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## "The moment we no longer have a free press, anything can happen. What makes it possible for a totalitarian or any other dictatorship to rule is that people are not informed; how can you have an opinion if you are not informed? If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer."

**Hannah Arendt, 1973**

## Generative Silence

Perhaps silence is not the first notion that comes to mind when thinking about the everyday sounds of the contemporary urban environment: we tend to experience and think of cities—even the relatively small ones—as places of mobility and multitude in which silence seems only present, as the empty pauses between, and thereby as the absence of noise. Since the public space is a social space of interpersonal encounters, it is also a political space of taking, and moving between, positions. Silence—in line with the notion of absence—can be seen as a retreat from this debate, or even as acknowledging the oppressive voice. But is this affirmation by absence the only shape silence can take, or can it be more diverse, nuanced and plurivocal, as the multitude of voices in public debate are as well? Can something like a generative silence exist in artistic interventions in the public space and the public debate?

Susan Sontag wrote on the aesthetics of silence in art and said it 'remains, inescapably, a form of speech (in many instances, of complaint or indictment) and an element in a dialogue' (Sontag 1967). Protesters in Lebanon recently obstructed traffic by giving yoga lessons on the streets of Beirut; Emma Gonzalez remained silent for minutes in commemoration of the victims of the shooting at her school; six years ago Erdem Gunduz, the standing man of Istanbul, stood still for hours on Taksim Square during the Gezi Park protests and was joined by many. All these acts were performed in silence, but through their gesture or act the subjects spoke loudly and were very present: because of their stillness attention was drawn to the noise and content of their protest, as well as to the repression of it.

Bernhard Waldenfels' (2011) notion of responsivity in interpersonal communication points at yet another aspect of silence: responsiveness presupposes not an empty but a creative one, a pause before the response, a reconsideration of different positions. It presumes a specific way of looking, listening and acting: it is an attitude that implies the postponement of understanding and harmony and builds on aspects such as silence and faltering. This silence is not a withdrawal or affirmation by absence, nor is it an outspoken silence: it is a presence in pause, acknowledging the ambiguity of the situation. (Artistic) interventions in the public space investigate the ambiguity or plurivocality in acts of absence and presence, in speaking, listening, and silence, and in moving between them.



## TimelineGallery - Colophon

## In our fragmented post-public world, dominated by propagandistic forms of communication, the TimelineGallery artists developed their own forms of counter publics and counter public spheres, with the ideal of a continuous counter-public stream.

## TimelineGallery: A Continuous Counter-Public Stream

This publication stems from the TimelineGallery project. In this project, design agency DesignArbeid, the research group Image in Context of Minerva Art Academy, and art space Sign in Groningen joined forces to enable young artists to explore and visualise the possibilities of the public space in the early 21st century in teams they formed themselves. Political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) termed the 'public' in Vita Activa (1958) as "that which can be seen and heard by everyone and gets the greatest possible publicity" (Arendt 1994). This is why she also speaks of the public as the illuminated, the visible, as opposed to the private as the dark, the hidden. The public domain is the world as far as it forms our common home. It brings us together and offers us the opportunity to talk to and debate with each other. In our fragmented post-public world, dominated by propagandistic forms of communication (Coumans 2010), the TimelineGallery artists developed their own forms of counter publics (Fraser 1990) and counter public spheres (Negt and Kluge 1993), with the ideal of a continuous counter-public stream (Seikh 2007). To this end, the artists developed non propagandistic, artistic forms of exchange and participation, all set out to address current issues, such as the climate crisis, tangible in the rising water level; the role of women within student associations; alienation in the public domain; our colonial past as seen in our public space; the amount of propaganda behind major city events; the ease with which we believe fake news; and how the public and private domain merge and overlap.

The guiding question for us all is: How can artists and designers create interventions that contribute to the process of us, as as autonomous thinking people, returning to and reconnecting with the Earth, as explained by Bruno Latour (2019). In this sense, the Earth is a concept that guides us into the direction in which we must move, from a newfound awareness that the world no longer consists of an environment in which people find themselves, but of a force field, an ecology, of which we are a part. The researchers of the research group looked for conceptual perspectives that provide insight into the different ways in which art can deal with the many forms of propaganda and disciplining at the start of the 21st century.
That is why, in this publication, you will find an overview of the various interventions developed by the participating artists, as well as the various conceptual perspectives that the researchers from the research group work with.

The artistic practices presented here are moments in time in the development of the artists; the result of a range of encounters that preceded it, and the consequence of a dynamic force that, at some point, they dared to set in motion together. Without the courage to act, nothing would have happened. The presented concepts are the deep grounds on which a researcher only dares to build after a certain amount of time has passed. These concepts have the ability to set something in motion. In the encounters with the art projects the concept can take root and broaden, and enable the artistic practices to acquire new layers of meaning. Together they help us to reflect on the new roles of artists and designers in the public space as a public domain.

## "We have to think of the public sphere as fragmented, as consisting of a number of spaces and/or formations that sometimes connect, sometimes close off, and that are in conflictual and contradictory relations to each other."

**Simon Seikh, 2007**

## Multiple & Counter Public Sphere(s)

For several centuries, Europe and the western world have cultivated public sphere(s) in which a political conviction—just like adopting a belief or posing a scientific hypothesis—can be freely developed and brought forth via a multitude of media and genres; from (news)media to (pop) music, literature, articles, film, theatre, dance, performance, etc. The small and big events to which the media, the arts, sciences, politics and literature testify, would not come to fruition without this tradition of 'making public', and also not without the concept of a 'public sphere'.

The artists that were involved in the TLG project created projects that consisted on the one hand of encounters, conversations, or debates, and on the other hand of a very critical engagement in, and design of media. In this way, they contributed to a 'civil society' of individuals and groups who try to invent new ways of influencing public debates, and who try to control the exercise of (state) power. This (force) field 'between' citizens and the state (Walling 2016) has to be revived over and over again, through all kinds of clubs and groups that converse, debate, and are in dialogue with each other. Civil society thus allows for a multitude of public spheres to emerge in which diverse voices can share their experiences, express their opinions, and organise others to influence public policy and other civic society institutions.

This imagined field, however, is constantly threatened by political and economic forces that try to colonise our public sphere(s), through the production of consent via (political and economic) propaganda, PR and branding (Chomski and Herman 1988; Edward Bernays 1947). In an interview with Roger Errera in 1973, Hannah Arendt explicitly warned the viewers of these anti-democratic forces: "The moment we no longer have a free press, anything can happen. What makes it possible for a totalitarian or any other dictatorship to rule is that people are not informed; how can you have an opinion if you are not informed? If everybody always lies to you, the consequence is not that you believe the lies, but rather that nobody believes anything any longer." This is precisely what is currently happening.
Artists that try to resist the widespread 'post truth' situation, created by media that are not independent anymore, choose for interventions, or for opening up counter public spaces (Negt & Kluge, 1993); they search for new models for social and political action in a context where civil society and democracy need new impulses (Coumans and Straatman 2015). This is how artists can become parrhesiasts, citizens that are courageous enough to ask attention for an unwelcome truth.

One could call this a 'political turn' in art.





## Happiness Project
### by Alice Strete & Angeliki Diakrousi

The Happiness Project by Alice Strete and Angeliki Diakrousi consists of a series of interventions that were carried out in the centre of Groningen on November 3rd, 2018, during the annual "Let's Gro" festival revolving around the same theme of 'Happiness'. The artists installed metal plates with statements and slogans about happiness, and hung a banner on railing of the Turfsingel bridge, next to the Schouwburg and opposite of the Province House. It remained there for one and a half weeks. In the afternoon, Alice Strete and Angeliki Diakrousi walked around at the Let's Gro locations, the Vismarkt, and the Grote Markt with a banner that said "Happiness is a privilege".

