seek out the fringes of the public space. Places with a lot of traffic, but in the periphery, in a corner, so their work doesn't shout for attention. Their work functions like the scribbles in the margin of a book: you don't have to read or notice them, but when you do, it can set things in a completely different perspective. New street

graphics don't provide answers; the work provokes and amazes passers-by, and that is what makes them small pieces of art.

P 112-114

In search of creative businesses*Jacoliene Nieboer*

What is it you make?

'I decorate furniture, mainly tables, but also cabinets, cots and chairs. The idea came to me when I found an old tea table outside my house. I discovered that when I painted the table, I could work with only colours and form, in an uncomplicated way, without having to tell a story. The decorations, usually depictions of fruit or flowers, have been painted with oil paint. In order to reproduce the product more easily, I developed a new technique. For my next project I will be decorating garden tables; my designs are very suitable for that.'

What are you good at?

'I started off as an illustrator, but I graduated in autonomous visual art. I started using the decorative elements I use in my paintings on furniture. I find inspiration in the use of colour and compositions of painters, like Co Westerik, Pijke Koch, Margritte, Cezanne, Morandi and Botticelli, but specially treated fabrics, decorated objects and the colours from exotic cultures appeal to me too. In my work, decorative and autonomous qualities are combined.'

What distinguishes you from other artists?

'Every piece of furniture I decorate has a function, and it is a piece of art at the same time; one of a kind, and made to fit.'

Where can we find you?

'My website is: www.jacoliendienieboer.nl

Volken de Vlas

What is it you make?

'I make objects, mainly with a function, like lamps, dishes and tables. They are composed from objects I find, both used, second hand as well as from natural materials. I use heaps of things that have been discarded by others: anything from tennis rackets, linen book covers, kitchen utensils, to scrap. Strangely, these objects always seem to have been suitable for their new function all along, although they used to be something completely different altogether. The forms are created by themselves, so to speak. They unfold themselves on the workbench, time after time. My hands stir them around, as if I'm stirring in a large pan of soup.'

Who for?

I make autonomous work that, after it has been completed, is put on sale for both the general public as well as for businesses. Most of my work is unique, but sometimes more than one version is made. I also work under commission.'

What are you good at?

'In seeing possibilities, and in bringing objects and material together that don't have anything in common to start off with, but then start to tell a new story. Old junk suddenly becomes useful and gets a new function, a new meaning and a new beauty.'

What distinguishes you from other artists?

'In the middle of the recycled goods store, Mamina, I gave in to gold fever. I bought a pickaxe and a sieve, and I started off. The store became a gold-mine.'

Where can we find you?

'My workplace is on the Oosterhamrikkade. Everyone can make an appointment and drop by. My website is www.volkendevlas.nl.

Sarah Vos

What is it you make?

I make Foefs. They are unique characters: fabric monsters with wobbly eyes. They are all different and there's something wrong with every one of them, which is why they are up for adoption. You can find their shelter online, on my website. You can also adopt a digital Foef, that you can put on your website or web log. The Foefs are made from sheets, pillowcases and vintage fabrics from the 60s and 70s. I like to give old materials a new life. I get inspiration from toys, children's books, and designs from the 70's and from jokes. The Foef family is one of my projects. I'm also a stage designer and I do styling.'

For who?

'I design Foefs for grown ups that have a good sense of humour and that have feeling for trends and design. Hanazuki in Amsterdam, the Centre for Visual Arts in Groningen and Nyna in Leeuwarden all sell Foefs.'

What are you good at?

'Foefs are happy monsters. I combine a feeling for design with playfulness. I actually got the idea when I was sad; I tried to cheer myself up with this project, and it worked. Now I try to cheer up other people.'

What is it that distinguishes you from other artists?

'My website is a world inside a world. I turned a crazy idea into a serious project. By changing the words 'to sell' to 'for adoption', a whole new concept was created. The Foef family is different from other cuddly toys because of the narrative. It makes people laugh and then they play along. They adopt a Foef, name it and give it a personality. The monster becomes their alter ego. Foef owners are part of the concept, which they co-design. I enjoy giving humour and playfulness a place in the world, and having grown-ups fantasize, like they used when they were still a child.'

Where can we find you?

'My website is www.familiefoef.nl'

Roland de Mul

What is it you make?

'Tables, lamps, fireplaces, kitchens, complete interiors: anything, actually. My choice of material depends on the object. I used to work a lot with steel, but now I use a lot of other materials too. I try to find things that suit the location and the object best. It's mainly custom made.'

'Some of my pieces are on sale in the Maupertuus (a fancy interior design store in Groningen). They get a lot of companies that want a full project design. There is also a shop in Laren that sells my work to customers in the area. In Groningen I do projects under commission for people I know. I don't want to talk people into buying anything. In the end it's more fun to take a different road, or to have a click with a customer than to receive credit on your bank account, although money gives me the freedom to do new things – and a new design is always tough business: it is hard financially and it is time-consuming.'

What are you good at?

'I'm always looking for something new. The unexpected usually gives me the drive to design new things. I designed the AKI (the academy for visual arts and design) monumental art in Enschede. It has always fascinated me, what materials and form can do with people: subtle distinctions that can make or break a design. Why a table has character and gives the impression of having been around for years, after the work has been done. Stranger even: that I as a creator, have to step aside, which gives me the feeling that I am no longer alone in the space, and that a new entity has emerged. I can bring these feelings to a halt and say: next.'

In what way do you distinguish yourself from other artists?

'In the end everyone is different, just like potatoes from different supermarkets. Design is an illusion. But if you're affected by something, or if it makes you feel *****? Then we're talking. I cannot say much about my work; that's up to the people that look at it.'

Where can we find you?

That's a surprise for me too, when I wake up in the mornings, but you can send an email to: info@lumedar-design.nl'

P115-122

School buildings, 'palaces', cellars, attics and containers...

Work space for people in the creative sector: policies and organizations

By Arjo Passchier

Music sounds from a studio on the ground floor. On the first floor landing someone is working with a circular saw: work is being done for a manifestation project. In the afternoon sculptures are carried down the stairs in crates, with Madrid as a final destination. At the same time art class students walk in and out. A class of children run into the square. The sound of small feet trampling on the stairs: the pupils are on their way to visit the studios. A gallery owner pops in. Later in the afternoon, the 'fire is stirred up' for an evening of model drawing. Just another day in a studio in the city centre of Groningen. Where do they work, these artists, and how is it organized?

Policy

A history of scarcity

There are approximately 850 artists in the city of Groningen (*source: CBK and HaViK*). Suitable and affordable working space and studios are hard to find, and the waiting lists are long. People in the creative field have urged the city council and Provincial authorities to come up with plans to improve the cultural infrastructure. In 2002 Provincial authorities drew up an action plan and demanded an inquiry (Margo Slomp, *Atelier op Maat*; 2003). The results pointed out that Groningen has a large shortage of both permanent and temporary workspace. A commission was put together (which included Provincial authorities and people that work in the field) to set up a policy regarding workspace, which was included in the council's cultural policy document in 2004. It was a start.

'*De basis op orde*' (a solid foundation) is the slogan of the council's cultural policy document 2009 – 2011. In order to realize more workspaces, quite a few things have been realized with council and provincial funding (€ 800.000 altogether) in the past four years, but they are still working on the foundation. The aim for the next four years is to acquire vacant properties and to make them suitable (temporary) working places and studios.

New plans

A number of new plans are ready to be realized. The shed in the Oosterhamrikkade 7 is the first project of Art Indeed, HaViK's new rental management foundation. It's the start of a new collaboration between HaViK, CareX and the GRIB foundation (Groningen in Berlin), in finding temporary workspaces for artists and to make them into dynamic breeding grounds. Together with the city council the space is made suitable for long-term temporary use with mobile constructions. Project OLE (Open Lab Ebbinge) started off with the construction of mobile units and experimental (sustainable) buildings for small, beginning creative businesses (for self employed people for instance) and working places and studios for autonomous- and applied art. The city council wants to participate, and is now working together with HaViK. The Provincial authorities are being persuaded and they are still looking for a housing corporation. The project is in full development.

Organizations

HaViK

The Huurdersvereniging Kunstenaars (association for artist tenants) is the only existing artists' work-space organization, and therefore holds a central position. HaViK facilitates, mediates and allots studios and work space. 178 artists have signed up for their waiting list. HaViK applies professional criteria. Their policy's spearhead is the expansion of a number of affordable work places for artists and designers. Their main goal is to offer professional art a place for research and development. HaViK is a mediator for buildings that are generally owned by housing corporations. In and around the city centre there are 7 'HaViK properties' where artists live and work. HaViK also mediates for the 24 'beginners' studios' in Het Paleis. They also have close relationships with Nieuwe Garde, OK-Noordzijde, the WEP Foundation as well as with the city council, several housing corporations and Provincial authorities for the realization of the city's workspace policy. On a national level HaViK is part of the corporate organization LOA, Landelijk Overleg Ateliers (national work space consultation). Art Indeed (AI), is part of HaViK and was set up together with CareX. Art Indeed rents out temporary vacant properties that can be used for at least 2 to 5 years. They manage the waiting lists of both organizations, and deal with the allotment of the properties. Their aim is to make the properties into a kind of breeding ground where artists can interchange and have the possibility to exhibit their work. The artists give shape to this.

CareX

Bureau CareX is an organization that manages a couple of hundred vacant properties like schools, offices and business properties. CareX temporarily rents out these properties that are used as living and working spaces at a very low price. Unlike HaViK and Het Paleis, CareX does not apply professional criteria for visual artists. CareX has a waiting list. Managing Director Lenze Hofstee would for instance like to negotiate with state agents, as 'they know exactly which properties are vacant'. He would like to see that the local council realizes a policy regarding unoccupied properties, so that vacant properties can be taken into use faster and more easily. According to the local council it is hard to combat national rules and legislations.

Stichting COB 10 (COB 10 Foundation) – Cultural Development Bloemsingel street 10: initiator of Het Paleis

Het Paleis, on Bloemsingel street 10, officially opened her doors in September 2009. What started off as a private initiative is now another jewel in the crown in Groningen's creative field. The 9.000 m² include 30 owner occupied studios, 24 studios for beginning businesses and 8 budget spaces for beginning creative businesses, as well as rental apartments, a café/restaurant, a conference room and project space, flexible work stations, a theatre and guest rooms. The city council and the Province council have helped fund the project; the property is owned by the housing association Nijestee. Het Paleis is an ideal breeding ground for visual artists and creative entrepreneurs. The owner occupied studios were sold at a reduced price, which was possible as they were part of the total

renovation of the Bloemsingel street 10. A 'purchase guarantee arrangement' applies to these properties, which means that when a studio is resold, a substantial amount of the profit that is potentially made, is reinvested in the building. This rules out speculation and ensures that the property will remain within financial reach of the target group.

The studios for beginning businesses are designed for recently graduated Art Academy students. Art students can put down their name on the HaViK waiting list two years before their graduation. Beginning businesses can use these studios for a maximum of two years, and will then have to move on to a different studio. A number of conditions apply for renting a beginners' studio. Stichting COB 10 and HaViK talk with the candidates on the waiting list and then decide whether they will fit into the concept of Het Paleis. The ambition is to include a large variety of disciplines. The main goal is to offer beginning entrepreneurs good opportunities at the onset of their career. Several coaching projects have been set up and a number of educational projects have been developed together with Academie Minerva. In a cultural building like this it is easy to get into contact with more experienced artists and artists in residence. Beginning entrepreneurs as well as the users of other workspaces, have the opportunity to participate in events like 'cultural Sundays', 'open studio days' and other activities that take place in the building. Project rooms and courses classrooms can be rented, and there is a large conference room that is suitable for presentations.

In conclusion we can say that the totality of policy-makers of the city council and Provincial authorities, the organizations and housing corporations, town and country planning and private initiatives all contribute to the establishment of a solid infrastructure for creative workers and their audience in the city of Groningen. This is realized by modest means and through the greatest, often honorary, efforts from the creative field.

Salustiano Martha

'I rent two studios in the Zonnelaan street. In one of the studios I receive people and teach a pottery class. I also have my ceramics on display here. In the other space I am working on a monumental project. 'My studio is a place of peace and quiet for me where my work has enough space to thrive and flourish, and from where I can build a network for the future. To me, interaction between my work and the world is important. I like to exhibit my work at events that appreciate a multi cultural environment. I open up my studio on Fridays and Saturdays from 10.00 – 17.00, but you can also make an appointment.'

Maike van der Kooij

My studio is located in an old school in the Had-dingestraat street in the city centre of Groningen, which is a little bizarre as the main theme of my work is 'landscapes', and I live in the middle of the landscapes that I have painted. The studio gives me the space to distance myself from the outside world and it offers peace and quiet so that I can get to the essence of what I love about landscapes. I also enjoy being surrounded by other artists. You can have a conversation, confront people with your work and

compare it to that of others. I have a class in my studio once every week in the afternoon. I prefer to dedicate myself to my work without other people watching me, regardless of whether I am slaving away, if am driven, or if it's an exiting experiment that I am working on. I consider myself very fortunate to have this studio. It is a haven of peace in the middle of the bustling city centre.'

Parminder Singh

'I have a studio in Het Paleis that I share with 60 other artists. I go to my studio to be creative, but I go there for contemplation also: to develop new ideas and to read about art and philosophy. I have arranged my time in such a way that I can spend time in my studio for up to 3 or 4 hours a day. I usually work on 2 or 3 projects at the same time. I'm always drawing; I will sometimes work on a drawing, A4 size, for a whole month. I also make installations and large paintings. Whilst I wait for the paint to dry, I read and work out ideas for new projects. My studio is open to the public.'

Jeanet Metselaar

I have a studio in Het Paleis on the Bloemsingel street. It is very inspirational to work together with artists that specialize in other art forms. This leads to new opportunities like the development of collective products. Besides that we share craftsmanship and networks. The studio is equipped in such a manner that I can work there, I can teach classes and exhibit my jewellery. I choose to rent a studio in the front of the building, facing the square that will hopefully draw a lot of people. Anyone can come and visit at any time so now, besides a studio, my workplace is also an exhibition space.

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Kunst op Straat (Art in the street)

By Ankie Boomstra

The CBK Groningen initiates and coaches art-projects that are realized under commission in the city of Groningen. City development plans, like local renovations or large construction projects, can lead to the commissioning of art projects. Artists are commissioned by the CBK to create a piece of art for a specific location. The CBK will support the realization of the piece of art, and take care of the maintenance involved. The whys and wherefores of art in public space.

There are approximately 400 pieces of art in public places in Groningen. The density is especially large in the city centre. We became aware of this when we had to move a work of Henk Visch called: *Secret Life in a Public Body*. The work was located in a parking garage for a certain period and when we tried to find a new location above the ground, we realized how cramped our city centre is. Art needs space, and people shouldn't be tempted to park their bicycle against it, and you don't want drunks to frequent the location. In the end the crawling figure was placed in a wonderful, prominent loca-

tion at the Oosterhaven harbour. New works are added frequently. Commissioned art is realized when local renovations, or city expansions are being created, or when new schools, buildings, parking garages and parks are being developed. We usually work with a team of professionals, like architects, urban developers and experts in the field of visual art. However, we also work together with local residents, teachers and students: people that know what they want for their school or their neighbourhood. Together they form the art commission. Often a wonderful synergy occurs between all these people that have the same goal. We start off by formulating a question, and as a starting point we determine the situation and target group involved. We immediately go in search of artists that have an interesting answer to this question. After getting to know each other the artists get to work. Subsequently, the artists present a preliminary design. The best idea is then selected, and developed further. If the art commission is in favour of the plan, the actual work can begin. Usually it takes quite some time before the project is completed. This has to do with the innovative nature of art and the development of new materials and techniques.

