

Living Beyond Logic

The great thing about programming your own place is that you only have to deal with artists whose work makes your heart beat faster. This provides an excellent basis for collaboration. A lightness and curiosity that make the impossible a regular and uplifting occurrence.

The very existence of HMK is unlikely, but here it is: a small-scale experimental project by and for artists in a seemingly traditional town. The town and the artists appear to have lost their hearts to each other. However, introducing this kind of unreasonable element in a residential quarter isn't always simple. Living together is difficult enough in itself, and what have we got to offer? A minstrel turned inside out in pursuit of Soul. A superhero fused with a medieval harlequin. A visual meditation on fields of grass blowing in the wind.

I believe we should all be able to encounter traces of life like this, beyond logic, every now and again. In the physical world, with all five senses simultaneously. Not because we would not recognize it from our own experience, but because we would. An exhibition can stir and address parts of ourselves that are often snowed under.

Sometimes something special happens in the interaction between a project and its audience. A man dropped in daily to see the show *Simultaan*, from the afternoon it opened until the day we took it down. I never saw him before, and I haven't seen him since. A kindergarten class spontaneously started running in circles around the big wooden Ship of Fools, in wordless unison like a flock of thrilled birds.

To me it is important that this kind of work can find its way into daily life. The intangible may remain intangible, but you have to be able to stumble upon it. That can happen wherever it is allowed to touch ground. For decades now, that has been the case in Hoorn.

Jantine Wijnja

To build a ship...

Superhero and I strolled around Hoorn. In his capacity as Superhero, he was wearing a silver suit with oversized shoulder pads. It was a weekday morning and we were on our way to a primary school where we were going to make masks. The streets were almost deserted and the sun was shining. Superhero said to kids bicycling past: 'I'm Superhero. How are you today?' Timidly, they ran away. A group of elderly people stopped mid-sentence to stare at us.

Superhero contentedly walked past a row of rose bushes.

During his time at HMK, Superhero made friends with a neighbourhood gang and played cards at an old folks' home. He was flaunting his laid-back style, and wanted to help everyone to discover their own internal Superhero.

A few weeks earlier, Superhero's predecessors had still been hard at work in the Chapel. There had been chaos, adrenaline, and a lot of woodwork happening. Under the supervision of artist Swintak, a motley crew was building a ship that would never sail. Instead, it would be dismantled after a brief display. There is technically no sense in spending a lot of time on something that is going to be taken apart almost immediately, which is precisely why it was important to do so. When I walked into HMK, it was aglow with enthusiasm. Everyone was

working from early in the morning to late at night, trying to figure out how to actually make this happen.

Swintak & Co. went to a builder's merchant and came back with a wealth of waste materials. 'You're artists,' the man at the lumber yard had said. 'You're doing something for us, so we'll do something for you.'

When the ship was finished, a large crowd gathered to baptise it. After all, when Swintak & Co went out looking for recyclable materials that had – hopefully – been discarded they had met most of the neighbours, as well as a lot of other people around.

Ship of Fools closed fittingly, with a ship-wrecking party. The materials which had been collected with so much care were quickly assimilated by Hoorn once again. Sheets of plywood went to studios nearby, the ship's organ stayed behind at the HMK guest house as part of the library.

Afterwards, the chapel was big and white and empty again, as though it had never been anything else.

Jantine Wijnja

Hot Potato

A sound of loud drilling emanated from the guest house. In the living room, designer Marc Petstra was working in the late afternoon sun. He was making our new furniture from thick sheets of plywood. It was going to be lovely. There was wood dust everywhere.

The guest house had been beautifully renovated. But we got it back completely bare, and we had no means to purchase the materials necessary to furnish it. We needed floors, and lamps, and beds. We didn't even have a budget for paint.

We wondered about what to do. There was so much happening at once. We were halfway into our first year, working hard to meet the deadline for our first major application which seemed like an endless ocean of work. Catherine Hemelryk was working on Hotel MariaKapel: A Portrait by Katie Jane from the temporary guest house. We found ourselves offering shelter to a number of artists whose project in the area had gone awry. And then there was that matter of finishing the guest house, and moving in.