# Rumour Camp
## by Pendar Nabipour, Alice Strete & Angeliki Diakrousi

In early November, the Rumour Camp project by Pendar Nabipour, Alice Strete, and Angeliki Diakrousi started with the distribution of stickers during the "Let's Gro" festival. The stickers played with the design of "Let's Gro" by displaying the text: "Let'm gro". The phrase was a future reference to the fictional case about the arrival of a large asylum seekers' centre in Groningen, of which a rumour would be spread during the 'Week of Democracy' (16–20 November 2018), right before the municipal elections. The artists spread this rumour by using two actors as interviewers. Only two of the interviewees were decidedly negative. The interviews were streamed on the Zomaar Radio podcast. The videos of the interviews can be found on Youtube and the audio of the interviews on https://archive.org/details/@letthemgro, or at www.sign2.nl.

**Refugees welcome to Groningen**

اللاجئين هلا بيكم في خرونينغن

les réfugiés sont les bienvenus à Groningue

**vluchtelingen welkom in Groningen**

نحن خرونينغن

Bienvenidos refugiados en Groningen

홍콩 난민에서 환영하는 난민들

#LetmGro

## Performativity

The term 'performativity' was introduced to the world by J. L. Austin in 1955, when he explained acts of speech as utterances that perform the action to which they refer. The phrase "I hereby condemn you to ten years in prison," is a clear example. It demonstrates that language can not only be referential and observing, but also performative. It has the ability to express and trigger something.

When art stops being representative, so when art no longer puts forth a work that refers to something else and/or when art is no longer an expression of an artist's inner essence, but when art becomes an act of language and communication that sets something in motion, then we call that art performative, according to Barbara Bolt in her article "A Performative Paradigm for the Creative Arts" (2006). Art is able to be performative without the use of words, like sitting behind a table and looking deeply into the eyes of the other, as Marina Abramovic did in The Artist Is Present in 2010.

A performative art practice is an art practice that acts in the world outside the studio. It is not made before being put on display, but it is created in the very space in which the public resides. In art as a performative practice, the artist therefore reveals himself as an acting subject. The artist does not precede the work of art but he arises in artistic acting. "Without the self-disclosure of the one acting in the act, the act loses its specific character and becomes a proceeding like any other" (Arendt 2005). While a representative work of art can exist in the world without the artist, with a performative work, the artist is always present in the performative acting in the public space of the event. The artist's actions create the space in which anything could occur or come into being. Because of this, a performative art practice requires courage, and confidence that both the viewers and the artists are able to take responsibility for what the action will cause in its environment.

**People in western Asia are much more politically and socially engaged in their everyday life than in western Europe, where things actually seem work out one way or another; the state cares for and fixes everything.**

**Some of that openness to the idea of the refugee camp might actually come from the naivety of people who think that there are no problems that come with this idea.**

## Rumour

Guus Kuijer, a Dutch author of many beloved children's books, started an ambitious project: the re-telling of one of our oldest written heritages, the Old Testament, for non believers. And his translation discloses one of the rarely addressed themes of the Bible: these texts are all stories of migration, refugees, and sons leaving family and fatherland to make a living in a 'promised land'. A land where they, of course, could escape the disciplining powers of the ruling patriarch (often their fathers).

Kuijer reveals how humans used the name and the power of their (sometimes angry or jealous) God for the benefit of their own projects and dreams. "God sends me away, to a promised land," said Abraham to his father. Abraham, and all the other followers and their offspring, masked their desire for a utopian, yet to be created, free, and independent space of their own, by referencing God's will. Without calling upon the divine voice, their fathers would have never let them go.

This is the 'template' or central logic of our western democratic heritage. We created a sense of freedom based on undermining the traditional patriarchal hegemony by circulation. It starts with the circulation of sons leaving their homes and fatherlands. And then, the circulation of stories that testify to these hopeful journeys. In these stories, people fight with (their) desire, (their) truth, their fathers and/or their God(s) or other authorities.

Pendar Nabipour, Alice Strete & Angeliki Diakrousi re-articulated this millennia old narrative theme in a contemporary version with their project Rumour Camp. To introduce 'rumour' into public space(s) means to introduce stories of hope, or stories that install doubt. Brought into circulation, this makes people think. Rumours even refer to the power of stories in a very paradoxical way. Some aspect of the ancient Greek concept of parrhesia is also at work in this project: one can bring the truth to the attention of the public eye by introducing rumour. Rumour addresses truth, and a desire, sometimes in the inverse form of a (half) lie. These 'counter stories,' as Alexander Kluge (1993) would call them, are at the heart of the democratic project. They bring to the attention what is being repressed or censored in our public space. This is how change (of ideas, of desires, of alliances) can happen; how newness comes into being.

## Rumour Camp – Dialogue of Pendar Nabipour (PN), Angeliki Diakrousi (AD) and Bibi Straatman (BS)

**PN**: "Initially, this idea started as a result of the discussions we had during sessions about one of Angeliki's previous projects that dealt with the refugees in Greece, and my own experiences being Iranian in the Netherlands and how people perceive me. I think this is what motivated the three of us to come up with Rumour Camp. Inspiration also came from Sacha Cohen's practical joke on 'Who is America?' However, I did not want to talk about exotic problems for a Western audience—such as narratives about the struggles of a migrant—which is an easy topic to earn quick success. The idea for Rumour Camp was born naturally out of our discussions during the sessions."

**AD**: "We actually saw a giant ship with refugees on board on the water outside the city and we thought of how hidden their existence is. Later, Pendar was talking about the difficulty he had answering questions that are aimed to confirm self-safety for the person who asks the question, such as: "Do you feel safe in the Netherlands?" or "Are you more free here?" So we thought of creating a rumour that the municipality had already decided to move a large camp near the border with Germany close to the city with the excuse of "introducing the refugees to the residents."

**PN**: "We thought this would be controversial and we would thus get reactions on camera. In combination with the municipal elections and the "Let's Gro" festival, which showed this glorified version of the city, it seemed like the perfect time to launch the project."

**BS**: "It was all bits and pieces that came together then. Angeliki's previous project was also on the axis of starting conversations about certain topics while Pendar has another work related to being an expat. They are rather political and bring out questions about topics that should be discussed. Your project is less about being a refugee and more about decision processes and how we react upon these decisions."

**Rumour addresses truth, and a desire, sometimes in the inverse form of a (half) lie. These 'counter stories', as Alexander Kluge (1993) would call them, are at the heart of the democratic project. They bring to the attention what is being repressed or censored in our public space.**

**AD**: "Exactly, and the projects is also about introducing the discussion, because so far everybody in Groningen has been talking about the student housing crisis but never about the refugee housing."

**BS**: "However, the project did not go as planned, did it?"

**PN**: "Yes, it came as a surprise that people were so neutral or positive towards the idea of a asylum seekers' centre."

**BS**: "But for me it seems logical, since people tend to behave differently in front of a camera and are more politically correct than in private."

**PN**: "Well, their political correctness can also be perceived as something else. People in western Asia are much more politically and socially engaged in their everyday life than in western Europe, where things actually seem work out one way or another; the state cares for and fixes everything. Some of that openness to the idea of the refugee camp might actually come from the naivety of people who think that there are no problems that come with this idea. They don't see what can go wrong or understand the practical process."

**AD**: "In the end, the rumour was not meant to be successful or not successful. It was the process that was important. We considered sending the project to the municipality as a testimony of the people being positive, and suggest to move the camp in reality."