You will come across technical innovations in multistorage car parks. Nowadays these car parks aren't as gloomy as they used to be; a lot of attention is paid to architecture, lighting and design. Art has to acquire a place here, as the work has to compete against the noise and other visual elements that are part of the entourage. Besides, people here are in motion, on their way from A to B, so they are certainly not looking for art. Why then commission art projects? Parking garages and new media are in fact quite similar: both are dynamic, they both have a fleeting character and they are interactive. The fact that garages are covered, and the place hardly ever sees daylight, makes it very suitable for 'power socket art'. Furthermore, a parking garage is the first stop and first introduction to the city for people from outside Groningen that travel here by car. A work of art may function as a memento of Groningen, and it will underline the fact that the city embraces culture.

Two works of art have already been realized; they are part of a series.

Ossenmarkt car park, light art by Peter Struycken

Driving or walking through this multi storage car park is a remarkable experience due to its architectural design, in which the road spirals down the centre of a hollow cylinder. We tried to find an artist who would emphasize this extraordinary architecture and could add something to it as well. Twenty light boxes at the bottom of the car park radiate different colours up through the 14,5 metre void, and illuminate the concrete structure. Peter Struycken designed a computer programme that generates colour sequences and colour blending, without repetition. By having the lights shine in a continuously variable modus, with a different intensity, colour change occurs. The timeline of the colour blending is based on the average speed of cars driving through the garage.

Stadsbalkon (the City Balcony), Second Thought by Giny Vos

Under the new City Balcony, the open space in front of the central station, there is room for 4.000

bicycles alongside the cycle path that runs below. Here we wanted a piece of art that would contribute to the world of passing travellers. We wanted an intriguing image that would catch the gaze of hurried passers by, but that would remain surprising at every visit.

Above the roundabout, under the balcony, there is a bell glass stuck against the ceiling, with an upside down, fairytale-like image of the station inside that emphasizes what the building used to look like. Darkness and bright lights succeed each other in the bell glass, through computer-controlled LED-lighting. Once in a while the station becomes a shadow, as if the artist wants to illustrate the downside of the erection of the City Balcony: on the one hand it is elegant, but on the other hand it blocks the view of the monumental building.

CBK Groningen

The CBK (The Centre for Visual Arts) in Groningen brings art, artists and the public together by organizing a wide range of activities. The CBK lends out pieces of art, they advise people when they want to purchase something and they support art under commission for companies and in the public space. In order to support this they also organize educational activities and exhibitions. The CBK possesses detailed documentation of professional artists and designers from in and around Groningen. The general public, businesses, art-related organizations, artists and schools are all welcome to visit the CBK. For more information: www.cbkgroningen.nl

Ankie Boomstra is the coordinator for 'Kunst op Straat', at the CBK Groningen

P 126-127

Kunstruimte 09

Transcending generations and non-mainstream

By Stefan Nieuwenhuis

Kunstruimte 09 (Art space 09) is a gallery for contemporary visual arts with an emphasis on conceptual and fundamental art that was set up in 2004 by designer Joke Vos and visual artist Jacob van der Veen. In the past five years the pair has transformed their love for concept free art into a beautiful, sunny gallery, where they organize exiting, appraised (group) exhibitions.

'The work we exhibit isn't mainstream,' says Van der Ven. You won't find the work of internationally celebrated artists like Tomas Rajlich or JCY van der Heijden in the Groninger Museum. Because we combine the work of several artists in one exhibition, the conceptual or fundamental character of the work receives the attention it deserves. Elements in the work of our group exhibitions are linked, which triggers dialogue.'

K09 doesn't go out of its way to be different from other galleries and museums. According to Vos, K09 was set up in order to exhibit art that was hardly ever on view on the contemporary market. The only distinction gradually manifested itself. 'Regular visitors have seen our concept develop throughout the years, and we have become more and more consistent in what we have on display.' This is visible in their two books, *Colour Matters 1 and 2*, published in 2005 and 2007, which includes work that was exhibited in K09 in the previous years.

Vos and Van der Veen consciously choose to work with a group of very diverse artists to set up an exhibition with. 'We always make sure we have a mix of people: internationally celebrated artists, young, old, local, etc.', says Van der Veen. 'We recently had an exhibition that included work of a former student of Academy Minerva, alumnus Wouter Nijland (1980), that was placed right next to a work of Vincent Hamel, who is almost fifty years older than he is. This wasn't a problem; their work transcends generations.'

The painting that is depicted here demonstrates the contrasts 'coincidence' and 'structure' that are both equally present. The work consists of 121 identical fields. 'Talens Amsterdam paint', which is used for study purposes, was used to paint the fields. This series consists of 35 colours. Codified marbles determined the order of the colours from the tubes of paint that were used for the canvas.

The first field in the left upper hand corner is painted in a standard tube colour, as is the field two blocks to the right of the first field. The same principle is applied from the top down. The fields in between are painted with blended colours that resulted from these two standard tube colours. The fields in the centre of every nine-field cluster show the blended colours that were created from four standard tube colours. The fields were coloured with brush strokes, and 360 numbered marbles that indicated the angle determined their direction. In the near future Kunstruimte 09 will be working together with other art organizations. In the autumn of 2009 K09 will organize the reflective programme *Chromodomo*, together with the Academie Minerva and Wallhouse #2, among others. The key components of the programme will be the following elements: colour, light and space. K09 also maintains tight relationships with other international galleries and organizations with the same background so that an exchange programme can be realized in the future, based on conceptual and fundamental art with an emphasis on colour and material.

Herebinnensingel 11

9711 GE Groningen

Open: Wednesdays to Saturdays, and every first Sunday of the month between 13.00 and 17.00.

P 128-129

Media combination NP3

NP3: QLOBBY Retort++ NULL PROMO NPeG DISplay

By Stefan Nieuwenhuis

Contemporary visual culture asks for attention in a new way, as you can tell from the title above. This culture however also requires a different approach to making and viewing art. NP3, the media association in the Hofstraat street in Groningen has based its projects on this idea. They focus on the relationship between artists, their art and the art world with contemporary visual culture. The initiators are Zwaan Ipema and Ruud Akse.

In an earlier interview Akse says: 'We seriously believe that something has to change in the art world. There no longer are any great artists, only those that are presented as such by the media. Therefore, the key question is: how does artistry relate to recent social developments?'

Naturally this perspective will bring on a discussion. Akse: 'At NP3 exhibitions are presented in a bold fashion. We hope that this will raise discussion. We use a combination of visual arts, Internet, advertisement and new media. From a cultural perspective, visual art is no longer a pioneer; this is now in the hands of Microsoft, Google, the gaming-industry and Youtube; they come up with interesting technological and creative innovations. What does this mean for the art world? That is an interesting question. I see NP3 as an intermediary for the exchange of information.'

Both Ruud Akse and Zwaan Ipema used to be part of the Groningen artist initiative Niggendijker. When Niggendijker ceased to exist in 2000, its magnificent building in the Hofstraat street was empty for a number of years. Four years later Akse and Ipema came up with a new initiative: 'NP3, a representative media combination on the borders of experimental, contemporary art'. They have a process-based method of working. Ipema: 'NP3 formulates questions about how art (and the art world) function. We invite artists to respond to these concepts.' These results and the creative process leading up to it are presented to the public. NP3 always makes sure that the programming in the three work and exhibition spaces in the stately former school building is always organized in such a manner that a final presentation in one of the spaces will always take place when the projects in the other two spaces are still in an early stadium, so that the audience can be involved in the creative process of the next presentation. Artists also get to know each other, which leads to mutual stimulation.

For those who are interested, the title of this piece can be interpreted as follows: the three exhibition spaces of the building in the Hofstraat street are called DISplay, NULL and PROMO; the *open-source*

Internet database where artists can develop and present their digital art (a virtual exhibition space, as it were) is called Retort ++; NPeG is the name of the video bus stop on the Emmaplein by Rem Koolhaas that NP3 provides short art films for. QLOBBY is the new network and presentation space in NP3's hallway, and finally: the name NP3 is based on nothing more than a typing error that stood out and stuck around. Akse then went on to stick a number three on no-parking signs in the city centre. 'No parking to the third power' which is in line with the initiative's main idea: 'never stand still.'

That's not a problem: NP3 organizes 30 projects every year, and they are the only artist initiative in Groningen that receives a subsidy from the Mondriaan Foundation.

P 130-131

Noorderlicht

'Taking photographs means being involved'

An interview with Ton Broekhuis

By Lennard Dost

It all started in 1981 when photographer Ton Broekhuis put up photos in the small photo gallery in the USVA, the cultural facility of the University of Groningen. Broekhuis, now director of Noorderlicht, taught photography classes at the centre, and with his students he put together an exhibition of work of documentary photographers in Western Holland. 'In fact, it was the first gallery for documentary photography in the Netherlands.' In 1991 the gallery's 10th anniversary was celebrated with a large manifestation with more than ten galleries and exhibition spaces taking part. This was, in fact, the birth of Noorderlicht as we know it: an annual festival for documentary photography. The festival is headstrong, confident and up to date, and nowadays is appreciated worldwide. An important photography website recently even declared Noorderlicht the 5th best photo exhibition in the world. Broekhuis: 'Photographers that have presented their work at Noorderlicht often go on to exhibit their work at important festivals and platforms, both nationally as well as internationally. This recognition feels good, of course; that your own taste can lead to wide ranged appreciation. That's wonderful.'

You started off with socially engaged documentary photography. How did Noorderlicht's view develop in the past decades?

Broekhuis: 'We started off in the 1980s with one-dimensional photography. The intention of photography was to reveal certain matters like photos of the squatters' movement, series about the environment or of places like Nicaragua. We gave up presenting these kinds of images in the 1990s, and went in search of different forms. We did want to remain socially aware, but we no longer wanted

the photos to function as evidence for injustice. Ed Kashi's exhibition (which is on display in the gallery as we speak – LD), is a good example of how our view has changed over the last few years. Kashi plays an active role in his presentation of the influence of oil exploitation in Nigeria, but he applies photography as an art form too. He leaves enough space for interpretation. His photos are layered, like good paintings. I believe photography has shifted to this level; the same as the art of painting.

How, in that respect, do you view the development of photography in the Netherlands in the past few decades?

Broekhuis: 'Right now photography is mainly about the vulnerability of man. People perceive this in a certain way and then try to put it into perspective. Photographers stay at a safe distance. In my opinion this kind of documentary photography is not an interesting development. To us photography means being involved, and it starts with your emotions. Having a passion for something and then presenting this in the best way you can. At times it is no problem if it is simply about beauty. Arnoud Bakker and Mathieu Keuter are good examples of this: two young photographers from Groningen that we are making books with as a part of the stimulation project 'Nieuw Licht' (new light). Arnoud speaks a language of the past; he photographs nudes. In his work I see a great passion for intimacy. Mathieu makes travel accounts that he works out in an almost old-fashioned style as a response to digitalisation. These kind of projects make me really happy. They have nothing to do with social awareness, but both books answer questions about the ins and outs of contemporary photography.'

I assume you also try to stimulate photographers from all over the region. What else do you do?

Broekhuis: 'You're absolutely right. We try to present work by photographers from the North of the country at least once a year. Last year we displayed work of Harry Cock (from Assen), and at the end of the year there will be an exhibition by Karel Zwaneveld (from Groningen). We also have a kind of educational programme for people who have graduated from the local art academy. They join us for a couple of years, and help us out with odd jobs. We discuss their work and at the end we help them make a book like we're doing with Arnoud and Mathieu, whose books we will present at a large photography festival in New York. That, of course, is a great opportunity for these guys.'

What else does Noorderlicht do for the city and its surroundings?

Broekhuis: 'I'm convinced that art and culture can stimulate the economy. In the past few years Noorderlicht has organized exhibitions in sister parishes on our own initiative, like in Graz in Austria. As a result of these personal bonds, economical ties are also made. As I understand, Graz is very interested in the Energy Valley here in the North. If it is sold, it will surely be of economic interest for the region.

You want to internationalize as a photo institute as well. Another way to realize this is through the annual curator-day that takes place during the Noorderlicht

festival that attracts curators from all over the country, as well as from abroad.

Broekhuis: ‘During these days curators and directors from international photography festivals and photography institutes discuss the changing position of documentary photography together and the consequences this has for photography festivals. It is always good to share experiences over a beer or two. On the long run, these curator days are good for establishing a relevant global network. All at once you have friends from all over the world. Through these contacts you remain well informed about what’s going on in the world, which is very important when you’re in this business.’

P 132-135

Poets in the Prinsentuin

By Correen Dekker

It could happen to you: it’s summer, the dog days have only just begun and the dazzling sun shines relentlessly. You hope to escape the sun in the shady Prinsentuin (a walled garden in the city centre of Groningen), but suddenly you find yourself in the middle of a group of people that all seem to be captivated by one person’s words. You have no idea what this person is talking about. Then you realize that this must be the poetry festival ‘Dichters in de Prinsentuin’ (poets in the Prinsentuin).

There’s a good chance it is. Every year on a Thursday and a Friday in July the walled renaissance garden behind the Prinsenhof is the setting for the open-air poetry festival. During two afternoons the Prinsentuin is the centre of Dutch poetry. About eighty poets travel from all over the country and from Belgium to the North, to recite their poems.

The poets are all kinds of people of all ages. Some write clear, simple words, others write hermetical poetry that you can only be familiar with after having heard, or having read the piece a number of times. There are well known poets, like Rutger Kopland or Gerrit Komrij, as well as less prominent poets like Erik Bindervoet or Peter van Lier. At least half of the poets here are talented beginners or amateurs. For those people the inspiration and the contacts they acquire during this festival, can be a stepping-stone towards professionalism.

Besides the poets, almost two thousand people come and visit the festival in the Prinsentuin. Many of them aren’t from Groningen: more and more poetry lovers travel to Groningen for one or more days to listen to poetry for a whole afternoon to be swept away to the strange worlds conjured up by the poets’ words. Every poem is a story in itself, which gives insight, and contains beautiful words, sentences, rhythms and sounds. The poems describe what you already knew, but couldn’t put into words. A festival like ‘Dichters in de Prinsentuin’ is unique in the Netherlands.

The poets recite their work from the lawn beside

the teashop and the audience sits or lies around them in the grass. The admission is free, the atmosphere is relaxed and the recitals are short. The poets take more time when they present their work in the recess of the foliage passageway and on the shady footpaths. The visitors can walk along or stop to listen, or they can ask for an explanation or make a request. The formula is successful, according to the local paper the Groninger Dagblad, and the quality national paper the NRC stated: ‘it is one of these festivals where you can listen to poetry forever (...) it’s heaven’.

Would Tsead Bruinja and Frans Geubel have foreseen this success when they were organizing the first edition more than ten years ago when they wanted to establish another platform for poetry? There was no budget, because visitors have free admission, the poets present their work free of charge. Nowadays there is a budget; they recently were granted structural funding from the corporate foundation SLAG (the foundation for Literary Activities in Groningen). The festival’s charm has remained, and admittance is still free. ‘Dichters in de Prinsentuin’ is not a slick and costly event, but it can exist through the support and help of several local business people that are well disposed towards the festival. There are bookstalls and for every festival a collection of works is published. Meals and drinks are available to poets and visitors. Culture and commerce meet – which is beneficial for the atmosphere.

‘Dichters in de Prinsentuin’ exists outside of the Prinsentuin too: in Café De Spieghele, for instance, where the kick-off takes place, and on the terrace of the theatre café De Souffleur, where the poets conclude the event by reciting their work in the open air. Exiting presentations take place in various locations like in the University Museum, the Blaauw Observatory at the Zernike complex, or in the city’s public space. Especially these events lead to cooperations with artists of other art forms. Musicians add music, visual artists are involved in the programme and the dividing line between poetry and theatre disappears.

