

# Intervening the Urban Void

On strategies of interventions in the city

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November 13<sup>th</sup> 2004 – February 13<sup>th</sup> 2005

The first research project conducted by Public Space With A Roof was dedicated to urban spaces and investigated their function, usage and accessibility. In work presentations, installations and lectures by artists, architects, theorists, street-artists and composers we questioned, which potentials of the public space could be revitalized through artistic practices. Organized and curated by Adi Hollander, Tamuna Chabashvili and Inga Zimprich.

## Concept

With its high percentage of foreigners and tourists, Amsterdam is considered an internationally minded town. Surinamese, Moroccans, foreign students and illegal inhabitants strive for integration into a Calvinistic coined mentality and liberal way of life. The medieval town is preserved as a national cultural good; access to living space in the city center is regulated through waiting lists, illegal sub renting, and estate speculation. Large-scale restructuring plans try to reverse suburban ghettoisation while the city expands northeast on recently gained land.

The general sphere in Amsterdam radiates a sense of content and wealth. Integration and Adaptation are frequently used terms to communicate migration-related questions and cultural conflicts. Bureaucratic regulation interferes in all areas of life as an underlying factor in order to establish, maintain or profit from a legal status in the Netherlands.

By choosing for the project title Intervening The Urban Void we would like to question, whether the Dutch model, in the example of Amsterdam, realizes a western utopian society or alienates its inhabitants from individual choices and intuitive ways of living. The void, understood as a lack of contact and communication, as a limit to own creation and decision-making and a lack of awareness of the potentials of self-determination in an urban environment, is the phenomenon we would like to dedicate this research.

In our selection of participants we have chosen for international artists, theorists, architects, graphic designers as much as independent and informal initiatives that have developed strategies of analyses, community forming and communication in their own practice in place of origin. Each group or participant meets the terms of a socially aware strategist, introducing significant perspectives to a public debate.

Public Space With A Roof as an autonomous artist-run space will try to enrich the dialogue amongst international practitioners and will conduct their appliance within an Amsterdam context by launching a public research, which falls into four sub-themes (Architecture as Analyses, Psychogeographic Data, Dialogue/critical practice and Urban articulation). We aim to examine artistically and politically motivated tendencies, which address the phenomenon of individualistic isolation in the city. Striving for a transparent research process and providing in depth information, we will enable constructive communication amongst the project participants as much as amongst participants and the public. Within a research format, which combines dialogue, intervention, visual presentation and information we aim to present artistic approaches, which promote a re-consideration of stagnated relationships between users and creators of public space.

We would like to start our research with the following set of questions:

How much regulation is needed to guarantee freedom? Who is included and excluded of that freedom?

In how far is the isolation from social processes a conscious, personal and willing choice?

Which potentials of self-organization, improvisation, autonomous decision-making and spontaneity are dismissed through regulation? Can some of these potentials be refreshed and considered in a new light?

Can suggestions emerge from comparison with other metropolises?

Which potentials can be recognized by considering strategies of architectural analyses, critical discursive practice, the examination of psychological and emotional qualities of environments and voluntary articulation in cities?

## EVENTS:

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(1 sub theme)

### Architecture As Analyses

Opening

Sat. 13. November 2004, 7pm



Work-presentations

Sunday 14. November 2004

4 pm

**AnArchitektur**, architecture collective, Berlin AnArchitektur is a magazine published twice a year, in which architecture is understood as a tool for reflection on the implications of built environment. **Andreas Mueller** will speak about the current border-project in Poland / Belarus – investigating the new outside borders of the expanded European Union, which is about to turn into a new migration route – and will introduce AnArchitektur's method of mapping and cartography with examples of their projects.

5 pm

**Alon Levin** is a graphic designer living and working in Amsterdam. Though trained as a graphic designer, even when commissioned, he uses his role that could be regarded as a 'parasite' with a self-reflective attitude, sometime cynical towards existing systems. He will show and talk over various projects as the questionnaire 'The average pie' for the graphic design as analyses and intervention in space.

6 pm

**Nilguen Serbest**, architecture student, TU Berlin Inspired by the thought of a "Mitfahrzentrale", where a person places an add to be taken somewhere by someone who is going there anyways and has an empty seat in the car, Nilguen Serbest will develop a web-based structure, which will assist the sharing of knowledge and information on issues as financing, self organization, positioning of one's work and the search for collaborators. In Intervening the Urban Void, she will start her swap-project in the physical realm of the project-space.