**PN**: "We are now considering to keep the idea of Rumour Camp going. This time in a different city and with a different subject. For example, we have an idea about the Boijmans museum in Rotterdam moving to a different location."

"counter stories"

#LetmGro

**LET'M GRO**
#LetmGro

BERTUS

ZEG JA TEGEN VLUCHTELINGENKAMP NOORDDIJK #LetmGro

Let them come. Yes? Yeah sure. -Okay. Come y'all.

As the public space becomes increasingly hostile and polarised, there seemed to be a need for a gesture that would be de-colonial yet non-iconoclastic. This is where the idea of jumping over a statue with a motorcycle emerged from. This 'thing', only a millisecond long as an image, is a very slow way to discuss the theme of privilege, manifested in the situated and therefore slow form of a statue. Recent violence from the far right, from the attack on Kick Out Zwarte Piet to the events around the "Unite the Right Rally" in Charlottesville in 2017, have concentrated around attempts to remove aspects of history through their appearance in material and ritualised aspects of culture. Maybe unfixing history[1] too fast is dangerous. History is too heavy.

Four different statues of men embodying a history of violence and subjugation were explored as options for the stunt. Piet Hein (1577–1629) in Rotterdam, Pieter Stuyvesant (1592–1672) in Wolvega, Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587–1629) in Hoorn, and Jo van Heutsz (1851–1924) in Coevorden. Coen and Van Heutsz were war criminals and, arguably, mass murderers. Their statues have been subjected to interventions going back to the Provos. In these situations, the jump might be reduced to a 'bad' figure being 'overcome'. The options were narrowed down to Stuyvesant and Piet Hein.

Piet Hein in Rotterdam is the most ambiguous figure of the four. A slave in his early life, he was involved in mapping out slave- and colonial routes, thus raising questions about complicity and responsibility. The gesture of jumping over something is a heroic one, a gesture of overcoming, but behind this initial simple image, questions about what to overcome and how need to be asked. Alternatively, Stuyvesant's slave ownership, aggressive accumulation, and fight against pluralism makes him more immediately condemnable, shifting the discussion to the presence of a figure like this today. His statue is in Wolvega, a small town close to Peperga, an even smaller town where Stuyvesant, this massive figure in world history, was born. The old houses and churches show that Dutch history isn't just found in cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

Recently it seems like 'things' might be less the crux of art, but points around which people organise and position themselves. Protests, withdrawals, and open letters all seem to be gaining cultural impact. The jumping gesture is related to heroism—to overcoming—but the space that is left behind raises the much more complicated question of what that overcoming would actually signify. Part of the work is to include a public discussion beforehand. The position of the public is what makes the work as much as the position of the stunt rider does.

'Unfixing Histories is a term for a category of artistic gestures that engage with and respond to the documented past. See Blokland, Pelupessy, (2012). The use of the Present Continuous is meant to indicate its ongoing nature, the never-ending flux in which the past influences the present.

## TimelineGallery: The Dialogical Quality of Art in Public Spaces

Other than in the museum, the confrontation with artistic interventions in the public space is unexpected. Because the audience comes upon the work by chance and is unprepared, a spontaneous meeting takes place between the spectator and the artwork, the outcome of which is uncertain and dependent on many factors. "The gaze of the spectator is, of course, not only dependent on the work and its placement, but also on the placement of the spectator socially (in terms of age, class, ethnic background, gender, politics etc.). Or, more broadly speaking, experiences and intentionalities. We can, thus, speak of three variable categories, that, in turn, influence the definition of each other; work, context and spectator. None of which are given, and each of which are conflictual, indeed agonistic" (Seikh 2004).

In contrast to the propagandistic communication of, for example, advertising and political parties (Vilem Flusser in Coumans 2010) that directs us all in the same direction, the meaning of a work of art in the public space is generated in the dialogue with the viewer. A work of art demands the asking of questions. Through these questions the viewer comes to his own experience and position in relation to his environment. Art thus strengthens the autonomous position of the viewer. Where a confirmation of the existing aesthetic, societal/political expectation does not lead to reflection, a work of art does succeed in this when it alienates the normal (Sjklovski 1982).

TimelineGallery asked a group of young artists and designers to create such dialogues through an artistic intervention in the public space. The temporary presentations, which took place one after the other, together form one exhibition: TimelineGallery. The project asked the participants a question about their artistic practices: What does being autonomous mean to you and how do you translate the autonomy of your artistic practice into a communication in the public space? The projects now asks you questions: Of which works would you have become the viewer? And can you imagine what dialogues you would have had with the works? And what does this mean to you?

## Higher Than History
### by Quenton Miller

Higher than History by Quenton Miller brings local residents into contact with monuments of controversial heroes in the public space (think of Piet Hein in Delfshaven, Pieter Stuyvesant in Wolvega) by having a stunt motorcyclist jump over them. In addition to the stunt, short meetings will be held on the subject of history and slavery. The invited speakers do not propose to remove the statues, but want to start a conversation about the lives of the people who are represented by these monuments, and ask what this kind of monument would look like today.

## METALLIC VESSELS

Smooth cylindrical objects have been found in large amounts around gathering places which may have been used as religious or ceremonial sites. Given the immense piles of the items found, it may be surmised they had a hallucinogenic or entheogenic purpose involved. As such, a vessel would invariably be used to transport a precious substance within. These items appear to have been strewn about the archeological sites, and unintentionally placed into the garbage collecting locations; perhaps they were used to imbue the surrounding land with luck, fortune or other spell-casting practices.

> By considering art in public space as a form of public pedagogy we highlight the transformative force that art can be in the process of living together.

## The Art of a Polyphonic Public Pedagogy

One way to understand art in public space is to consider it as a pedagogical act, or more so, to regard it as a form of public pedagogy. Biesta gives us a guideline for an obstinate 'third' way of considering public pedagogy, one that differs fundamentally from instructing and learning; namely "a pedagogy which enacts and acts out of a concern for the public quality of human togetherness" (Biesta 2012). This concept involves ways of acting and being that "opensv up the public sphere towards itself," as the status quo is interrupted and the inevitability of boundaries that are drawn—in both visible and invisible ways—is being questioned. This type of pedagogy is oriented towards plurality or to put it differently: it gives way to a 'multi-voicedness'. This can be specifically referred to as polyphonic, in the sense that Bakhtin proposes: "A plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses, a genuine polyphony of fully valid voices" (Bakhtin 1984). In this concept we don't find an 'Author', a higher authority that is comforting us by ultimately submitting these different voices to an overarching monological story. Here lies a strong connection with the educational notion of 'subjectification' (Biesta 2015) which is built on the idea of the human capacity for action (Arendt 1958). We, as humans, have the possibility to appear as subjects—as free agents so to speak—who can bring 'the new' into the world in encounters with the Other in reciprocal freedom. Artists can be this kind of free agents par excellence.

The kind of public pedagogy we are referring to has no fixed framework for reference but is open for contingency, for a living experience, and gives way to authentic encounters. This ties in with how art works by its very nature, as it can be considered as open ended, ambiguous, and charged with productive contradictions. It is in this capacity that it confronts us so characteristically with the unpredictable, the unanswerable, and the absurd. We can recognise this within the dialogue it evokes and through the intervention it brings, specifically when art is brought into the bright light of day, in the discernible realm of public life. By considering art in public space as a form of public pedagogy we highlight the transformative force that art can be in the process of living together.