‘Dichters in de Prinsentuin’ is, in fact, recommended in the city’s national marketing campaign, which illustrates that the festival is now an established cultural event and that it has become part of both the creative city as well as part of Groningen’s identity.

P 136-137

Noord Nederlands Toneel

‘Direct communication lines are extremely short in Groningen’

An interview with Ola Mafaalani
By Marieke Jissink

Since the first of January 2009, Ola Mafaalani is the artistic director of the Noord Nederlands Toneel (the Northern National Theatre Company), and she has settled in the Machinefabriek theatre, the company’s home base in the Bloemstraat street. Her relationship with Groningen however goes further back. ‘There are a few things in life you never forget, like the birth of your child, for instance. For me, one of these moments was when I made my first professional production, which was here in Groningen thanks to Jan Stelma in the Grand Theatre.’

‘I can still remember a conversation I had with him, about the production I wanted to make. After this conversation he said: ok, let’s do it. I thought: what does he mean; that I should make my first production? But it actually meant: let’s do it! I then decided it wasn’t wise to tell him that I hadn’t even graduated yet.’ This first production, Harige Machines (Hairy Monsters) in 1995, showed the final hour of the Polish avant-garde artist Witkiewicz, before he kills himself. Mafaalani: ‘I got to do whatever I wanted to with the piece, and there was a lot of money available. I got to go to Poland to do research, for instance. That’s why the piece worked out so well.’ The piece was well received and drew a large audience. ‘We got to go on an international tour, which is how I became an established theatre maker, even before I graduated’, says Mafaalani. She made three other productions in the Grand Theatre after this one, and she got to stay at the Grand Theatre guesthouse. ‘I came back to Groningen; so for me it wasn’t a new city.’

The most important thing she learnt from her first production in Groningen, is that you can realize anything with little means. ‘In Groningen you can fly. You can do anything if you want to. I profited from this in my later work in Amsterdam, Vienna, Cologne, Boston and Brussels, but I learnt it here.’ The scale of the city is ideal too, according to Mafaalani. ‘It is a small metropolis. Communication lines are extremely short. I only just got here and already I know a lot of people who have seen my work that I greet in the market square or at a home game of the Groningen football team FC Groningen. Contacts are made easily. In this short period I have already worked with the Groninger Museum; the Royal Commissioner has played in one of my shows; a collaboration has been set up with the Grand Theatre to train a new generation of theatre makers, and we did a co-production with the dance company Club Guy and Roni. We meet and then get to work immediately. I don’t think there are many cities in Europe with such direct communication lines.’

For her first NNT production, *Medea* (adapted from the text of Euripides), Mafaalani spared no expenses and organized an outdoor spectacle on the Grote Markt square. ‘I was really excited about us starting off, and wanted everyone to know. I was welcomed with open arms. My straightforward approach appealed to a lot of people: for me it’s ‘everything or nothing’. This fits the Groningen mentality.’ She doesn’t only want to focus on Groningen, she wants to include the whole region: ‘We for instance set up the Medea-express to invite people from outside the city to come and see a show. We pick them up with a special bus. I

am trying to find a way to build up an audience from outside the city, and to make performances outside the city too. We recently took on two theatre makers that will explore the region in the next couple of months, and collect stories that will be used for a production on location.’

Another project that was recently set up by the NNT is called *The Garage*. Here, again the NNT goes in search of an open and direct means of communication with the audience. For *The Garage* we invite a number of artists to make something together with us in a short period of time. It is a place where different art forms can meet. We want it to be low profile, so we can break down the barriers for a visit to the theatre. People in Groningen should be able to pop in on a Sunday afternoon if they feel like it.’ Mafaalani doesn’t shun the large theatres, though. ‘We are one of the eight national theatre companies; naturally we will also perform in the city’s main theatre. This still means, however, that our actors can cycle off from the stage and then communicate with people in town, to return for their next scene. They are probably the only actors in the world that can do this. That is unheard of; it is unique and bizarre.’

P 138-140

Noord Nederlandse Dans

By Marije Kruis and Mare van Koningsveld

For almost ten years Groningen knew the company Galili Dance. Their choreographer, Itzik Galili, made way for the American Stephen Shropshire in the end of 2008. Through a concurrence of circumstances Stephen joined the company as a dancer and choreographer in 1999, and now he has taken on the role of artistic director. The company’s name was changed to Noord Nederlandse Dans (Northern Dutch Dance), the NND. ‘It is a name that says: We are from the North!’

Artistic leader Stephen Shropshire is very pleased with his new role in Groningen: ‘What’s exciting about Groningen is that it is becoming more and more internationally orientated. The city feels livelier than when I first got here. In the streets I now hear people speak English, French, German and Japanese. The city is bubbling; the city offers a lot of opportunities.’ Brigitte Goeij, the company’s business manager, tells us that it has been a good opportunity for the company to make a new start with Stephen Shropshire. ‘Everything that was realized with the old company can be reconsidered and adapted, if necessary. Because the supporting department still largely consists of the same people, we can still rely on the know-how and experience we acquired before. Our new name is also beneficial; the word ‘Nederlands’ (Dutch), is very powerful, as the Netherlands are famous for dance. In the Netherlands we are always innovative, and we are famous for the high quality and diversity of our work.’

Irene Rinsma, who is responsible for the publicity and marketing of the NND, says: ‘We officially started off as NND in January 2009, but only after the new company’s first performance *Ball Electric*, did it feel right. Once the performance was over, we thought: And now we’ve only just begun.’

The NND has two main goals: first of all, they want to make headstrong, edifying artistic dance programmes, and secondly they want to realize a thriving dance climate in the North of the country. Brigitte Goeij and Irene Rinsma explain that it had a great impact when the NND was nominated ‘official dance company of the North’ by the Ministry of Education. De Goeij: ‘Being the official dance company of the North of the Netherlands brings on a lot of new responsibilities. The new beginning of the NND is therefore more than just an artistic change.

The NND wants to inspire the public and develop personal contact with the audience. Educational activities contribute to this. Brigitte de Goeij: ‘We had educational projects in the past, but they were usually ad hoc, and the dancers often didn’t have time for educational projects on the sideline. We’ve now set up the StudioGroup, which is a group of talented dancers that will soon complete their training at the Rotterdam Dance Academy. They rehearse with the company, and realize educational projects. They are trained to organize workshops for youngsters and to develop a personal repertoire, especially for a young target group. They perform in schools, in family homes, in theatres and in special locations. Besides educational projects, the NND is in search of new means of drawing an audience. Irene laughs when we ask her if the NND has a Twitter account. ‘We don’t have an account yet, but there will be one soon.’ Brigitte de Goeij: ‘We also want to make dance more accessible, and have people drop by more easily. We’re considering a monthly presentation of our studio work, and in December we will do the kick off of *Het Glazen Huis* (a popular fundraising event), on the Grote Markt square.

It is important for the company to remain in close contact with the international dance scene; not only by doing international tours, but also by working together with international companies. Stephen Shropshire tells us that the NND wants to work with young choreographers. ‘I was very lucky in my career, and I was able to develop my skills thanks to the support I received. Now I want to return the favour and do the same for young choreographers. I want to offer them the opportunity to create something, as well as a platform in a creative surrounding, where they have the chance to work with our company for a period of two weeks. Together with them we discuss how they should develop their work further. What are their interests? Where does our view meet theirs? It’s a collaboration purely based on research, which is why there is no necessity to actually perform the work. Choreographers that I am interested in can always come here and make a production for the company.’ Collaborations with artists or organizations from the North of the Netherlands bring the focus back to the region. Shropshire: ‘There, for instance, will be a collaboration with the Noord Nederlands Orkest (the Northern Dutch Orchestra). I am very favourable to people with kindred interests, and

possible collaborations are not limited to dance.

The NND is in full motion, and they do a lot more than just creating dance productions. It is an outstanding company that will boost both the city’s as well as the region’s dance culture through education, research and development, and both international and regional collaborations.

P 141-143

Cartoons in Groningen

‘For many people a cartoon is nothing more than Donald Duck’

By Stefan Nieuwenhuis

Five years ago, when Groningen was granted a cartoon museum (and Haarlem wasn’t), the comic strip all of a sudden received great public interest. From a broad public anyway, because for many years already, Groningen has known a large and active, cartoon scene, that is mainly active ‘underground’.

The legendary Small Press Festival takes place in Vera once every two years (after having been organized in Huize Maas twice, in the nineties). Here, both local cartoonists make their appearance, as well as other cartoon makers from all over the country, and even some from Hamburg: Calle Claus en Wittek, for instance. They became successful, partly due to the Festival, and their work is now published in *Zone 5300*, a magazine for comics, culture and curiosities. If you add up the numerous private publications of cartoonists from Groningen, the (cartoon) magazines *Grunn* and *Van Speijk*, that offer a platform to local cartoonists and that have both already celebrated their twelfth anniversary, the Cartoon museum that was mentioned earlier and the 3 specialist cartoon shops (*Pelucidar*, *Zinnebeeld* and *Sleaze*), we can safely say that Groningen has a lively cartoon scene.

Comic strips have become more and more popular in the last few years, and have therefore become more ‘mainstream’. Every self-respecting bookshop has a shelf that includes *graphic novels*, American classics, manga and the *Oog & Blik* albums, which are Dutch quality work publishers. The supply isn’t exactly adventurous, but at least they are available to the public. This wasn’t always the case. Cartoons are becoming more accepted and are taken more seriously than ever before. Cartoon lovers no longer have to defend themselves: comic books, like *Suske en Wiske*, *Lucky Luke* and *Joop Klepzeiker* (which are comic books that are generally considered banal) no longer run the show.

Sam Peeters is one of the four members of the cartoon collective ‘Lamelos’ (‘Letmege’). Together

with his brother Boris, Jeroen Funke and Aleks Deurloo they have been working together for twelve years already. Their achievements include dozens of books they published on their own as well as three official albums by *Kaasheld* and *Poephoofd*. What is characteristic about Lamelos, is that they are limitless: everything is possible, everything is permitted. The colourful, grotesque and absurd: Lamelos has a patent on it. Next to being a cartoonist, Peeters teaches first year students at the Minerva Art Academy. In his lessons he tries to expose students to cartoons, whenever possible. This is out of necessity, as according to Peeters, ‘they know hardly anything about cartoons at all’. When I asked them to make a cartoon, the results were dreadful; they were only typical cartoon clichés. They believe that a cartoon is nothing more than Donald Duck. People in their thirties and forties grew up with cartoons; that’s completely gone now.’

Peeters is aware of other preconceptions about cartoons. ‘many colleagues and students still look down on cartoonists. I sometimes point out the work of Chris Ware or Daniel Clowes to students. To me it’s a small victory if two out of sixty of them can appreciate their work or learn something from it. In spite of this, Groningen does have a lively cartoon scene. According to Peeters, the former owner of the cartoon shop *Modern Papier*, Pick Fokkens, is largely responsible for this. In the eighties and nineties there were a lot of parties in the Pelsterstraat. The shop was a hangout for cartoon aficionados. Leaflets and books were made here; there was a lot of activity. Peeter believes that this is what Groningen needs: a place where illustrators, cartoonists and writers can get together. He has set his mind on *Sleaze*, and he hopes that this dvd/cartoon/designer toyshop will carry through the plans for a gallery. ‘*Sleaze* has potential. It should be like in Amsterdam, where people get together for drinks every Friday in cartoon shop *Lambiek*. That is where they talk about things, this is where you meet people and learn what others are working on; that’s important. The making of cartoons is a solitary job. It is especially useful for young artists to get advice from more experienced people. This also happens at the Small Press Festival. After all: kindred spirits give you energy.’

The Hague already understands that cartoons deserve more attention in the Netherlands. A lot is being invested in the realization of a cartoon department at the ArtEZ Art Academy in Zwolle. Its driving spirits are Hanco Kolk and Jean-Marc van Tol, the creator of the famous Fokke and Sukke cartoon. Furthermore, the comic paper *Eisner* appears every six months, which includes a mix of the best American cartoons and that of Dutch artists. *Eisner* is targeted at serious cartoon lovers, just like the publishing companies *Silvester* (that publishes Lamelos, among other things) and *Oog & Blik*.

P 144-145

Cinema

Images: quality films and good coffee

By **Lennard Dost**

The ‘Filmliga’ (Film league) foundation 1968 started screening weekly films in large cinema’s, like the Grand Theatre, Camera and Cinema Palace, in 1968. After a couple of years, a permanent location was found in the art cinema in the Poestraat street. After the company that exploited the upstairs hall went bankrupt in 1997, there was a legal exploitation void. That was when the Foundation Liga ’68 together with the Wolff company from Utrecht, decided to realize an art house. Nowadays Images is an established cinema as well as a popular meeting place. An interview with Frans Westra, former director/programmer of Images, who, at his own request, only does the programming now.

Does Wolff have a say in the programme?

Westra: ‘No, we founded a company together, and both the Foundation Liga ’68 and Wolff have a 50% share. We set up a management agreement that states that we do the programming. They take care of things like the administration and technical support. Naturally, the programming must fit the budget, which is in agreement with our aim to draw as many people as possible with quality films.’

Quality films, what exactly are they?

Westra: ‘They are the films that are screened in competition at large film festivals; the ones that win prizes, or the ones that are similar to these films. Films that certain kinds of national international journalists write certain kinds of critiques about.’

These large festivals set the standard?

Westra: ‘Yes, to me Cannes, Berlin and Venice are most important. In Groningen Images is the main representative of film art, ‘par excellence.’

Do you work together with other organizations in Groningen?

Westra: ‘Absolutely. We structurally collaborate with the Noorderzon Festival and occasionally we work together with other art related organizations like The Grand Theatre, the Stadsschouwburg and the Oosterpoort (the city’s main theatres), the NNT (the Northern National theatre company) and the Groninger Museum. We also have connections with the University of Groningen. Furthermore, Images organizes the film festival Cine Premières and it is the only cinema in the country that presents a pocket-edition of the International Film Festival Rotterdam.’

How do you stimulate film talent in Groningen?

Westra: ‘Through the programme *Groningse Nieuwe*, for instance, a cooperation with the Foundation Groninger Videolandschap (Groningen

video landscape). Every third Sunday of the month we screen short films of independent Groningen film makers, which may include everything from documentaries to fiction, both conventional and experimental films. Admission is one euro: it’s a symbolic contribution.’

On Cinema.nl someone described Images as a ‘modern cinema with 1968 idealism’.

Westra: ‘I am certainly still idealistic, and I do hope that people recognize that.’

Idealistic in the sense that you want to show different things?

Westra: ‘Yes.’

You want to educate people?

Westra: ‘Not exactly. I also like amusement films, like *Slumdog Millionaire*, a film with a high entertainment level. This film also contains a statement, by the way. I do like to screen films that make you think. I hope that after seeing the film, the audience will ask themselves why the world is arranged the way it is. It’s all about reflection: reflection on your own existence and your surroundings. That is my idealism, to provide this context for people. I don’t mind if you make different choices in your life, after having seen a film that you love to bits. That can also happen to very conservative people.’

You probably don’t see too many of them here, though, do you?

Westra: ‘You’ll be surprised. We have a lot of visitors from Haren, and these people surely aren’t all left winged libertines. The audience of Images has grown a little grey over the years, though. It is a development that is taking place in all European cinemas. This older audience, that is clearly growing, has money to spend, as well as free time. About 20 % of our visitors come from outside the city, and visitors from the province of Drenthe are on the increase. 80% of our audience has enjoyed higher education. Images is not only a cinema, but it is also a meeting place. Whilst most bars and cafés have the music on loud, especially later in the evening, in Images it is possible to enjoy a good conversation in a pleasant ambiance. Creative people can do up inspiration in Images, because when it comes to film, the very best is presented here. This is in contrast with other cinemas that may occasionally screen great art, but never do so the whole year round, or they don’t show the best films in the world. We do.’