We called and wrote everyone we could think of. The result was a patchwork of support from shopkeepers and neighbours. Piles of linen from one place, a carpet from another. A drawing teacher donated a wooden floor. My parents worked on the guest rooms, friends drove vans, and the town council came through. And in this pandemonium, Catherine put on a wonderful exhibition.

Afterwards I lay in bed, adrenaline still pumping, already thinking about the next deadline. I was afraid that HMK would sink on my watch. That this was my chance, and that I was blowing it.

There was a big party when we finished and the guest house was packed. But I felt as if the space we were making for the art we love came at the expense of my own ability to let things sink in - the joy and tranquillity to really look at something. When watching visiting artists at work in the Chapel, I was happy and proud, but also a little bit jealous.

Jantine Wijnja

Bon Voyage

We were in Cameroon. Sander Veenhof, Steven Jouwersma and I. We spent three weeks at Art Bakery, an artists' initiative in Douala set up by Goddy Leye.

Goddy Leye and I first met earlier that year in Cairo.¹ Goddy had a warm, intelligent cheerfulness about him that immediately made it good to be around him. Despite visa-related issues, we decided to do an exchange and try to have the artists from both countries visit each other. It was worth trying, and if we didn't succeed, we could at least make a big stink about it.

That first meeting was in March. In October Sander, Steven and I were aboard a wobbly plane to Douala. After we landed, there was a taxi ride along a road normally only accessible to motorbikes. It consisted mainly of potholes and wet mud. We drove through dark and narrow streets, past the slaughterhouse.

The aim of Elopement was to get to know each other's perspective by working within each other's organizational structure. Sander and Steven, both technical guys, had to manage without their usual equipment. In spite of power failures we held screenings, in part by candlelight. Daily, long conversations took place on the Art Bakery porch. With Goddy, his neighbours and relatives, visiting artists. The air shimmered in the heat and the aroma of coffee wafted through the garden.

Steven dressed up as the jungle for a performance in the Chief's front yard. For hours, we covered his body with banana leaves and vines. Perspiration ran down his cheeks. Sander developed the NBEEP6, a free and untraceable (if slightly complicated) communication system using twelve mobile phones and coded messages.

Some time later, on 19 February 2011, Goddy died unexpectedly of malaria with complications. His brother Jackson and sister Estella are trying to keep Art Bakery going. It is hard to accept that Goddy is no longer sipping coffee or going through portfolios with young artists. A man who so unceasingly breathed life into everything around him is bound to be missed in countless ways.

When Sander, Steven and I caught our flight out of Cameroon, Goddy was there, waving to us and giving us each a can of soda to drink on the way.

Bon voyage.

Jantine Wijnja

A Plan to Abandon

Daniël Dennis and I have based our approach to HMK on the ideas outlined by its founders, Daniëlle Van Zuijlen and Bart Lodewijks. We also introduced a lot of changes. In the name,

¹ At the Cairo Residency Symposium, see www.crs.nu.

the programming, the exhibition policy. I feel confident that Josine and Wouter Sibum will do the same: that they will take the next steps in a development that is never finished, with a great deal of love for what is there already there.

At the start of our time at HMK, at the opening of RE-constructing, Daniël Dennis and I were standing around together. 'No one thinks we can combine HMK with our own work as artists,' Daniël Dennis said, a bit worried. I shrugged my shoulders and replied, 'We'll have to, so we will.' For me, the way to do that turned out to allow myself to be completely absorbed by HMK. It took more out of me than I had anticipated, and occasionally more than I had had in mind. It was worthwhile to be so immersed in something. It led to special moments and meetings. Mostly, our guests have produced works which might not have existed in this way otherwise, and I feel privileged to have been witness to that.

Like Bart and Daniëlle at the time, I also like to think HMK now has a solid basis. It needs to, as things may get rough in the coming years. Fortunately there is support from neighbours far and near, a board of directors that really cares, and municipal authorities that can be relied on. And last but not least, there are two good new directors who will continue to make, change and abandon plans as they see fit.

On to the next round...

Jantine Wijnja.