## Groningen onder water op apocalyptisch reuzendoek

GRONINGEN Water dat als een zondvloed door de straten van Groningen golft. Dit onheilspellende beeld is sinds enkele dagen te zien bij uitgaanscentrum DOT dat op de achtergrond nog 'droog' is te zien. Het tafereel heeft iets weg van een fragment uit de vaak apocalyptische films van regisseur Roland Emmerich. Aangespoeld afval vergezelt het reuzendoek, waaronder een autodeur en een dode koe. Vraag is nu: wie is of zijn de (tot nu toe onbekend gebleven) kunstenaar(s) en welke boodschap wordt uitgedragen? FOTO PETER WASSING

## In Loving Memory 2018 0.8°
### by Nadine Rotem Stibbe & Ryan Cherewaty

In Loving Memory 2018 0.8°C, a project by Nadine Rotem Stibbe & Ryan Cherewaty, consists of seven objects placed in front of a banner that is hanging on the wall of the parking garage in the Ebbingekwartier in Groningen. The banner, measuring 8x5.5 meters, shows an interpretation of that part of Groningen in 2050, after it has been flooded. The objects represent the archaeological finds from this future perspective.

"A large cache of archaeological objects were uncovered in the transeuropean flood plain. The artefacts uncovered offer an unprecedented look into the life of the human race in 2018, prior to the great cataclysms that we have witnessed in the last few decades. Particularly the profound obsession with objects created from the industrial processing of complex carbon chain polymers, 'plastics'— an industry that was a key factor in heavily increasing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It would seem this material afforded these peoples great luxury and the accumulation of personal wealth in a horrendously stratified society. These quotidian objects have survived extreme climate changes. What would have been waste for them, now offers us a glimpse into their perplexing culture. Ultimately, these factors led to their demise. In loving memory of 2018, we will gather at the Ebbingekwartier in Groningen to remember the Earth at a time when it was only 0.8°C above the norm.

*"transformative"*

*"free agents"*
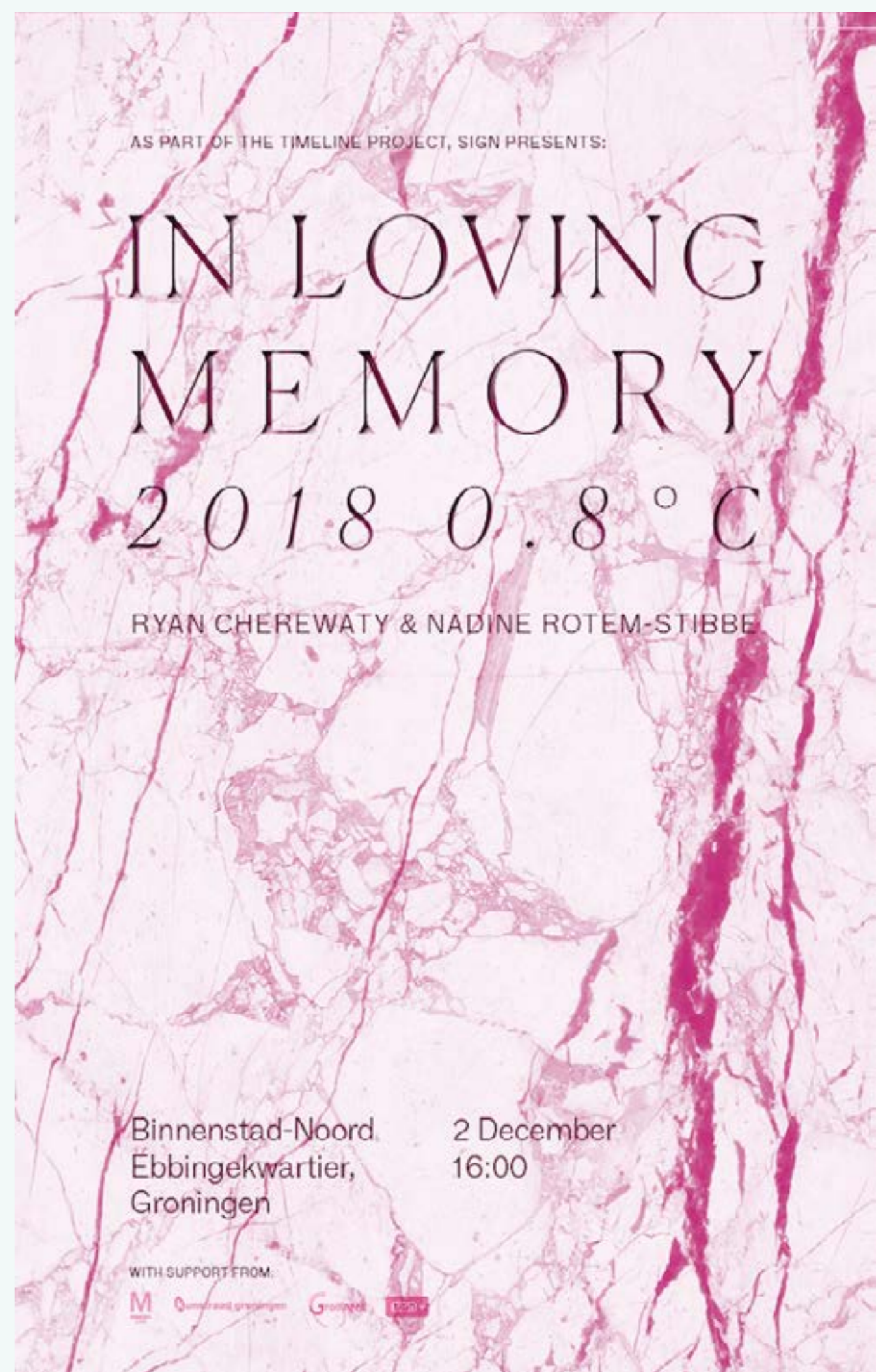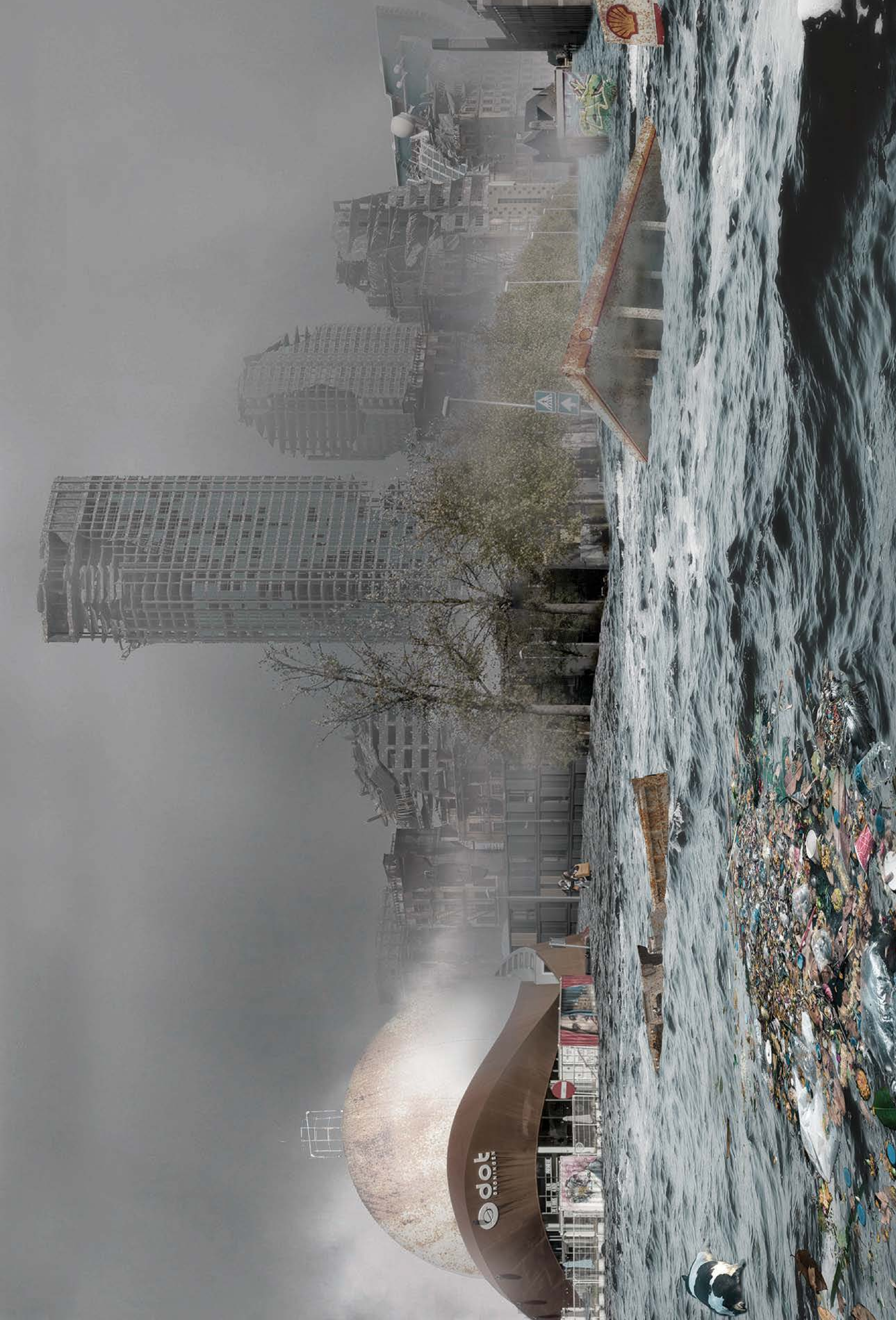
How are you feeling today? My name is [ERIC/GIULIA], and today we will dance this dance together. Now, make your way out of the building. No need to rush, but the sooner we're outside, the sooner the choreography can start.