P 146-147

Historical images and audio material

Format GAVA: old images in a new context

By **Lennard Dost**

What the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision in Hilversum is for the Netherlands, is what the Groninger Audiovisueel Archief (the Audiovisual Archive of Groningen), GAVA, is for the province of Groningen: a storage depot for historical images, film footage and audio material.

The GAVA was founded in 1992. It is a joint initiative of the University of Groningen, The Groninger Museum, RTV Noord (a regional broadcasting company), the Public Record Office, the municipal archives and a number of regional museums. Initially the GAVA was set up to accommodate the images, footage and audio material of these organizations, but nowadays it is also a storage depot for privately owned films. Format GAVA adds a new dimension to images.

What does the GAVA collection consist of?

René Duursma, manager of the collection: ‘Right now our collection contains about 8000 videotapes, a couple of thousand audio files and 4000-5000 videos. The oldest film is from 1914, which shows the funeral of colonel Thomson, a soldier from Groningen who died in Albania right before World War I. The first amateur film is from 1925 and was made by the owner of a photo shop in Groningen that who also sold film material.’

Where did you get this material?

Duursma: ‘Most of it was brought in. Private owners know where to find us now, because RTV-Noord and Andere Tijden (a TV-programme broadcasted by the VPRO) regularly show our films.

What kind of people are we talking about?

Usually people that are well off: lawyers, vets, shop owners, that kind of people. Especially in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s making a film was very costly.

Is the footage representative of its time, if the fragments were shot by the upper class?

Duursma: ‘The footage is never completely representative of its time; the people who shot the footage determine how we see things from a certain period. This must be taken into account. I’m pretty sure that in the future we will have a distorted view of the period 2000-2025, because amateurs hardly ever use proper equipment anymore. Films are no longer stored in tin cases in the attic; they are stored on hard discs that are discarded at a certain point, or replaced or cleared. A lot of the material is in fact lost.’

You anticipate these new developments. With Viva La Focus, for instance: an annual festival in Images for films made with mobile phones.

Duursma: ‘Indeed, that is how we gain insight in what people record nowadays, and how people perceive the world. In future we want to archive this material too.’

Another important project is Format GAVA, where footage that is related to our national heritage is used for media art. Footage from the old days is recycled and then used to tell new stories.

Duursma: ‘It started off like a *Groningse Nieuwe* project: In my opinion musicians, VJ’s and visual artists were not sufficiently informed about the images they were using. There is an active VJ culture in Groningen, but artists often work with material from jumble sales. Our footage is only

presented in documentaries, which is appropriate, of course, but we also want to present the material in a more exiting way. That’s the main reason we set up Format GAVA, a project that Frank Schaap (of Studio Frank en Lisa – LD) and I are curators of.

We select musicians, we offer them a 500-euro budget and we let them use GAVA’s footage, free of charge. Furthermore, we also give technical and creative advice. By doing so, we try to let the creative sector look at archive material in a different way, and we hope they are stimulated by it. Format GAVA presents its work at the IFFR in Groningen and at the Noorderzon Festival, and occasionally on different locations. Liseth Medema’s project was, for instance, presented at Viva La Focus! When the presentations have taken place, the musicians are free to present the project elsewhere.’

P 148-149

Eurosonic-Noorderslag

The epicentre of the music industry

By **Lennard Dost**

Eurosonic Noorderslag is the South-by-Southwest of the Netherlands: a three-day music festival in mid-January that temporarily changes Groningen into the epicentre of the music industry. During the first two days the city centre is reserved for acts from Groningen (Grunnsonic), as well as from the rest of Europe (Eurosonic). On the third day a cross section of Dutch pop music is presented in the cultural centre the Oosterpoort. An interview with Joey Ruchtie and Robert Meijerink, the music programmers of the festival.

Pop music seems to be thriving in Groningen. Does the music venue Vera have anything to do with this? Vera is a regular award winner at the annual VNPF gala, which is organized by the Association for Dutch Pop/Rock venues and Festivals.

Ruchtie (who is responsible for all Dutch bookings): ‘Vera is certainly an important catalyst for pop culture in Groningen, but there’s more.’ Meijerink (who does all European bookings): ‘It’s not only about clubs and/ or festivals, but also about the people living in Groningen. The supply is good, and there is enough demand, which is a perfect combination.’ Ruchtie: ‘The setting is ideal: there are so many great locations that are at walking distance of each other. This is one of the reasons why visitors from all over Europe come here to enjoy music for a couple of days.’

What kind of visitors are they?

Ruchtie: ‘They are mainly professionals. We don’t have many ‘ordinary’ visitors from abroad. Many people miss out on the festival because the tickets sell out so fast.’

Could you then say that Eurosonic Noorderslag is mainly a showcase for the industry?

Ruchtie: ‘It is indeed primarily a business related event. Musicians get the opportunity to present themselves to the 2000 professionals that attend the festival. They are promotional opportunities.’ Meijerink: ‘The audience includes programmers, as well as journalists, bookers, agents, label representatives and radio and television makers. Eurosonic Noorderslag can certainly be a steppingstone in that regard.’

And the rest of the audience consists of non-professionals?

Ruchtie: ‘Yes, a regular audience is needed to create a natural surrounding for the bands. If there are only professionals, you won’t see much enthusiasm, that’s for sure.’

You don’t just promote talent at the festival, there’s more that you do. With ETEP, the European Talent Exchange Programme, for instance.

Ruchtie: ‘Correct. Eurosonic Noorderslag initiated this programme, in order to stimulate European countries to get to know each other’s cultures. With ETEP we stimulate European festivals and venues to book artists that are staged at Eurosonic Noorderslag. Every club, or festival that joins the ETEP programme (which were around 60 clubs from 17 different countries in the past few years) and books a band from Eurosonic Noorderslag, receives financial compensation. These clubs and festivals in their turn commit themselves to booking at least two acts that were staged at Eurosonic Noorderslag that year. In this way we try to promote European music at an international level. Last year we had a band that was booked for 17 festival gigs, after having played at Eurosonic Noorderslag, which is great, of course. Festival gigs are very lucrative, you see.’

These days’ musicians really need festivals, don’t they?

Ruchtie: ‘That’s right. Record sales are zero nowadays, although there are some exceptions. The Staat, for instance, has sold more than 10.000 copies of their album. Their concerts sell out in venues that fit more than 1000 people; that’s unknown nowadays.’

We are in the middle of a financial crisis. Does this have consequences for your work as programmers?

Ruchtie: ‘Yes. I especially notice it in my work as booker for a club (Ruchtie also does the bookings for Rotown in Rotterdam – LD). You see that international artists want to play it safe. They now confirm summer festivals very early in the season, as these festivals are generally risk free, and pay well. Only when these gigs have been secured, do they consider venues and clubs. These bookings have, therefore, become a lot harder. At the same time, this is positive too: Dutch artists are now filling the void in the programming.’

So you could say that thanks to the crisis Dutch musicians have more opportunities?

Ruchtie: ‘In a way, yes. Maybe this crisis is good for something then.’

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NOISIA: ‘Electronic music with balls’

By Mare van Koningsveld

Noisia is a drum and bass collective from Groningen with the following members: Thijs de Vlieger, Martijn van Sonderen and Nik Roos. In their studio on the Boterdiep street they make their own music and remixes for bands and artists, like The Prodigy, Robbie Williams and Moby. Furthermore, Noisia owns a number of labels, and they travel the world as DJ's too.

You’ve worked together with big names: The Prodigy, Moby... How did that come about?

Martijn: ‘We only make music that we like ourselves, and these bands or groups or producers, or whatever, were doing the same, about 15 years ago. They also made music they liked themselves, and they didn’t give a shit about what was considered normal or good. They understand our mentality. When we started off we would always get requests for *drum ‘n base remixes*. Lately this has changed: people now ask for *Noisia remixes*. They don’t really care about the genre, as long as it sounds like Noisia.’

Why are you still in Groningen?

Nik: ‘Because this place is really laid-back. Besides, just a year ago we had a new studio built here, so we won’t be leaving any time soon. I do find the degree of mental power disappointing here in Groningen, though. What I miss is ‘thinking big’. A lot of people here think small.’
Martijn: ‘People usually have the wrong attitude from the start. You see, we were in a kind of niche; we couldn’t do anything with our work here. That’s why we put our music on the Internet, which wasn’t standard at the time. Nik: ‘We didn’t have a specific goal when we started off, but by not being too focussed on things that are happening immediately around you, you can reach a certain standard. A standard that can be relevant worldwide.’

I cannot imagine that you do everything from Groningen. You must travel a lot.

Martijn: ‘We go to Schiphol Airport and back, every weekend. People cannot imagine that you spend so much time on a plane; that you are on the road all the time. That you have an hour’s work, for which you have to travel 24 hours.’

Is it still fun then?

Thijs: ‘Being away from home all the time is not very pleasant. In the beginning it was great to travel; but when you’re away all the time, you want to be back home. I recently spent a month in Australia, though, when it was winter here, and summer there. That was great.’

DJ Broadcast says you’re innovators. Do you see yourself that way?

Thijs: ‘Have we done anything really special? No.

Bit we’re a lot better at what we do, than most other people; we’ve actually realized something. I often think that people copy our work: that they are making things that we have invented. Things they hadn’t thought of before, but after hearing our music, they’ll think: hey, that’s interesting.’

How would you describe the Noisia sound?

Nik: ‘It’s electronic music with balls. With character and forcefulness. We usually make things with a rough edge.’

Martijn: ‘We try to find the balance between melodious music and dance. A lot of people either listen to electronic music, or they dance to it. Thijs: ‘We’re in the middle. We never use long intros with just drums, for instance, so DJ’s can mix it. The music has to remain appealing to the listener.’

Do you have exiting plans for the future?

Martijn: ‘Yes, they’re making a computer game about us.’

Thijs: ‘The three of us play the leading part in the game. A friend of ours graduated from the Academy of Arts in Utrecht, and majored in *Game Design & Development*.

Martijn: ‘He now has a successful company. Because we’re friends, he came up with the idea to design this game. It’s getting along nicely, which is great!’

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Column

Unusual

The American artist Agnes Martin said that she created her work with her back turned to the world. The abstract paintings with a subtly drawn raster and horizontal soft coloured stripes, that command utmost concentration from its observers, are an inscrutable result of this. The Portuguese writer and poet Fernando Pessoa needs more than one personality, and besides producing a large amount of poems, he has also produced several poets (heteronyms). Besides being himself, this writer and poet is a person who creates a large number of contradictory lyrical identities that speak through him for a shorter or longer period of time. The German poet Paul Celan was a child of Jewish parents, and after the Second World War, in which the whole of his family was murdered by Nazis and turned his native language to a language of destruction, he decided to change the German language, to purify it, and to translate it to an almost incomprehensible poetic language, that asks a lot from its readers

The Japanese artist On Kawara has erased every personal trace of his life from his work in order to get to the essence of it: consciousness and the passing of time. In order to do so, he uses minimal, but effective means. Since 1969, for instance, he has been sending his friends and acquaintances postcards and telegrams with the message ‘*I am still alive*’. He also makes small, mainly black-and-white paintings of dates (the Today series, from 1966 onward) that only depict the date on which

the piece was made.

The German artist Hanne Darboven is turning her life into ‘*Schreibzeit*’, with an iron and almost official-like discipline. Writing without describing. She writes every day in order to portray the time (of life).

These poets and artists, that became famous in the second part of the last century, continue to fascinate me, because, in a sense, they place themselves and the world at a distance. Their work has been released from their usual forms and their communicative gestures have been set apart. It illustrates an original figure, which can be perceived as clear, uncomplicated and extensive; and can be experienced as complex, mysterious or incomprehensible. Originating from a strong identity, the work has the same effect as a purifying gust of breath that can blow you away and let you lose your grip on the usual, or it can move you and make you emotional by touching on an incomprehensible greatness.

These poems and pieces of art don’t tell stories, they aren’t pictures, they don’t entertain, and they cannot be consumed. They are unruly highlights of creativity and individuality that cannot be produced by any creative industry.

The life and ideas of Victor Segalen (1878-1920) are also unusual.

In a small book, that I reread recently, he touches on a theme that is extremely relevant, in a world where themes like globalization, integration, cultural diversity, the extent to which social change can be effected by government policies and uniformization of processes are of topical interest. The book is entitled *Aesthetik des Diversen*, and it contains letters of the French ship’s doctor, traveller, ethnologist, archaeologist, writer and poet Victor Segalen. These letters mention the different chapters of a book with the title *Essai sur l'Exotisme, une Esthetique du Divers*. This book, that was never written, was going to be a plea for radically different contact with the exotic, the foreign and the different. The prevalent tourist perception of the exotic of his contemporaries would be cleansed.

Victor Segalen wants to create space for people to think from an exotic, different perspective. To Segalen, exotic life does not exist in a kaleidoscopic condition of a tourist or a passer-by, but in the lively and curious reaction of a strong individuality when meeting reality, from which he can view the distance to himself, which he fully enjoys. In doing so, the exotic and the individuals complete each other. You mustn’t adapt to understand the other in order to experience the exotic; you need a sharp, direct observation of an eternal incomprehensibility. Victor Segalen finds his way into the impenetrable and herein finds the basis for the cleansing of the ethnocentric view of the exotic, in order to demonstrate the importance of cultural diversity. APART

September 21, 2008

Ton Mars, visual artist

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Column

Creativity is a personal matter

It is impossible to give a general definition of the concept ‘creativity’. Creativity is a personal matter, and therefore is different for everyone.

An example: At the last European Football Championships Ruud van Nistelrooij scored an outstandingly brilliant second goal against France. As a spectator you might see this as a ‘creative’ moment, realized by a talented forward line player. This conclusion however is of no value whatsoever, because this depends on Van Nistelrooij’s opinion. It is quite possible that he has successfully performed this same move thousands of times before during his trainings. For him it would then just be a move that is a result of many hours of training, and that hasn’t got much to do with true creativity. I am convinced that for Van Nistelrooij it is only a matter of ‘creativity’ when he performs a good move that he has never made before on the field.

I have only experienced three of these moments in my life, which comes to an average of once every seventeen years.

In the mid seventies probably no one at my school was better at mathematics than me. This didn’t have much to do with creativity, because I was simply good at arithmetic and applying formulas. Only at one time did something exceptional take place: during a lesson in fifth grade I got up in class and dreamily demonstrated a theorem on the blackboard. For my teacher and all the students present, including myself, this theorem was new, and it wasn’t mentioned in our book either.

In the mid eighties I played a game of chess against a guy called Millar from Utrecht. I am a reasonably good chess player, and was part of Groningen’s first team for a year. During my life I’ve played thousands of games of chess, but only one included a truly creative moment. During the opening I decided to sacrifice a rook for two pawns. I still don’t know what had gotten into me, but everything worked out perfectly, and I won in style.

In the mid nineties I had the honour of solemnizing the wedding of friends of mine in the A-Kerk church. My twenty-minute speech was well prepared and included a number of original features. To my own surprise, I added things to the speech on the spot, making it quite successful.

In all three cases it was as if a kind of alter ego arose that was responsible for this creativity. Naturally I was a little proud, but at the same time I was completely estranged from myself too. With an average life expectancy I might experience another two of these creative moments. I’m really curious!

Evert Janse, managing director of OOG TV (a local broadcasting company in Groningen)

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The city as opportunity: Developing

When the first TWIST was given its ultimate design in the spring of 2007, I was on the design team. It was more or less by chance that I wound up on it. At the time I was living in Bremen, after having travelled around for a few years. I had reserved a week or three for the job in Groningen. However, as is often the case with a creative project, it ultimately ended up taking more time. I was given the opportunity of staying a bit longer, during which time I even landed a few other commissions. Wonderful!