[GIVE THEM SOME TIME]

When you're on the street, notice how your feet are pressing on the city's pavement. With every step, and step, and step, start to feel from your feet upwards. Left foot, right foot. The pressure on the cobble stone, the grass, the mud, a tile, a sidewalk.

Observe yourself inwardly. Stand still in a place you feel comfortable enough in to stand still for the amount of time it will take to answer the following questions about yourself. What would you say is most "you"/yourself?

Is it the way you dress?
The way you breathe?
The sound of your voice?
The murmur in your stomach?
The blood running through your veins? Your mind wandering off?

The way you treat your friends?
These (a-)politicised desires?
Your keen eye for detail?
Your hobbies or habits?
Your favourites and dislikes?
The afternoon nap? The hiatus? The break? The hole? The gap?
The smile? The sunder? Shyness? Hopefulness? Lack of interest? Desire to experiment?
Allow for the answers to seep into you, like water seeps into earth. Aaaand…. Walk again. Don't walk too fast. Follow a slow heartbeat-rhythm. Your feet are still touching the ground, your mind is focussed on the feeling of their touch.
Step, step, the stone underneath…

### Listening to the other

Some artistic interventions are grounded in listening which can be defined as 'the act of recognizing what others have to say, recognizing that they have something to say or better that they, like all human beings have the capacity to give an account of their lives that is reflexive and continuous, an ongoing, embodied process of reflection.' (Couldry 2009) In the public performance Choreography of Disclosure, the artists (Giulia de Giovanelli and Eric Peter) and the participants had to listen to each other via a telephone conversation in order to create a full involvement in and with the public space.

This way of open listening, where hearing becomes listening, starts with what can be described as becoming alert. 'Such 'alertness', might be characterized as a listening for difference, for something new emerging from familiarity.' (Tebbutt, 2009) It makes room to let go of our own agendas and to be genuinely interested in the other. As Giulia de Giovanelli describes 'to rethink self as the other and other as self.' 'Listening, then, does not amount to grasping something in order to integrate and order it into our own world, but to opening one's own world to something or someone external and strange to it. Listing-to is a way of opening ourselves to the other and of welcoming this other, its truth and its world as different from us, from ours.' (Irigaray 2008)

Listening in order to know how one can answer by transferring knowledge will get in the way of the reflexive process-based character of listening. Instead, when approached as a processual and contextual practice, one needs to 'listen to the way in which the other envisions and constructs their truth.' Which is always in interaction and in relation with the context in which the person who speaks is embedded and the conversation takes place. 'Thus the question is not only one of listening to words, but also to the linguistic and cultural context in which they take place, to the world that they compose and construct.' (Irigaray 2008)

I think its overvalued. The singular voice. The artist as a genius… this is an old, redundant concept. In our practice we try to create a space where it's about the collective. We are enablers, or initiators, but the work eventually surpasses us and our own authorship.

## Choreography of Disclosure. Act 1, Groningen
**by Giulia de Giovanelli & Eric Peter**

Choreography of Disclosure is a public choreography by Giulia de Giovanelli & Eric Peter in which the participant is dissecting its perceptions of an environment through several types of movement. The environment is a social landscape of people, walls, and greenery, in which encounters are unavoidable. But instead of self-performance in the public space, the artists invite participants to perform a choreography of potentialities of togetherness. A dance through their voice, danced with them and other people on the streets. Choreography of Disclosure is challenging surveillance, digital communication, and the increased dissolution of intimacies and relations between strangers (even between closed ones). Through its movements, CoD is asking for an introspective journey, to rethink the self as other and the other as self.

### Parrhèsia as a kind of movement that leads to a collective voice.
**Fragments of the dialogue between Eric Peter (EP),**
**Giulia de Giovanelli (GdG) and Frederiek Bennema (FB)**

**EP**: How can Parrhèsia lead to something other than highlighting a problem, voiced in a singular way? We wanted to think about Parrhèsia as a kind of movement that leads to a collective voice.

**FB**: This whole idea of Parrhèsia, and the position of the individual in the collective. Do you think it's something that is undervalued?

**EP**: I think its overvalued. The singular voice. The artist as a genius… this is an old, redundant concept. In our practice we try to create a space where it's about the collective. We are enablers, or initiators, but the work eventually surpasses us and our own authorship.

**FB**: You facilitate spaces.

**EP**: Yeah, facilitator or initiator. For instance, with this dinner thing afterwards. This is something I have done before. I create a space where conversation happens. I initiate it, but I wouldn't say it's mine. When I think of this idea of one individual, I feel that it's not what I'd like to do. Maybe we should redefine it. Is that maybe what we should do?

I believe things are brewing and collectively, things are happening. Maybe artists—being sensitive people—can pick up on that and initiate a work. But of course, we are part of a collective [i.e. society, community, etc.] that senses it. We already feel that something is happening. I don't like this idea of the enlightened individual.

**FB**: The one person who knows and shares. If that's the essence of Parrhèsia then that's not something you would stand for.

**GdG**: No, because the work of an artist is never an isolated act. It's always a kind of corrupted and influenced act. We act because we have a context around us that informs us. And then we inform back onto someone else. It's a kind of chain, and we are just one link in the whole network.

**FB**: In a chain reaction, as part of an ecosystem. While you were talking about the collective and how the individual relates to the collective, I was thinking maybe it relates to ecosystems and the commons as well. Is that a term you are also working with?