The first month went by in a flash. During the second month, the weather was lovely warm and I fell in love with an Icelandic artist. During the day I would work at TWIST headquarters, and at night we worked together in his studio. TWIST was launched in the third month and I decided to stay on for the time being.

Since I was there anyway, on the spur of the moment I signed up for the full-time study programme in Autonomous Visual Art. Minerva it was. The Academy had just undergone a stringent visitation and had drawn up a development plan in order to present itself better in future. Which is how I ended up in the test phase year, becoming one of the guinea pigs of the new system. Which, besides the inescapable inconvenience, is actually quite a lot of fun. We are even allowed to join in developing to a slight extent!

And by now TWIST II has arrived. Many of the projects that were just starting to grow at the time of TWIST I, are now in full bloom... And I’m still here too. Here in Groningen. I’ve moved four times by now and am going to switch to the Academy’s Design department. And I’m still in love. A while ago we embarked on a very exciting project. It will be in its development stage for a few more weeks. Warm and cosy in my ever rounder belly.

Friederike de Bruin, design student, Academie Minerva.

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Old buildings, new developments

Phantom pain

Text and photography: **Rob van Gemert**

Walking slowly through a city on a day you see more than usual. It doesn’t matter what the

weather is like. Each kind of weather generates its own observations.

And then suddenly it can happen: you’re struck by phantom pain. You casually visit a spot that turns out to be new and different. And you realize, almost intuitively: this new situation is in no way as good as the old one. It might be much bigger (and it usually is), but it means so much less! ‘Have I got that old people’s ailment – moaning about the past?’ you then wonder.

When the gas factory site was cleared of its gas and electricity installations, it ended up a large, barren area. The new housing blocks were meant to turn it into ‘city’ again. But how can you stop the children who will grow up here from feeling as though they are living on a new housing estate... in this area, with its rich history?

And then that little 1910 pump house, stuck to the side of a 1950 filtration building – which served as a café for a few years whilst awaiting demolition – suddenly came into play.

It was clear from the start to everyone drawing up plans: this building could be the steppingstone into the past for those children. Technical adjustments created financial room; preservation became an option. The entire building was packed up and rolled off to a new location, where it now stands triumphantly on its new spot between buildings yet to be built. The underground car park’s lift was built into the old pump. And hopefully it will become a café again, that will bring an urban, Groningen feel to the tidy homes that will one day surround it.

If you walk slowly through the *Ebbingekwartier* district that borders the gas factory site, there are other old buildings to be found which have withstood the test of time and embarked upon a new life.

The *Electrisch Centraal Station (de Machinefabriek)* on the *Bloemstraat* became the home of the theatre company *Noord Nederlands Toneel*. The regulator building behind it (with its charming roof) still doesn’t know what it’s to become, but in the meantime has been completely renovated. The *Chemisch Laboratorium* on the *Bloemsingel* street will become an incubator building for the arts, known as ‘*Het Paleis*’. The former meat-canning factory *Vleeschconservernfabriek* on the *Boterdiep* street for years now has been youth centre *Simplon*.

A lot can be said about the importance of preserving old buildings and giving them new purpose. The writer Borges once spoke these wise words: ‘Old and new are not true opposites. Doesn’t the very newest lead to the quickest ageing? The words *preservation* and *creation* are enemies on earth, but in heaven they are synonymous. The combination of the past, present and future opens up new ways of looking at space and time. And – as Ruskin once said – haven’t the same old stones of the Via Appia led to new human histories time and again - without the road itself ever disappearing?’

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The Mediacentrale

By Sabine Hoes

The Hunzecentrale power plant once stood in what nowadays is the Europapark, the newest part of Groningen – its five enormous smokestacks were city landmarks. After a great deal of discussion it was demolished. Luckily the old Helpmancentrale power station still existed. It was preserved as a memorial to the area's past. The building was given a new purpose: to house some of the most modern and innovative businesses in the city.

After a major renovation it was given the name *De Mediacentrale*. The companies it houses mostly have to do with the media, new media and the IT sector. To this end, the building was fitted with the latest, most advanced technological infrastructure on offer. The Mediacentrale's fibre optic network is connected to the Groningen Internet Exchange and to the Mediapark in Hilversum. The Mediacentrale has a number of sound and television studios and its own mini data centre, which can even be used for hosting. The impressive main hall can be used for various purposes. *RTV Noord, iWink, Gispem, Wegener, Merkator, Kalooga* and *Jet-Stream* have found a home in the Mediacentrale. A visit to *Kalooga* and *Jet-Stream*.

Jet-Stream: creativity in technology

Jet-Stream is a perfect example of how you can conquer the market with a simple concept, just by being the first to develop it. The company delivers the technology to show video content on the Internet. The people behind Jet-Stream were the first to send live streaming video over the digital highway, and were therefore trailblazing pioneers. It all started in *Simplon* youth centre, where a number of young volunteers worked with light and video purely as a hobby. Stef van der Ziel was one of them. 'I was eighteen or so and mostly working in graphic design and publicity, but I also found multimedia very interesting. We were putting gigs on the Internet that were being filmed, and without our really realising it, we were doing something very special. We were the first to do so in the Netherlands, in Europe, and perhaps in the world – to send live video footage over the Internet. That was in 1994, I don't even remember which band it was, it was some metal gig or other.' From there matters progressed. In 1996, the first video material from the *Noorderslag* festival was broadcast on the Internet. A year later, Stef began an Internet bureau that built websites and made video productions. 'But I saw that there was a market demand for streaming video, so in 2001 Jet-Stream really set to work seriously.' Moving images on the Internet were a solution for people who didn't want to be dependent upon television broadcasters. 'Up until then, you had to have licenses and get airtime. Nothing was broadcast over the Internet. I therefore see it as the democratisation of the media. Anyone who wants to can broadcast something - at whatever time.'

Jet-Stream provides the knowledge and technology. 'That's it. And of course somebody else could do this too. But the advantage to us is that we've been developing the technology for a decade, and therefore we automatically are a couple of steps ahead of our competitors.' Jet-Stream provides hosting and sells technology to businesses. Each business receives a license with which it can implement these activities further.

Jet-Stream has several major enterprises as customer, such as *Essent*, the University of Groningen, the *VPRO* broadcasting company and a number of publishers. *YellowBird*, with its innovative 3D technique, also uses Jet-Stream technology. It's not only Dutch companies, however, that know how to find Jet-Stream. 'We're the largest among the Benelux countries, and sixty percent of our business is from outside the Netherlands.' Stef isn't technical at all, he says. He takes care of managing the business. I like doing production work, marketing and publicity – the organising and arranging of things. To me, that's the creative part of a business. If you want something and nobody can arrange it for you, you just have to do it yourself! That's how we started out in *Simplon*, trying to get the best out of the limited resources we had. Even if it has to do with technology, it's still being creative.'

Kalooga: a new vision in doing business on the web

It's always the little guys who come up with clever ideas and who subsequently have to swim among the big fish in order to get noticed. Having a good idea is just half the job. So take notice of Kalooga, a new Internet service that we definitely haven't heard the last of. Revolutionary? Visionary, in any case, as they're not afraid of the big guys. Kalooga makes looking for images on the web a lot easier. If you compare it to *Google Images*, you can simply describe it as follows: Google Images lets you search for pictures, while Kalooga lets you find collections of images. The advantage is that a photo collection will tell you more about a subject than a single picture. At the moment Kalooga is capable of finding 25 million collections. Looking for collections means that you can't collect everything there is out there. A website with only one picture of something won't be included. The advantage, however, is that what you do find is presented in a very well organized way.

'The main advantage is that you don't get a load of pictures of which the majority has nothing to do with what you were looking for. The example I always use is: suppose you want photos of Paris. So you type in the word *Paris*. And what do you get? Pictures of Paris Hilton. With us you can also search in a specific category, so you can use the category *travel* for your search for example, or *celebrities*, Folkert Ringnalda explains. He runs Kalooga, which was launched four years ago. The company has grown to twenty employees and has branches in several countries. 'We've been well-received in the marketplace and developments are moving fast!' What they actually saw was that there was more to be had from the marketplace. Folkert: 'Twenty percent of all searches have to do with images, but there still wasn't anyone making money from image searches. Even the major search engines don't consider image searches as more than just a sideline and don't make any money from it.'

The way Kalooga makes money from technology is by looking to the future. It firstly moves in pace with developments and then takes a step beyond. Next to the search results there are always some ads displayed. Whoever is doing a search is supplied with related ads. 'So actually they're a kind of visual *AdWords*.' But it can work in another way as well. Kalooga enters into an agreement with a web publisher, for instance an online newspaper. An editorial piece is accompanied by several thumbnails, which lead to photo collections to do with the subject, such as a football tournament. If you click on them, you end up on a page with more visual search results to do with the football tournament. If an ad is clicked on, both Kalooga and the publisher earn a fee. Simple, logical and clearly organized. But especially smart! 'There's always a relationship between the search content and the ads displayed alongside them, so the advertiser has more chance that his ad will fit the subject search criteria.'

Why didn't anybody come up with this before? 'The idea must have come up before, but there are only a few independent search engines, and they dominate the market. You have to really watch out for them, and not everybody is prepared to take them on. It's a bit like David and Goliath, but David is going to give his sling a really good swing.'

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Crossover

Serious gaming

By Marije Kruis

In recent years, it has been the negative influence of gaming that has been particularly emphasized in the news. Today's youth gets too little exercise and spends too much time playing video games. There has been a lot of debate about violent games that supposedly incite young people to high school shootings and other awful acts of violence. There are, however, people who have discovered that gaming has advantages as well. Playing computer games can teach you specific skills that can be profitable in your career.

Sims can teach you management skills and *Wii* games are good for your motor skills. The term 'serious game' has been around for a long time. In 1977, Clark Avt published his book *Serious Games* in which he referred to the use of board games and card games, but his definition still applies in the computer age. He talks of 'serious games' as being games that have an educational purpose which are not purely designed for amusement.

Jetse Goris is an educational theorist who works at the Wenkebach Institute, part of Groningen's UMCG hospital. He is researching the use of gaming in developing and maintaining surgical skills. Serious games simulate daily life; the player can test the level of his actions and reactions. Many advantages to gaming have come to light. Using a game increases the effectiveness of the learning process. The player is at the helm, he

chooses the route to take and experiences its consequences; he actively absorbs information to work with in the game and can test options without danger.

Interest in serious gaming is growing quickly in Groningen. Serious games are for instance being used by the homecare organisation *ThuisZorg* to train its staff in coping with aggression. Participants find themselves in a simulated environment and are given assignments that lead them through the teaching material – at times they are also confronted with unexpected events. In the UMCG children with burns can enter a virtual world of snow and ice, meant to distract them from the pain. More and more people in business are also using gaming for such things as marketing, training, visualization, raising awareness levels and team building.

Up until now, amusement value played an extremely subordinate role in the development of serious games, which many real gamers call 'lame games'. Jetse Goris describes what he considers to be the greatest challenge to developing a game for surgeons as follows: 'Eighty percent of what a person learns during life happens during informal activities and gaming is a new way to exploit that fact. Because it's a new medium it takes a lot of thought. What makes a game fun and addictive? Why is playing the one game fun, and the other not? The question isn't whether using games is effective, but what the elements of a game are that make it educational.'

Goris doesn't expect any major changes in the future in terms of serious gaming. 'The serious game is a medium that's new to the education developer's toolbox. E-learning was supposed to become a tremendous hype, and now it's serious games. I think a lot of games will be developed in coming years. A few of them will be very effective. Almost all the serious games will be little more than old wine in new bottles.'

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Creative industry: right into the hospital!

Innovative education at the UMCG

By Arjo Passchier

The heartbeat rises and the patient goes into shock. Blood pressure collapses and the heart is having a hard time of it. The blood loss is substantial – worse yet, the patient has lost nearly all his blood. He will soon have cardiac arrhythmia, which heralds cardiac arrest. The patient is having a tough time of it and is in a bad way. There is still time to take action, but if the team doesn't act soon his condition will worsen and resuscitation will be necessary.

We're at a computer in the production room of the High-tech Operation Room of the Wenkebach Skills Center (the Skills Lab) of the UMCG hospital.

From here all sorts of scenarios can be programmed for training and educational purposes. Two TWIST editors and a trainee are being shown how a calamity is dealt with, using a simulation dummy controlled by a computer which represents the patient. The dummy, jam-packed with the latest in computer technology, is the result of multi-disciplinary collaboration between IT professionals, designers and physicians. In programming the human simulators the operators are of the utmost importance. These trainers develop the scenarios together with the IT staff, with the aim of providing the users a positive and thus effective learning experience. According to Mink Kiewiet, an anaesthesiologist and Skills lab lecturer, 'We used to learn on the job. Patients no longer accept inexperienced specialists who are still being trained at the operating table. Now though, with this new training technology, assistant physicians have already been trained before they ever even treat a patient.'

The UMCG has had a sophisticated Skills Center for years now, but the new Skills Center that was completed in 2008 is a complete miniature hospital with patient simulators controlled by computers. Here, real-life situations can be imitated in detail. Hospital staff and students can gain experience and keep their skills up to date, without interrupting the day-to-day running of the hospital. Everything that takes place in a hospital, from the scrub protocol to disaster training, can be practised here. Besides providing the opportunity to learn skills such as performing an operation or a part of one, the Skills Lab is the first one in the Netherlands specialized in communication and leadership training.

CRM

Kiewiet: 'The UMCG anaesthesiology department uses the dummy operating room to practise dealing with emergency situations that could come up during an operation gone wrong. This is a new concept in health care, comparable to training in a flight simulator in aviation. During a session like the one I just demonstrated, we don't just look at aspects strictly related to how the procedures are carried out, but also look at the so-called *Crew Resource Management* (CRM). This is another concept taken from aviation and tailored to health care. The human factor and team interaction in an emergency situation is studied. Studies done since 2000 have shown that poor communication and failing team interaction too often are the causes of patient deaths in health care emergency situations. During practice sessions in the dummy operating room with its lifelike dummy patient, the operating team is evaluated using the video footage taken during the simulation. Feedback is given on verbal and non-verbal communication and on leadership, patient safety, the consequences of fatigue, dealing with conflict and solving complex problems in a high-pressure work environment. We develop multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary exercises in our so-called 'dry labs'. Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration come up every day in patient care.'

A changing hospital culture

'Every technologically complex environment has its accidents. It could be a nuclear reactor, an

airplane or a hospital. To err is human, but hospital management and the government were shocked by the findings of previously mentioned research, coming to the conclusion that a culture shift in hospitals and during medical training was necessary.

Human error is often a factor in medical mishaps – caused by fatigue, making mistakes, poor communication and inadequate patient handover. Most medical mistakes are the result of misunderstandings, which have major consequences for the patients. Mistakes are often not the fault of one single person, but the result of error after minor error, where things have gone slightly wrong. This isn't always preventable, but it is possible to change the attitude towards patient safety in a way that minimises the chances of making mistakes. This is also what the minister is aiming for.

The success of surgery and procedures often depends on good teamwork. Seeing as you can develop skills and gain experience in a safe environment, here there's also room to make mistakes. Here you can make mistakes and learn from them! All procedures that took place and everything else that happened can be watched afterwards on video shot during the exercise. This feedback provides a great deal of information and leads to safer professional practice. This Skills Lab and the dummies have been especially developed for this purpose, just like the CRM exercises, with an aim to increase patient safety.

We've been using this programme for the past four years to train anaesthesiologists. It's become a natural part of the education programme – the new hospital culture has already been brought about in this department. For others, who are following the programme for the first time ever, it's a whole new world. The response is positive. They really enjoy the programme and find it interesting and useful.'

We go back to the operating room and take a close look at the dummy with its impressive computer technology. It breathes, it moves its eyelids and it says 'ouch' when not treated properly. We then move on to the simulator lab where there are virtual trainers that can be used for practising endoscopic, bronchoscopic and laparoscopic skills on your own, applied in urological, gynaecological and orthopaedic procedures. These simulators are controlled by computers and give feedback on what has taken place. 'Minister Plasterk tried to seal a blood vessel on our opening day.' And? 'The operation was not successful!'

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Interactive art

E-culture

One of the major opportunities e-culture has to offer is interaction with the environment or the audience. In an urban context, this can be interesting.

By Noline Wijnja

A development with at least as much impact as the invention of book-printing: that's the way the rise of information and communication technology (ICT) and digital media has at times been described. We email, chat, use *MSN* and *Skype* on the web, we phone, text and Twitter on our cell phones. All these ways of communicating have led to us experiencing our environment differently. The world has grown smaller (with *MySpace*, you can have friends all over the world) and one's private life has become public (think *Hyves* and *Facebook*).

The influence of communication technology is tremendous in the visual arts as well. Internet is widely used by artists, museums and other institutions to present artwork and projects. There are also artists who turn a website into a work of art. For a few years now, these various digital manifestations have been given the name 'e-culture'. E-culture stands for Electronic Culture and is actually a term used to cover anything to do with communication technology or digital media, whether it's the medium used for a work piece of art or the medium used to present art. It's also often used for projects that are known as 'new media projects'.

One of the major opportunities e-culture or new media has to offer is interaction with the environment or the audience. It's a way to involve people with the work of art or even to make them part of it. *Pavlov Medialab*, *Noorderzon*, *NP3*, the *Groninger Forum* and the *Tschumipaviljoen*: they're just a few of the organizations in Groningen realizing these sorts of projects. The most interesting projects are those where users aren't just meant to press buttons at random, but where the interaction actually has meaning.

The CBK Groningen (*Centre for Visual Arts Groningen*) at the moment is busy with a new art project for (V)MBO vocational training schools in the Lewenborg city district. Its purpose is to have a digital work of art that capitalises on the students' own world: for these students in particular, daily life consists of more than just the physical world around them. The virtual reality to be found on the Internet and in games like *Second Life* are at least just as important to them. The artist was therefore asked to develop a work of art that joined the physical and the virtual worlds together in a surprising fashion.

In other cities as well, artworks are being developed for display in public spaces, specifically designed for interaction. In Almere for instance, an interactive film by artist Susann Lekås called *Optionaltimes/Almere* is being made. In one of the city squares in the new city centre designed by Rem Koolhaas, an enormous screen is to be erected. A film that was shot earlier on the same spot will be projected on to the screen. The fictitious movie images will merge with live footage, so that past and present mix. As the years go by, a database will be created which will continually be updated with new footage of people who make use of or visit the square. The artwork will therefore not only mirror people's behaviour in the public space, but will also be a remarkable visual documentation of this young city's history.

Back to Groningen: starting in 2009, the municipality of Groningen will earmark money for an e-culture budget. Every year, there will be 60,000 euro for projects. The budget will function as an

incentives scheme that will help innovative e-culture projects get off the ground. Anyone who knows anything about e-culture can tell you this amount is not that much for financing innovative art projects, but it's a start!

Nicoline Wijnja is project leader Kunst op Straat (Art in the Streets) at the CBK Groningen

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FabLab Groningen

An innovative workspace in a worldwide network

Towards the end of 2009, FabLab Groningen will open the doors of its workspace, Het Paleis. Initiators Peter Groen, Thuur Caris and Bart Kempinga come from the world of electronics, research and 3D design. The FabLab is a workplace for designers from every discipline: a platform for an exchange of ideas, a breeding ground of innovation.

By Bart Kempinga

What is a FabLab?

A FabLab (Fabrication Laboratory) is an innovative workplace with a number of digitally controlled machines. They are high-grade machines that not everyone has at their disposal and which can be used to translate a digital design into a working 3D hardware model. Production machines that work in the same way are a fixture in industry. In order to successfully develop and market new products, these machines are indispensable in the design and development phase. A FabLab functions as a platform for the exchange of ideas. Every single FabLab in the world uses the same machines and software, in order to be able to share knowledge worldwide. It's an open source community that cooperates globally and realises things locally. The FabLab concept came from MIT in Boston that codified the concept in a FabLab charter. There are thirty FabLabs in operation in the world at the moment. The Netherlands is a major player. The number nearly doubles every year. All of the FabLabs are linked together around the clock via an Internet video conferencing system. A wide variety of users make the FabLab a laboratory, which has already led to an exchange of viable ideas. With the FabLab machines, an idea can quickly be translated into prototypes in order to test or present them. Lengthy development processes thus can be speeded up. The process can be further improved and speeded up due to the participation in an open source environment. The FabLab is an ideal place to approach a technical problem with a broad creative outlook.

FabLab Groningen

FabLab Groningen is the first FabLab in the north of the Netherlands. It provides easy access to as many users as possible, from university researchers to school pupils, and from inventors to entrepreneurs. The FabLab functions as a development

centre for new types of collaboration and earning models, but also as knowledge institution supporting education and setting up development tracks where universities, universities for applied science and business can collaborate. Research in the FabLab can contribute to the development of both sustainable and cradle-to-cradle solutions; applications in the medical arena, in multimedia, electronic engineering and sensor technology can be worked on.

FabLab Groningen has 'open walk-in' hours and 'closed' hours. There is always support staff. The 'open walk-in' is free of charge. In exchange, people are requested to post their idea and its result on the FabLab community website, so others can respond or recycle the idea and its outcome. This does not apply to the 'closed' times of day when a fee is charged. In that case, the Lab staff is required to maintain confidentiality, to ensure that work and deliberation can go on undisturbed. Workshops will be regularly scheduled for businesses and educational institutions – general as well as thematic, for beginners as well as for advanced users.

The FabLab Groningen Foundation plans to turn the FabLab into an indispensable element of education, the creative industry and innovative enterprise in the north of the Netherlands.

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Urban growth

The layered city

Urbanity is characterized by complexity, interaction and flexibility. Not by the multitude of its elements, but by the action between them. Not by the going to, but by being able to go to. Urbanity stands for opportunities, for openness and dynamism.

The philosophy of 'layered building' stems from this view of urbanity. Introducing layers in shape and meaning is a fitting way to go about this. Developments in Groningen.

By Rob van Gemert

Layered building

It might very well have happened that the 'new' Groninger Museum had been built on the edge of the city, in green surroundings. Many were enthusiastic about the idea. Why the switch from city edge to city centre? Look at the building that was realised. Not only is it a special building, but it also incorporates a bridge that became the major connecting route for pedestrians and cyclists between the heart of the city and the station. The building doesn't just stand there looking pretty, but is also a calling card, a lure and an orientation point, not just for the museum visitor, but for every visitor to the city as well. The choice of the museum's location gives it particular meaning, something that would not have occurred had it been situated on the edge of the city.

The search for added value in shape, location and meaning is also known as 'layered building'. This is a specific form of urban growth. It offers the opportunity to add qualities to cities that are 'full'. Layered building no longer has to do with 'more', but with 'more complex', and thus richer and more interesting. An important eye opener in this thinking was the Dutch pavilion at the World Fair Expo 2000 in Hanover. Multiple functions were literally stacked into it – the user was prompted to zap and choose.

By replacing the existing two-dimensionality with multilayered meanings, a new urbanity is created. Layered building means: creating space for multifunctionality, finding impromptu connections and creating new perspectives. It means thinking differently about the use of space and time.

Function

Bundling functions is an important way to increase qualities in urban planning. It's a bridge too far to say the more functions, the better. But the opposite does hold true – that monofunctional developments generate little urbanity. In this regard the museum isn't very special, and Groningen has other examples of farfetched mixing of functions. There was once a station square, first black and empty, then full of bikes. Nowadays: a square and a balcony and a bike lot and a bike route. The train station itself got its own block of shops after it was restored. The *Oosterpark* was unique in value due to its hallowed football grounds. The new football stadium became the heart of a new urban mix: school, cinema, restaurant, gym, homes, social services office, and etcetera. The old academic hospital *Academisch Ziekenhuis Groningen* was a medical enclave in the city. The new UMCG hospital has connected itself to the city with a special square and, with its streets, squares, shops, restaurants and its non-medical character; it has become a part of the city itself and a source of urbanity.

Space

With its 'City On A Roof' project and 'RoofTopHop' – a journey across the city centre's rooftops (2006) – *Pavlov Medialab* proved that the rooftop landscape of the city is an interesting one to inhabit: a new perspective of the city.

In 2005, Christophe de Jongh and architect bureau *DAAD architecten* completed a project in the *Rabenhauptstraat* in Groningen, where new wooden houses were built atop existing old homes: literally an added layer. The most interesting part of it was the world between the two layers: a new route, with outside areas and front doors: a second ground level.

Architect bureau *Onix architecten* designed such a second ground level for a lot behind *Boterdiep* street. For the building on the roofs of *Simplon* and *OpMaat*, intensification and alternative use of the space are the starting point. The plan presented gave the following description: From the Boterdiep, via small alleyways and courtyards, you reach a roof street at a higher level where new spaces have been created, such as an extension to the *Simplon* Youth Hotel as well as an outdoor theatre for the youth centre. A bridge connects this roof street with new studios and workplaces, ending up at ground level again at *OpMaat*.

Daad and Onix designed a city on a city. A second

layer was literally created, but a second layer of meaning has also come into play: a completely new world of experience for the user making his or her way through the area.

Time

A person moving through the city adds the factor 'time' to the mix in experiencing the environment. Every moment provides a different perspective. The building itself can also play with time, by being able to change in place, shape or function. Examples are for instance mobile buildings, buildings that can be extended in various ways, or are changeable in shape or functionality, as well as temporary structures. Time adds an extra dimension to this.

In first instance, the added value of temporary buildings seems to derive from their temporary nature, which leads to the use of specific materials and shapes. But it is the functional freedom that their temporary nature provides that turns out to be more important. Suddenly more is 'allowed' and people 'dare' to do more: initiatives arise which stray far from the usual route. How about ecological rooftop gardens in the city centre, or buildings made based on potato starch?

When building projects were held up on the *Cibogaterrein* lot in Groningen, a piece of land lay fallow for a while. The *Open Lab Ebbinge* (OLE) project, a 'temporary practical laboratory for architecture for the time-being and urban planning', wants to create its very own freeworld for the duration of five years. One of the initiators is Christophe de Jongh. By connecting and stacking prefab units in special ways, pavilions can be created for a variety of uses: homes, studios, workshops and shops. Will it be possible to arrange them in a way that will give the outside areas fresh spirit? Or will an 'own' group of users lend the area urban vitality? Will the experiment prove that the homes that are planned to be built there are not 'urban' enough, given the quality of the location?

Opportunities

The economic crisis seems to be an obstacle in launching new projects. At the same time, it's advisable to reflect on urban growth, now more than ever. Projects like OLE bring many opportunities. Hasn't the crisis not been brought about in part because we produced too much of the same?

In financially troubled times the government is seen as the supercharger of choice. Building the Forum, as an example of layered thought, provides an important economic stimulus at a time when it's most needed. The building industry has never been enamoured of more complexity with less volume. That they choose to come to a standstill is of no great importance. In the smaller and more specialised projects it is the individual, creative thinker that should come to the fore. And was not 'the possibility of' a true form of urban thinking? So I mustn't end with the words of Willem Elsschot, that 'between dream and deed stand law and practical objections'. Because it is in this regard that Groningen has a reputation to lose.

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Sustainable building

EERPEL

A project by: Jan Christiaansen, Erik Slor en Anton Visser

By Anton Visser

Eerpel (Dutch dialect for potato) is a joint venture between potato starch producers, a contractor's firm and two architectural firms, who aim to develop sustainable products and to continue with their innovation process in projects that have already been realised. *Open Lab Ebbinge* is the perfect project for this. Eerpel plans to create a building that has been made from products made from materials that are entirely naturally sourced. One of Eerpel's major innovations is using biopolymers based on potato starch as building materials. The Open Lab Ebbinge building will provide Eerpel the opportunity to develop new products and applications.

The products Eerpel develops will be used to upgrade the building, which will turn it into a sustainable Lab. Eerpel is for instance developing a building panel that will convert solar energy into heat, for heating both water and the building. The Lab's use will define the building's appearance, with for example workshops, studios, or combination homes and workplaces. Eerpel will invite the user to contribute to the building's character.

In this way, images and text can be applied to a building's facade, or LED lights can be projected on to it, or it could incorporate sculptural moulding made of potato starch. In this manner the facade will become a personal exhibition space for the user. The Lab 1.0 will be completed, clad in transparent building panels made from potato starch, which have been strengthened with a combination core of biopolymers and cardboard with a honeycomb structure. The main load-bearing construction will consist of cardboard columns and wooden trusses.

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Groningen as Most Sustainable City

By Sabine Hoes

The municipality of Groningen's green heart was warmed by the new coalition that came to power in city hall in 2006. From there, green blood has started to stream through the city streets, with the alderman for the environment, Jannie Visscher (SP), leading the way. The launch of the 'De duurzame stad' (The most sustainable city) programme in 2008 heralded

the start of a concerted multi-pronged campaign to realise ambitious environmental goals: to make Groningen the most sustainable city as well as the most energy neutral one by 2025.

Ambition

De Duurzaamste Stad resulted from the motto chosen for the Mayor and Aldermen's policy programme: strong, social and sustainable,' alderman Visscher tells us. 'We can see what's happening in the world around us – in March 2006, for instance, a UN report was published on the disappearance of plant and animal species. And besides that there's the climate problem, which we would like to have a Groningen answer to. We show we're making choices and that we would like to contribute to finding the solution to the problem. Groningen is after all a nice city to live in. We want to keep it that way, and if we can, even improve things.'

The goals are not to be laughed at. Groningen is to become the most sustainable city in the Netherlands and energy neutral as well by 2025. 'We called the programme 'The Most Sustainable City' on purpose, because we wanted to make clear that we take the goal seriously. We are one of five or so municipalities approaching this through their policy programme.'

Projects

Such ambitious goals lead to an energetic approach. *'De Duurzaamste Stad'* is a comprehensive programme, comprising over two hundred projects and campaigns. The projects focus on decreasing CO2 emissions and ensuring that Groningen is a liveable city. Air quality is very important in the city, but also green surroundings. Whilst governing the city, we plan not to build more in nature areas. That means that we'll only build within the existing city borders and preferably as minimally possible in green areas. And should that prove impossible, we'll compensate for doing so. Of course we require whoever carries out projects to work to the sustainable standards we set. We are collaborating with major partners in order to support sustainable initiatives, but we also have as action items on our agenda informing residents and making them aware of matters. There are also all sorts of grant schemes, such as for having an energy scan carried out or having a green roof installed. But money isn't only being spent in grants. There are also projects like building new schools that are designed and fitted out in sustainable fashion, for which the municipality gives extra support. Just as in the housing corporation sector, where new homes are being built that are more energy efficient, or where homes are renovated so that they expend less energy. A nice example of how we do things is our flock of sheep, which is used to maintain roadsides in an ecological manner.'

Sustainable business

'We also really want to stimulate doing sustainable business,' says Visscher. 'The motivation to do so is often intrinsic, but we want to make it clear to people that they can simply save money. Sustainability is no longer a word only used by those out to improve the world, but can just as easily be used in a business plan.' Innovation is a key word in this regard. The aim is to discover new things that others can then use. That's why we created the

prize for the most sustainable entrepreneur.' This year it was won by *Citeq*, which chose geothermal heating to heat its existing building as method of conserving energy, using a closed system with a heat exchanger, and no extra heat pump which would use energy. The consolation prize went to chocolaterie *Schlaman*. We want to show that sustainability doesn't always have to be a difficult and weighty subject, but we've already notice that people are beginning to enjoy the subject and that those in business are also inspiring one another.'