**GdG**: The term 'commons' can also signify the value system which binds people together in communities. In my work, I like thinking of alternative values for togetherness, such as mutual responsibilities or the idea of 'gift' as an act of giving without expecting to receive something in return. I'd like to image how we can create an alternative economy of being together; something different from our neoliberal, market-driven way of living public life.

**EP**: Michael Warner wrote about publics and counter-publics. These could be minority groups that are not part of a larger opinion or stage, and act against something. So, in a way, that could be Parrhèsiast. Create things and let them enter the world trough safe spaces, or spaces that are not publicly visible. So it's like pushing against something, yet always with a specific attitude.

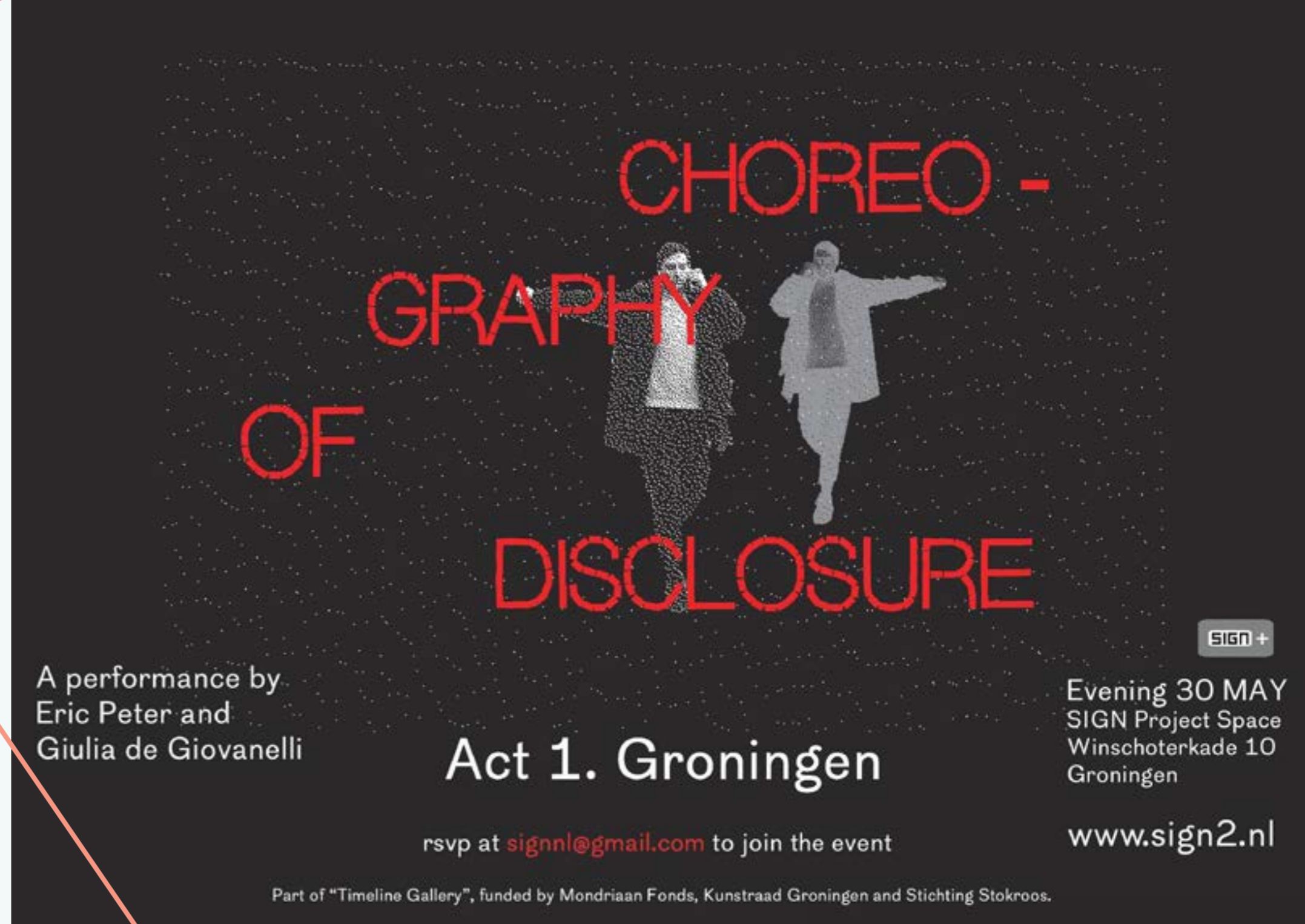## "I always pray, when I speak."

### Parrhesia Revisited

"I always pray, when I speak." (Derrida)

Parrhesia as a concept came to us from the classical Greek world, through Michel Foucault. It had been forged by the poet Euripides and his friend Socrates. It designates the search of the powerless for truth and justice. Parrhesia means to 'tell everything'; namely those truths (about injustice, (sexual) violence and abuse of power) that stay hidden, censored, repressed, or are clandestine (in the form of gossip) most of the time. The concept was first phrased in Euripides' play Ion, where Euripides places it in the mouth of Creusa; a woman who denounces Apollo, because he raped her and took her son.

Parrhesiasts bring into circulation what is being considered a taboo, not only within dictatorships or traditional patriarchal societies, but also in our 21st century democracies. One of the taboos of our societies is our inability to deal with refugees, migrants and people that are dreaming of a promised land. We put them in camps and leave them without hope or a prospect for a future. We silence them, because we would rather not listen to the testimonies of their agony.
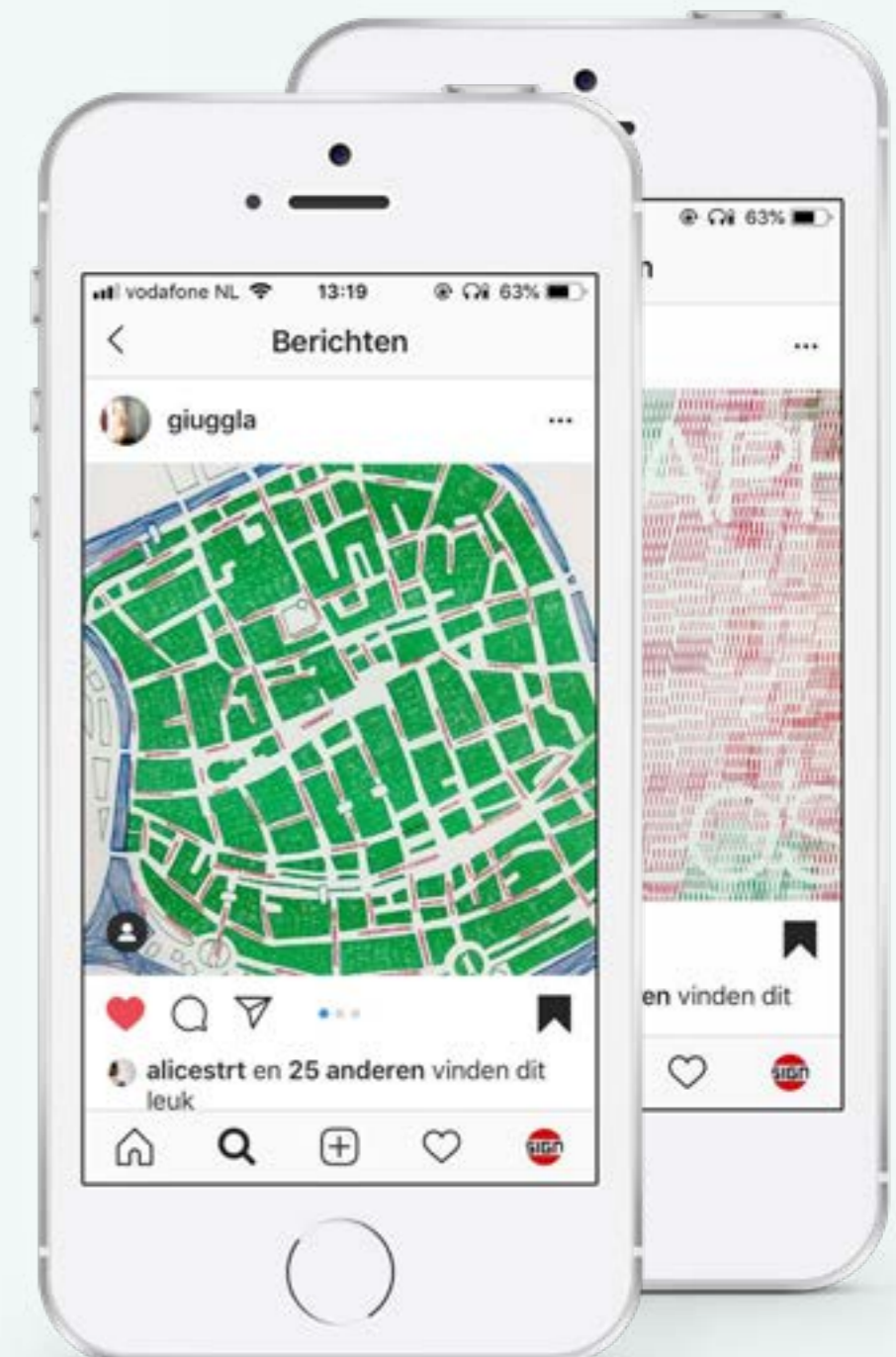
A parrhesiast interferes in the public sphere and opens it up by bringing these taboo stories into the open, (e.g. by naming and shaming; a recent example being the 'Me Too movement'), thus criticising those who hold their tongue or abuse power. Democratic tendencies are born once people start to share these taboo stories and make them circulate in contexts that were previously filled with 'propaganda'—by speaking up, by testifying, by writing articles, by creating an artistic project.

It has always something to do with a 'calling'; a certain invocation or mission; and with the articulation of a desire; for justice, freedom, or a space of one's own. The new, even in a patriarchal context, comes with the act of saying, with the performative act of stating a word or a sentence, which gives way to a desire. Jacques Derrida pointed to this very powerful and subversive aspect of parrhesiastic speech: it becomes a prayer. A prayer uses language without knowing if the words will be received or heard, in the hope that still, someone will listen.

**Parrhesiasts bring into circulation what is being considered a taboo, not only within dictatorships or traditional patriarchal societies, but also in our 21st century democracies.**

CHOREO-GRAPHY OF DISCLOSURE

A performance by Eric Peter and Giulia de Giovanelli

Act 1. Groningen

rsvp at signnl@gmail.com to join the event

Evening 30 MAY
SIGN Project Space
Winschoterkade 10
Groningen

www.sign2.nl

SIGN+

Part of "Timeline Gallery", funded by Mondriaan Fonds, Kunstraad Groningen and Stichting Stokroos.

## Space Invaders
**by Jaleesa Mallée,**

Since February 26, 2019, Jaleesa Mallée's Space Invaders project has presented viewers with a script when scanning QR codes that are applied to the sidewalk. Together, the codes form a route that can be followed. The script asks them to perform certain actions at the locations of the codes that call into question the distinction between the private and the public. One of the assignments was: Open the gate and wave to the people sitting inside.

"Practiced actions are inseparable from the utilisation of a public space. This project approaches the accessibility of the public space from an abstract conceptual perspective, by identifying the tangible, perceivable rituals that make up the process of going into/leaving public/private spaces. Upon scanning QR-coded tiles, 'the public' receives Jaleesa's instructions. Instructions that provide ways to invade private spaces that, despite their 'private' status, are already visually accessible to the public. In her research Jaleesa questions the moment of becoming either private or public, as well as the space wherein that moment takes place.

The Space Invaders tour has two missions which take you to different parts of Groningen.



**Other than public works of art that are placed in rather confined spaces such as public buildings, squares, or residual spaces like roundabouts, artistic interventions within the public space often are more dynamically present in the threshold world; they act in and across liminal spaces and thereby explore them, asking questions, stretching the boundaries, and inviting participants or audiences to do the same.**

## In-between-space

The liminal zone between the private and the public space in the urban environment has been characterized by René Boomkens as a threshold world (drempelwereld), an in between world in which the individual and the collective can enter into a dynamic interaction (Boomkens 1993). Streets, sideways, squares, shopping malls, bars, and public buildings are labyrinthine places of encounter in which humans meet and interact with, respond to and confront each other. Our bodies, gestures, acts and behaviour are dynamic explorations of the 'weak boundaries' of these liminal spaces and of the objects in them.

Not only the 'hardware' of sidewalks and buildings can be seen as those spaces of encounter, since the notion of a dynamic 'in-between space' is also present in and related to the phenomenological concept of the intersubjective in-between world ('intermonde'). Bernhard Waldenfels, building on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, defines this in-between space as an interpersonal space of encounter in which an experience of ambiguity, estrangement and discomfort attracts our attention: "something which provokes sense without being meaningful itself yet still as something by which we are touched, affected, stimulated, surprised and to some extent violated" (Waldenfels 2007). We are touched by what is alien or different to us, and according to Waldenfels this experience subsequently forces us into a pause, a temporary retreat, and a postponed answer. If we would strive to immediately resolve the difference, we would undermine the provocative, appealing, and disruptive aspect of the encounter with the other.

Waldenfels' description of what happens in such encounters is particularly useful in understanding interventions that address the boundaries of public spaces. Other than public works of art that are placed in rather confined spaces such as public buildings, squares, or residual spaces like roundabouts, artistic interventions within the public space often are more dynamically present in the threshold world; they act in and across liminal spaces and thereby explore them, asking questions, stretching the boundaries, and inviting participants or audiences to do the same. These kinds of artistic interventions in the public space explore and embrace the discomfort of encounters in the in-between spaces.
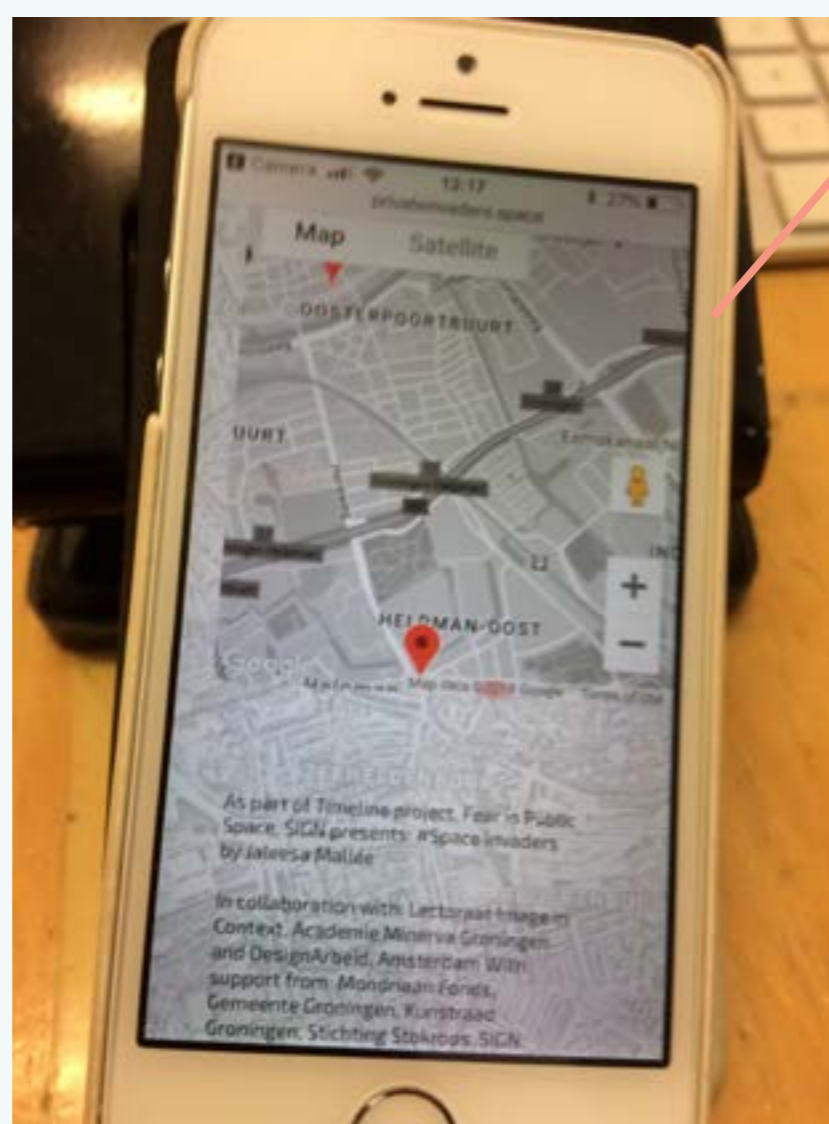