Innovation

The creative industry is certainly cut out to contribute to the Sustainable City. When dealing with sustainability, innovation is of prime importance. A good example is the street lighting in the city. A member of the RO/EZ (*Spatial Planning/Economic Affairs*) department thought up a system with which the street lighting can be dimmed in stages and per unit. It conserves a lot of energy. Creativity and innovation are the pillars supporting the policy. Visscher: If the *Google* building that's in *Zernike* district were to be built today, we would probably have done so in another location, so that the waste heat could be used to heat homes. This is something that UMCG hospital is already doing; they're investigating how waste heat can be used to heat nearby homes. And that's the way policy goes from small to large. From the new city district *Meerstad*, where energy-efficient homes are being built, down to neighbourhood projects. The municipality plays a role as initiator, manager and safekeeper of the progress being made, while many institutions, businesses and private individuals are all helping to make Groningen the Most Sustainable City in the Netherlands.

Box

A world first: flexible dimmers for street lighting

An important conservation measure in Groningen is the dimming of street lighting, leading to substantial savings. The goal is to be able to dim half of all public street lighting in the city by 2010. The municipality is leading the way in this regard as the system being used is completely new. All lighting can be individually dimmed, as well as in phases.

Harry van der Wal is responsible for this innovation and works as policy advisor for street lighting at the RO/EZ (Spatial Planning/Economic Affairs) department of the municipality of Groningen, and as energy advisor to the *Milieudienst* (Environment department). He felt that a bit more could be done to conserve energy. 'The policy plan drawn up three years ago was very ambitious with regard to sustainability. Energy consumption was very high in Groningen and I investigated what could be done differently.' Harry went out in search of a good system. There was equipment that could be used to dim lighting, but it wasn't flexible, and thus of no use in the city. You could for instance dim fifty percent at a fixed time, and that was all. I wanted something more suitable.' What he was looking for wasn't out there. So he

asked the company that does the maintenance for the street lighting whether they could come up with something. 'They put something together that worked a charm. It's a computer-controlled system that can be set per quarter of an hour.' Because the lighting is dimmed in phases, people hardly notice. That took care of the most important drawback, the fear that it would lead to people feeling less safe in the streets. The introduction period was set at two years. 'Currently, over 5000 of the 30.000 streetlights in Groningen can be dimmed. Whenever a new neighbourhood is built, or street lighting needs replacing, dimmable streetlights are installed.' What Groningen is doing is being copied in other municipalities. Besides saving one million kilowatt hours a year, it also saves in operating costs, because the lamps last longer. *Philips* has taken over production of the system, which now is available the world over.

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Cradle to cradle with chocolate: Schlaman chocolaterie

Deliciously sustainable

By Sabine Hoes

Many Groningen residents – stadjers – consider the bonbons made by Schlaman bonbon atelier to be the most delicious and the finest in Groningen. They also are the most sustainable chocolate bonbons to be had in the city. Schlaman attempts to adhere to the principle of cradle to cradle. This led to the chocolaterie winning the City of Groningen's incentive prize for most sustainable entrepreneur in 2008.

The main secret to Schlaman's renown is the love and care for the product they deal with. 'Quality tales prime position with us, and that starts with the quest for the best raw materials available', owner Jos Schlaman explains. 'The step to sustainability then becomes a small one. It's important that the product is as unadulterated and pure as possible – it just makes it taste better.' To use organic products is therefore a logical move. 'Organic products not only taste better, they're also not necessarily more expensive. Take eggs, for instance. Not only are they organic, but they're also from free-range chickens. You can taste that. I'm very interested in nutrition, and when you delve into it, moving towards sustainability becomes no more than logical.' Schlaman has a strong dislike for additives. Aspartame for instance, a sweetener. It's forbidden in any number of countries because it can cause cancer. If no additives are used and the raw materials are haven't been treated with pesticides, fertilisers or other chemical substances, food is the ultimate cradle-to-cradle product. It gets broken down and the remnants go back into the environment. However, pure raw materials and a biodegradable product aren't enough. Important to the cradle-to-cradle concept is that the whole production pro-

cess is sustainable. Schlaman is busy adapting the different aspects of production, step by step, a process that will take some time. 'We've already taken measures which deal with our energy consumption, such as using daylight sun tubes, light switches on timers, and nowadays our neon sign gets switched off at night. We plan in when we use our machines, so that for instance the heating cabinets aren't switched on day and night, but are turned on in time to be at the right temperature when we need them.' The chocolaterie is still in its initial stages of becoming a sustainable enterprise, but has already made great strides in the right direction. 'We're not there yet. We're trying to only use organic raw materials, but it's not always possible to do so. I haven't found all the ingredients yet; it's a quest, a process. It takes hold of your mind: What else can we do? It's a real challenge!'

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On the profession

Harma Heikens, sculptor: searching for other layers of meaning

By Arjo Passchier

What does the profession entail for you?

'I'm a sculptor and make sculptures and multimedia installations. It's difficult to place my work in a certain category, but my work does belong to contemporary figurative sculpture. As an artist, I want to slightly extend the frame – as it's provided us – through which we view the world. I want to show other layers of meaning of images that present themselves to us in a self-evident manner. My work is represented by the Witzzenhausen Gallery in Amsterdam and New York. Besides exhibitions in the US, I've also had the opportunity to exhibit in countries such as Germany, Russia, Spain and Mexico. Just recently even in Groningen, where I hadn't had an opportunity to exhibit in the past decade.'

What are the aspects of your profession that are important to you?

'I'm interested in seeing which themes come to the fore in popular culture and in which ways. It can say a lot. Other that art, popular culture underpins the ideas that have taken hold in a certain period. You see for instance that in times of war, things with a violent fantasy theme are often popular; once the war is over there will be a flood of realistic anti-war movies. I use the visual idiom of popular culture in my work to make a statement about less popular themes. I get my inspiration from the cinema and from literature, such as the books of Elfriede Jelinek and Michel Houellebecq, and of course I use the Internet.'

What does the city offer you as an artist?

'The city of Groningen isn't a source of my work,

but it doesn't hinder me either. I don't think my art or how I am as an artist would be influenced, were I to live elsewhere in the Netherlands. But in a city like New York, where everything takes place on such a different scale, you do tend to look at your work differently. The scale of the environment makes a huge difference. Groningen is a nice city, everything you could want is at hand, but as to culture it doesn't have much to offer me. Groningen as creative city should keep its aims realistic, it doesn't have the potential to become the cultural centre of Europe; of course that's nonsense. But it would be good if there were a few more initiatives for artists and others who are interested in culture. It's a sizeable group in Groningen, and they're not really being provided with enough. Many artists have no outlet for their work. A *kunsthal* type gallery would be nice. The notion that bothers me these days is the one that artists should have something to offer the city besides art. Artists having to do projects in rundown neighbourhoods or for educational purposes... An artist isn't necessarily someone who is good at dealing with adolescents between the age of twelve and eighteen – and teaching them about art. There are specially trained teachers to do that, who are trained in teaching children to learn to appreciate art. Institutions like the CBK (Centre for Visual Arts) and the Groninger Museum also function that way. The city should provide artists with a stage, and there aren't enough of those. The artist's job is to fill the stage.'

What does art offer the city?

'My work is considered to be disturbing. I don't make work to please people – that would be more an ad agency's job. Wherever I am, my work elicits roughly the same reaction, in other parts of the world it's understood in the same way as here. The reception is however different. In my experience the public outside the Netherlands takes art more seriously, the conversations on it are more profound. Artists have more status in other countries as well. A bit more respect for artists in the Netherlands would be nice. I sometimes think that the Dutch – in general – aren't very interested in culture. It seems as if people are less and less ashamed of not concerning themselves with culture. There is a bourgeois hedonism that has only one perspective: an economic perspective. That is bad for the art climate. Artists usually work hard for very little pay. They do so because they consider it necessary. Things have no meaning if there are no artists, writers or theatre makers to give their view on them.'

Anneke Claus, poet: tasting the language anew

By Correen Dekker

What does the profession entail for you?

'I only began writing in 2004, when I was spurred on by a performance by Jules Deelder: the tempo and the theatrical aspect of his act appealed to me. To perform is a good way to judge whether your poems have any impact on your audience, but the most important thing is to have the time and quiet necessary to write. It's a quest, an eternal quest to find the right words to tell a story. I want to taste language anew in every poem.'

What concerns you as a poet?

In my last volume *Dat was dat* (That Was That), I used an *'ikkenparade'* (I parade); but as city poet you can't get away with that. I've had to play a completely different register, which was quite refreshing actually. In my previous work, I investigated how people reacted to modern phenomena and change; nowadays I'm more concerned with history and how it shapes us. As far as my influences go, I'm a culture junky: I see a great deal of theatre and read more prose than I do poetry. When I was in my early twenties I would read anything dark and romantic; but lately I catch myself searching out artists who deal with complex matters in a certain matter of fact, down to earth way; that's an art I would like to learn. Perhaps I've been influenced by what they call the 'Groningen school' in the west of the Netherlands: northern poetry is plain, just the necessary; Groningen dialect lends itself perfectly to understatement and the dry humour that I've so grown to love in the years I've spent here. Last but not least, I'm a girl in a man's world. The fact that female poets are in the minority has its pros and cons. Nowadays I can see the fun of it – it's a role I enjoy playing. My last volume was my own little Medea. So if they think that's sort of on the edge, I don't really mind.

What does the city offer you as poet?

'I made the resolution never to use the word 'city' in my city poems. A city is a bottomless well of stories that I gratefully dip into. Besides that, the city has played an important role in my development as an artist. Groningen is a village, but also a cultural hothouse. That makes collaboration easy and pleasant. The *Oude RKZ* (the former Catholic Hospital, now a housing co-op) where I live is an island of its own that has countless things to offer, creatively speaking. For instance, I share the stage with my upstairs neighbour Sander Trispel, and my next-door neighbour Saar de Vries designed my book cover.

What can poetry offer the city?

'For years now, Groningen has had three major poetry festivals and has provided podiums (*Poëzie-marathon*, *Dichters in de Prinsentuin*, *Doe maar dicht maar*) for young poets to first set foot on stage. Bookshops and libraries bring poetry under attention with interviews and performances, poets hawk their wares as if their life depended on it. I sometimes wonder whether people in Groningen aren't sick and tired by now, of all that poetry. I think that the secret may be to not have poets perform among other poets, but to put them on stage in a diverse show, with musicians and other performers. That way, they'll end up more in the middle of cultural life in the city and their work will then become more relevant and have a frame of reference. I hope to aid this process as city poet with a number of projects that will flesh out this change in mentality. Baudelaire said in the 19th century that the people could go without bread for three days, but didn't have the right in the slightest to go without poetry for just one. I'd say that's putting it rather sharply. Art doesn't have any real appreciable use to society, although a lot of money is spent on it. In the first place it's entertainment – a playground that everyone can run around in. Poetry is as much part of that as music, visual art and theatre. You

can carry a good poem around with you your whole life; there's something to be said for that I should think.'

Jan-Ype Nota, cellist: learning your life through

By Janet Meester

What does the profession entail for you?

'I began playing cello as a boy of eight. Later, I studied in The Hague, Paris and London. Nowadays, I play for the *Noord Nederlands Orkest* (North Netherlands Symphony Orchestra) and conduct the Haydn Jeugd Strijkorkest (Haydn Youth String Orchestra). I get the feeling my education will never end; you always continue to learn, grow and develop. I used to think there would be a point when you knew how to play the cello. I still don't know, and I want to keep it that way. It's all about being prepared to open up and going in search of something, again and again.

Playing cello is a craft, for 90 percent. You have to work hard at it, study every day to fine-tune your technique and your coordination. We're athletes, we have to be in top shape. You need the technique as a foundation. From there you can start to make music. Mastering the technique gives you a lot of freedom.'

What does music mean to you?

'I'm a performing musician. That doesn't mean I copy. Copying doesn't exist. Everything is always new. Every moment you play is real. Every single time, the same notes can lead you to somewhere completely different. A piece of music comes to life the moment that the notes, the way they're played, the ensemble playing together, the place, the time and the interaction with the audience are all in sync. Every moment is different. That's why a piece of music is never the same. To me it's important where I'm playing and for whom: that dictates my playing, my tempo, my timing. Classical music shouldn't be a dusty museum, set outside of society, as it were. The interaction with the audience is essential to me.

Playing for an audience is a very fragile thing. You give your all; what I can't say in words, I say in music. Sometimes you're in a flow. That hardly ever happens. Everything takes care of itself. The nicest thing imaginable is when you're playing with people and at exactly the same moment you want to say something. Not something you can practise at. The audience senses it; it reacts. Everything falls into place; the audience helps to create the music.

If you ask me what creativity is – in the first place inspiration. Then the working together of all the ingredients that let a piece of music be what it is at that moment. And forever learning anew. To take everything that you experience and to use it in your playing.

My students come from all over the world. They bring along their own culture, their own vision. I think that's very enriching. I sometimes think I learn more from them than they do from me.

I've finally found the cello of my dreams, an instrument that's nearly 300 years old. It's a beautiful instrument, powerful yet reserved – a

marvel. A cello like this invites me to question everything anew. A new instrument influences my playing and provides me with new insights. Music is ephemeral. The moment you create it is the moment that you give it away. That's what makes it alive and determines its intensity. When I make music, I'm in the moment.'

What does the city offer you as a musician?

'The city offers me everything: the conservatoire, my orchestra and my audience. Groningen is a city where so very much is possible. There are opportunities to make impromptu connections. Everything is here.

In the west of the Netherlands, perhaps there is more quantity, but there is a special quality here in Groningen as well. I'm convinced that the relative quiet and distance help one to become centred and develop unique personal qualities. I have students from Paris who can breathe again at last here. And besides, there are more opportunities here because there are fewer of us. In Groningen you can still stand out.'

What does music offer the city?

Everyone has some feelings towards music. The first music you ever hear is your mother's heartbeat. The rhythm of the day, the rhythm of life, everything is music. A city without music – that's impossible. You end up with a dead city. If the music disappears, then I think life will disappear as well.'

Guy Weizman, choreographer: sketching with eyes closed

By Marjon Leertouwer

What does the profession entail for you?

'I'm choreographer at Club Guy & Roni in the city of Groningen. Together with Roni Haver I make mysterious, tempting and dynamic dance performances. We play with Club Guy & Roni at festivals from Terschelling to Tallinn, from Los Angeles to New York. Our language of dance is described as innovative, raw and exciting.

My first dance steps were in Israel, where I was born. As an eighteen-year-old, I danced with the Batsheva Dance Company in Tel Aviv, the dance company which was set up by Martha Graham among others, and where I met Itzik Galili. I learned to become a choreographer by myself, by doing it. I just took the opportunity to. Together with Roni I made my first piece. It was in me. I wanted to communicate with people, to tell stories. I had so much to say.'

What does making a dance piece mean to you?

'Every dance piece is another world - in movement, imagery, energy, everything. For many people a choreographer is someone who thinks up dance steps. For me it's about expression. The essence is the story that needs to be told and communicated to the public. And in my trade dance is the form of expression of choice.

As a choreographer I'm always in the midst of a creative process. I begin with research, which takes a long time in my case. I think, search and read for

a year-and-a-half. I'm working on a new piece now that will premiere next spring. That's 'in the kitchen', so to speak. That's the first part. Then I always try to describe it in a short piece of writing. I invite a composer to write music parallel to the process I'm in. In the next step I involve the dancers. We do a kind of workshop. We invite people we find inspirational and then just talk and share knowledge.

That's what it was like for *Poetic Disasters*, a dance piece from 2008, based on the post-traumatic stress disorder. To better understand the syndrome we held conversations with the head of the psychiatric department of UMCG hospital. Science is my purchase on the creative process, as well as a source of inspiration. I integrate the rational and scientific into my own intuitive process. It's how I create clarity for myself.

At a certain point we take to the dance floor. Everybody is prone to fear at that point. One cigarette is used to light another. To allay the fear I start out with improvisations, which is a safe way of discovering that new, different world... It's a game; you can still make mistakes. It's like sketching with your eyes closed.

Usually about two or three weeks before the premiere I have to open my eyes. The intuitive process then ends and the intellectual editing of the piece begins. Out of all the sketches, all the material that's been gathered, we have to make something explicit. At that stage the music is added. That's how the piece takes on its ultimate shape.'

What does the city offer you as choreographer?

'Groningen is my cultural paradise. I'm so very happy here. It's the people that make Groningen into an important, exciting city. Groningen should thank its lucky stars for harbouring so many original, inspirational people. The artistic exchange with inspirational colleagues of the *Grand Theatre*, the *NNT Theatre Company* and *Noorderzon* festival drives me to great lengths. This is something that wouldn't happen so easily in Amsterdam or Rotterdam, simply because Amsterdam and Rotterdam are larger, but also because a special sort of person ends up in Groningen. Not everyone can survive here; it can drive some people crazy. It's a bit of a survival camp here. You arrive here and there seems to be nothing at all, but then you pick up your little diamonds and look: you turn it into a beautiful jewel.'

What can dance offer the city?

The fact that the quality level of dance in the city is high has put Groningen on the map as dance metropolis. The city has a strong attraction for international dancers. All these dancers bring their stories to the city. And you then see those stories reflected in the performances. That's beautiful, isn't it?'

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Grand Theatre

'It's my job to see whether someone has talent'

Interview with Jan Stelma. By Marieke Jissink

The Grand Theatre in Groningen is known in particular as the theatre situated on Grote Markt square. What's less well known is that in the first place the Grand Theatre is a production house that offers up and coming theatre artists the chance to develop. In this regard 'the Grand' is highly appreciated both nationally and internationally. In the twenty-nine years of its existence, the Grand Theatre, led by artistic director Jan Stelma, has given many talented artists the chance to develop into world-renowned performers.

Jan Stelma: 'A few years ago someone decided to investigate which Dutch production houses played the most shows abroad. The Grand Theatre came in third. That's pretty impressive. But that's never what's at the back of my mind when I'm working with artists. We always focus on the development of the artist. Only when the piece is done do we see whether there's any place for it at all in the overflowing marketplace of today. We only arrive at decisions based on content and not on the size of the audience it attracts. That we're so well known across the border says something about the artists we work with, I feel. And about our commitment. For five years we produced Sacha Waltz, when there was still nobody who saw anything in her. The same goes for Guy & Roni. We believed in these people and invested in them for years.

What I think is important in fresh talent is not whether they produce a good piece. That's not what my job is. That's the artist's job and the artist ultimately is judged by the audience. It's my job to see whether someone has talent. I look for authenticity in that regard. True talents have an urge to do something, but don't precisely know how to go about it. They in any case don't want to make the usual slick art.

The way we work makes us different from others. Most production houses were theatres first, and then started to produce as well. For us it's the other way around. The building was squatted with the idea that it would become a place where artists could develop. We started to programme to keep in more regular touch with our public. The Grand Theatre is the only theatre in the Netherlands that lends its infrastructure to long-term production processes. It's not unusual for a group of theatre makers to set up camp with us for three weeks and to be in constant need of support. Most other theatres will give you one or two days at most to build a performance.

It's a cliché to say that Groningen feels further

away to people from Amsterdam, than Amsterdam does to people from Groningen. But it's true. When we do a production the thinking is often: If it's really worthwhile, you'll be able to see it in Amsterdam too. But that isn't necessarily the case. The national press doesn't automatically keep track of what we're doing. We often really have to convince them to come take a look. Abroad, people are often very aware of what we're doing. The artists we've worked with have become our ambassadors. They tell others about their experiences with the Grand. Our name spreads itself with ease over the world. But the other side of the story is that I can be at the bar somewhere in the city and have to explain to people what I do and they say, 'Wow, is that's what's going on in there?' We want to change that. We recently managed to hire someone who will focus on marketing and publicity. I hope that in four or five years time, people in Groningen will know all about what we're up to here.'

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Professional art education

The Prince Claus Conservatoire: International, innovative and progressive

By Arjo Passchier

At the end of the Meeuwerderweg road a tuba sounds a welcome – the Prince Claus Conservatoire is slightly hidden away behind the Oosterpoort Cultural Centre, but you can't really miss it. Once inside, I'm nearly knocked off my socks by the Conservatoire Big Band's opening notes. They practise every weekend and perform often. 'On Queen's Day for instance, they play on the Grote Markt square', Wia Aalders tells me, who does PR for the institution. We take our seats with a cup of coffee, with a view of a grand piano standing open, ready for the jazz lunch concert to come.

At the conservatoire, students can choose between two Bachelor's degree programmes: Music and Music Teaching. The Music department has four different sections: Classical Music, Jazz, Conducting (Choir and Band) and Composition, Music and Studio Production (CMS). It is also possible to be trained as a music teacher, formerly known as a school music teacher. Besides the Bachelor's degree programmes, there is also a Master's degree programme, which is a collaboration between *Academie Minerva* and the NHL University in Leeuwarden. This programme covers all the arts: dance, visual arts, theatre and music. The conservatoire is also developing a unique International Joint Master's programme, and young and talented musicians can enrol in the Preliminary Programme (Young Talents Classes and Bridge Class).

International Dimension

Students come from over the whole world to the conservatoire in Groningen – there are over thirty nationalities represented. 'Conservatoire students usually choose for a certain teacher, and thus for the institution where they teach', according to Aalders. *The New York comes to Groningen* programme attracts them to the Jazz department for instance. This is a unique programme. Every week, another teacher versed in the New York jazz scene visits Groningen, to teach all of its jazz students. It's only in Groningen that you can study with eight different teachers from New York.'

The Prince Claus Conservatoire works together with about forty other conservatoires in Europe, the United States and in Asia, and is a member of the Association of European Conservatoires (AEC). Students can spend a period studying at another conservatoire, and likewise teachers can teach for a period at a foreign institution. Students are thus able to really delve into their specialisation, by choosing the right teacher, at precisely the right moment for them.

The conservatoire is developing a special international version of the Master's degree programme: the Joint Music Master for New Audiences and Innovative Practice. It is being developed in conjunction with four other European conservatoires. 'Students will take specialist classes at other conservatoires. Groningen took the initiative in developing this new Joint Master's programme. Besides this we organize so-called Intensive Projects. These are specific long-term international projects where knowledge and know-how are exchanged with a number of foreign institutions. There has for instance been an organ project, a European Big Band project, and just recently a project for music teachers from five different countries. Students from certain years visit an institution to learn more about a specific subject. Part of the Music Teaching degree programme for instance dealt with the question: How do we shape music education at schools in the Netherlands, and how do they do so in other European countries? An innovative project, in which we took the lead.'

PTE

Performing, Teaching and Entrepreneurship are the three mainstays of the Bachelor's degree programme. 'A career spent 100% as a performer isn't possible for most. The preparation for the profession, to becoming an entrepreneur and learning how to teach, are all-important aspects of the curriculum. We have for instance a module '*Ondernemende Musicus*' (Enterprising Musician), which includes subjects like: administration, taxes, PR and marketing, presentation, etc.'

New: Master of Music

The Prince Claus Conservatoire, which is the best one in the Netherlands according to the Dutch higher education guide, is currently developing an innovative Master's Degree programme, Master of Music. 'The NVAO (Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders) has given us accreditation, now we're waiting for approval from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The degree programme will probably start on 1 September 2010. We plan to start off with two variants, Interaction in Classical Music Performance and the international Joint Master

New Audiences and Innovative Practice. The two other ones - Interaction in Performance Jazz and Interaction in Instrumental Teaching - are on the cards to commence in September 2010. It's quite an ambitious plan to set up a completely new Master's degree programme: a two-year programme means adding a complete new department.' The Master's mustn't focus solely on learning to play better, learning to command your instrument even better. 'Our Master does this as well, but also offers an extra dimension. The curriculum was developed together with the professional music world, so that students - once they've finished their degree - will not only be better musicians, but will also be better prepared for the changing demands of the profession. Developing knowledge in the Master of Music programme will take place through interaction in the professional field and by doing practice-related research, wherever possible at the behest of the field. If there is a certain question that has arisen from needs or queries in the field, it can be addressed by our Master students in their research.'

Finally, Wia gives me a tour, 'to get a feel of the atmosphere in the building.' We pass by one classroom after the other. Just around the corner in the hallway, a cellist is studying, who looks up - his concentration broken - shyly. 'Yes, well ... lack of space, and the acoustics are good here too,' says Wia. In another hallway, three students play pianos, side by side. It's fine, with headphones on. All we can hear is the sound of the keys plonking. I stand watching for a while and feel that I can sense what they are playing, by judging their body movements and reading their faces. Music communicates, and not solely through the ears. A bus is blocking the exit. Someone is loading the instruments of the *Haydn Jeugd Strijkorkest* (Haydn Youth String Orchestra), or are they unloading them?

INSET

www.hanze.nl/prinsclausconservatorium (in Dutch)
www.lifelonglearning.org, lectureship Rineke Smilde.

Concerts:

See the website / concert agenda for up-to-date information on all concerts.

All academic year weekdays: 1 PM, jazz concert, conservatoire canteen.

Every Monday: 2 PM, jazz concert in the Andrea Elkenbrachtzaal hall, given by the 'New York teachers', followed by a master class.

Master classes:

There are interesting master classes on numerous occasions, which are open to the listening public.

Open Days:

On an Open Day you can ask questions, receive a tour, perform informally, take a model class, do a model theory exam, and attend concerts.

See www.hanze.nl > English > Prospective Students > Open Days

Talents and prize-winners:

Information on the especially talented, and on prizes and prize-winners can be found on the website (in Dutch).

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Alejandra Wah: 'Art and science have a lot in common'

An interview by Arjo Passchier

What was your motivation in choosing to do a PhD?

This PhD position gives me the opportunity to learn and to imagine in new and different ways. And it's a privilege to work with Dr Barend van Heusden as well.

What are you researching?

The phenomena of memory and memories have fascinated me for a decade now. I've portrayed my fascination with a variety of visual media: drawing, graphic art, photography, video, digital images and software.

At the moment we are researching the possible effects of digital images on the visual self-image. We're working in the field of cultural studies. We study processes in the brain and in doing so delve into theories concerning cognition and semiotics, as well as emotion and sensation.

Are art and science not completely different fields?

How do you combine the two?

In my opinion art and science have a lot in common. In their most inspirational form both make use of creativity, reflective imagination and consciousness.

How are art and science related to each other in your work?

Scientific elements - by which I mean a combination of thoughts, emotions, feelings, reasoning, consciousness and creativity - can all be part of my visual research. I don't necessarily see art and science as two separate entities.

When you receive your PhD, will you be a scientist or an artist?

Both, as well as the link between them.

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Learning stream Art Education

The artist as PhD student

Since September 2007 there have been two PhD positions at the University of Groningen, which were created for artists with a Master's degree. The artists do academic research into matters arising from their visual work. Are artists a different kind of scientist and does scientific insight lead to added value for their visual work?

By Barend van Heusden

Since the autumn of 2007, Alejandra Wah (Mexico) and Yaron Abulafia (Israel) have been doing PhD research at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Groningen. That in itself isn't very remarkable - there are more PhD students around - were it not that before starting out on their PhD, both researchers did a degree at the Hanze University Groningen's Frank Mohr Institute, where one can do Master of Fine Arts degrees in Painting, Interactive Media and Environments, and in Scenography. While Alejandra uses interactive media (photography, film) to portray the working of memory - in her Master's project, which was exhibited in the *Tschumipaviljoen*, the pavilion on the Hereplein square, she used images of the square from the Groningen archives *RHC Groninger Archieven*. Yaron worked, and still works, as a light designer for various dance and theatre companies, in the Netherlands and abroad, among them the famed *Galili* Dance from Groningen.

Alejandra's PhD project is on the influence that the digitalisation of images may have on collective memory. She wants to know whether digital photography influences the way we form an image of important historical events in a different manner than analogue photography did. Yaron wonders how the way light is used in post dramatic theatre has changed in comparison to how it usually was used up until fairly recently.

Is it significant that in this case artists are doing the research? Yes and no. No, because the requirements Alejandra and Yaron's research must meet are no different from those of any other PhD done at the Faculty of Arts. The question addressed must be set in a strong theoretical framework and also be confirmed by empirical and/or interpretative research, for as far as possible. There is, however something that could certainly make this research different. In the first place the question addressed. In both cases it has come from their practical experience as an artist. In a number of her works - first in Mexico and later in Groningen - Alejandra has investigated how memory can be portrayed. Her PhD research is a logical next step in a process of development - not through imagination this time, but via academic research. The same applies to a certain degree for Yaron. In his work as a light designer he discovered that light in contemporary theatre works differently than in classical theatre. Light and other parts of the scenography, such as the sets and sound, have become more autonomous, more independent of the text, the story and the performers. This then has consequences for the way the audience experience a performance and interpret it. He would like to address the question in his research - and perhaps answer it - of how this other use of light is linked to a general development in theatre and dance.

As artists, there is yet another trump card Alejandra and Yaron have in hand. In contrast to most other PhD students, they have an inside view, thanks to their education and background. That could be a major advantage. In her experiments, Alejandra can make use of her knowledge and experience as an artist in constructing digital compositions. As a light designer, Yaron has good access to the world of light designers and directors, whom he can more easily interrogate for his research, given his expertise in the field. The results will also be even more interesting for artists, since both the questions

addressed as well as the methods will be very familiar to them, to a certain extent.

So, although the research is conducted within the bounds of research for any given PhD, it will have a special touch, due to the fact that the researchers are artists.

The image description

Alejandra Wah.

Capsules of Compressed Memory II.

Interpolation of images - present and past - from the Hereplein, Groningen.

The visual material from the present was captured with a mobile phone and a video camera, and that from the past is processed material from the city archives.

This project was made possible with the support of the Tschumipaviljoen, the Frank Mohr Institute, the Groningen archives *RHC Groninger Archieven*, the *Groningen audio-visual archives* Groninger AudioVisueel Archief (GAVA), the City of Groningen, the JUMEX Foundation/Contemporary Art Collection and the Mexican National Fund for the Culture and the Arts (FONCA).

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Column

Can an animal be creative?

The question in the title isn't difficult to answer. You have to be a very firm friend of animals not to notice that they continually are working through set behavioural programmes and otherwise only imitate. The programmes such as for instance for begging for food, laying an egg, tearing a toddler to pieces are quite loosely scripted - the animal will adapt the execution to circumstances without a problem, but the base pattern is as unchangeable as the Himalayas.

Which naturally leads me to the question of whether man can be creative. This is much more difficult, because now we have to say something about ourselves and no one wants to say anything bad about themselves. Why, you may ask, is it a problem to call yourself creative? Of course it's not - we agreed with each other fifty years ago that being creative is completely OK, and ever since everyone has stuck to the script. The more creative, the better. No, the sting in the tail lies in the fact that we would have to be prepared to say we're not creative, that we can only do a couple of tricks and otherwise just plagiarise. Now that would be terrible. At least it would be for modern-day man, although this wasn't the case in the past.

If someone was creative in previous centuries, he was deeply distrusted, even locked away. In those cases he or she would have been considered to be an 'eccentric' or a witch, or just plain strange and