## Care as a relational practice

Care is a complex and multi-layered concept, indispensable in both public and private spheres; through care people connect with each other and their environment. Care does not only refer "to actions and activities but to relationships and to attitudes and values about our responsibility for others and for our own being in the world" (Fine 2007). This dual meaning of care is reflected in the words "caring for someone (carrying out caring work) and caring about someone (having caring feelings)" (Thomas 1993). Care is relational and "can be part of formal, loving, professional and friendship relationships" (Phillips 2007).

Care as a practice is an important prerequisite for performative and participative art in the public space in order to create a sense of togetherness. For the viewers to become active agents from a position of care, artists need to facilitate caring activities by building trust, and acknowledging seen and unseen dependencies, as well as the needs of the participants. Whether the participants engage in walking, baking bread, gardening or discussing, when an activity is developed as a practice of care it shows them how to respond to needs and why they should. "It builds trust and mutual concern and connectedness between persons" (Held 2005).

It is important that caring in a public and participative artwork is not based on a pre-cooked set of values and moral judgments. "Therefore, care should be approached as a practice which brings persons together in ways that are progressively more morally satisfactory" (Held 2005). Sentiments of caring need "to be refined through reflection, and subjected to the critique of reasons and discourse with others, before they are taken to be moral judgements" (Held 2011). In order to open up possibilities for participants to postpone their judgements and to redefine their roles in relation to others, caring in art in the public space has to be a reflexive and dialogical practice.

## Ecology of Practices

The concept of ecology, originating from biology and concerning the study of interactions among organisms and their environment, has come to determine our thinking and actions in recent years. We have come to realise that human is not separate form Earth, but a part of it. We have changed from a way of thinking in which we move linearly towards more consciousness, knowledge, means and power, to a way of thinking in which we are a part of the very ecological systems that we indeed influence, but are not superior to. We are becoming spatial thinkers instead of linear thinkers, realising that things do not only move in succession, but also co-exist. Moreover, we are shifting from a conviction of individual engineering, to one of agency and responsibility. We are no longer in control of what we cause, but we must take responsibility for it. Isabelle Stengers' concept of an 'ecology of practices' occupies a special place in this ecological movement, because it views systems as the sum of different interacting practices. In the ecological approach to practices, we study how different practices can bring one other into a state of development. What is leading in the research is not what already exists, but what is possible. "It thus does not approach practices as they are—physics as we know it, for instance—but as they may become" (Stengers 2005). At a time in which the arts want to showcase what they can generate outside of their own domain, this offers new points of departure. Art does not have to fear for its own existence when it enters the social political domain and brings other practices into a state of becoming, but as a practice of its own, it will also be changed in this transaction. In an ecology of practices, a dialogue arises.

## "private or public

## togetherness"

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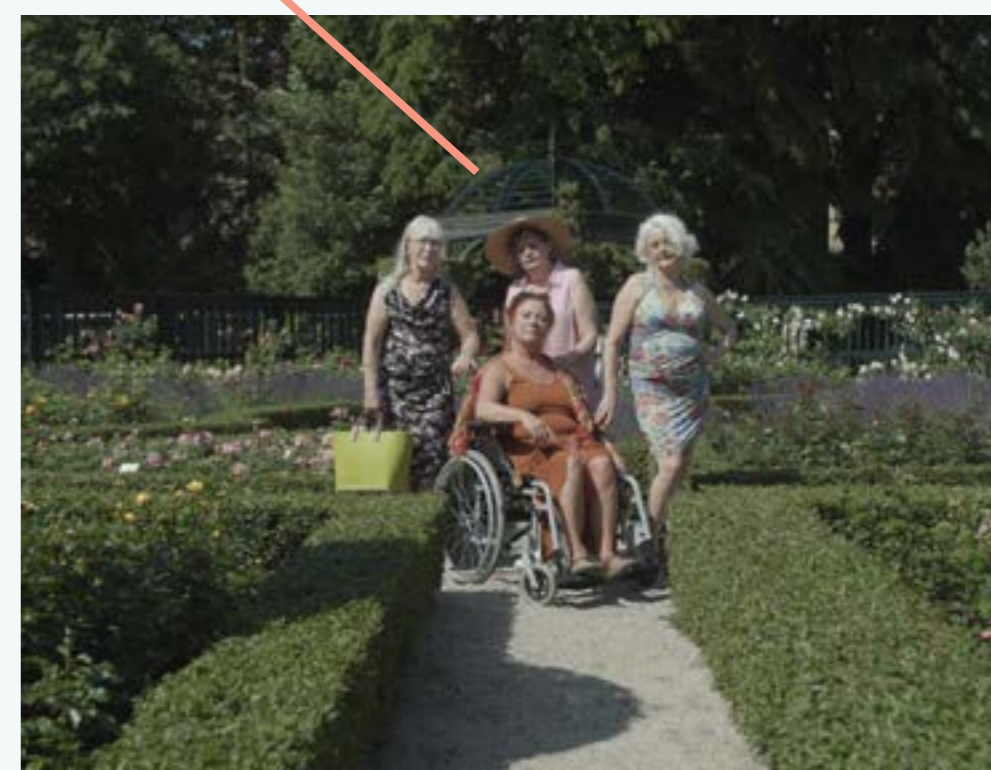






## Blood Sisters
**by Josefin Arnell & Helen Flanagan, in cooperation with Renuka Goorhuis, Ulrica de la Mar, Margriet van den Eijnden, & Riet Olthof-Bierman**

Blood Sisters, an experimental film by Josefin Arnell and Helen Flanagan, is based on student behaviour at student associations such as Vindicat atque Polit. For the film, the four older actresses Renuka Goorhuis, Ulrica de la Mar, Margriet van den Eijnden, and Riet Olthof-Bierman, improvised on the social rituals of these kinds of associations; such as hazing, control, order, and group dynamics. This happened on June 23, 2019, in the public space of the Prinsentuin in Groningen. The film will be screened in the spring during the overview exhibition of the Timeline project in February/March 2020.