7 pm

**Malkit Shoshan**, Architect, Israel. Both the past and the future can be constructed or destroyed – literally, through what we chose to build, protect and create in the physical world. No more so than in the Middle East, where the Israeli and Palestinian conflict is acted out through the architecture and physical planning on the land. Behind the seemingly down to earth work of Israeli spatial planners lies a reality, which is actively reshaping the land into divided state. While for Israeli towns and villages a future is constructed, the so-called 'unrecognized Arab villages' remain blank areas on planners' drawings, or are literally wiped off the map. A territorial battle is now being fought with the spatial planners' tools.

She founded F.A.S.T., foundation for achieving seamless Territory by challenging the ethnocentric planning system in Israel.

8 pm

**Discussion**

9pm

**Screening**

*La Notte* (Italy, 1960) by Michelangelo Antonioni in the cinema of OT 301



Work-presentations

**Sunday 21. November 2004**

4pm

**2012 Architekten**

Usually the architect's materials for building a house are chosen from a catalog of the producing industry. And specific demands sometimes even lead to the industrial production of new materials. Designing and building with available waste-materials requires an innovative and fundamental different design approach. What is in the area? What is cheap, available

en masse and near by? These questions bring about unforeseen design solutions. The result can be compared with traditional regional houses. They were red because the locally found clay was red. But it doesn't need to look that plain. Recyclicity is an attempt to reverse architectonic concepts towards a more economic way of building that saves energy, transportation and costs and recycles useful resources.

5 pm

**Buro MA.AN**

Brings art, architecture and urban planning together. Martijn Boelhouwers and André van der Eijk offer solutions for art in public spaces, giving legal and architectural advice, developing public art-works and exhibitions.

Aside of these applied works, Buro MA.AN has become specialist on the laws and limitations in public space. Inspired by an idealistic view on society, they develop City Manuals, which research the spatial, cultural and social implications of regulations in society and their representation in public spaces. The city manuals list and comment the (im)possibilities of city-life. Buro MA.AN will speak about their experience with regulated public spaces on *Sunday*, 21st of November.



(II sub theme)

## Psychogeographic Data

**Sunday, 28 November 2004 4 pm**

**Wilfried Hou Je Bek**, Socialfiction, psychogeographer, Utrecht, NL

Wilfried Hou Je Bek developed walking algorithms, such as “1st street left, 2nd street right, 2nd street left” which are applicable in every urban environment and turn walking people into data-collecting computers. With the Psychogeographical Markup Language (PML) places can be characterized as closed, empty, distinct, at ease or lively. The processed data can “take the fingerprint of a city” and generate “a new mythology for urban space”. Wilfried Hou Je Bek is one of the engineering brains of a new Flaneur Culture.

<http://www.socialfiction.org>

**Inga Zimprich**, Congress, artist, Amsterdam / Berlin

By using a combination of ciphers and stripes, complex information can be coded. In a thirteen-digit bar code all worldwide products can be classified. In EAN 13 *daycode* Inga Zimprich has adapted this system to code new situations that are livable in every European city. Based on a generic archive of places, activities, equipment and movements, new situations can be programmed and experienced.

*Inga Zimprich will live curated days in Amsterdam during this project. On Sunday, November 28<sup>th</sup> at 5 pm she will speak about the subjective attachment to places and the day coding system.*

<http://www.daycode.con-gress.net/>

**Boaz Bar Adon**, architect, Israel

‘I want to make the city a personal place for people who live in it. The idea is to take a route based on personal places of an existing person living in the city, and give this route back to the city, the area, in a physical way, and there after to give other people the chance to “follow” this person, experience the city through his perspective and there for undergo a new city experience.’

*Boaz Bar Adon is looking for 21st century adventurers, willing to explore the city in search for the personal experience. He will introduce his work on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> 6 pm and will invite the audience to follow his route during this week, Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> of December.*

**Pieterjan Ginckels**, civil engineer-architect, Belgium

Pieterjan Ginckels gently attacks the whole city during the project’s period with small daily interventions, house-by-house, car-by-car, until at the end, he will have perforated the city systematically in his own way.

The notes and comments that he spreads contain pasta-recipes and compliments for beautifully parked cars. The little handwritten flyers are carriers for personal attention, but catch the receiver by surprise in their daily rhythms.

*Pieterjan Ginckels presents his work “you + me = you [i am not a lot]” on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> of November at 7 pm.*

<http://www.geocities.com/pjgvisual/>

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Workshop

**Friday, 3 December 3 pm**

Wilfried Hou Je Bek, Socialfiction, psychogeographer, Utrecht, NL

**"Programming for Cities"** is a workshop that reinforces a long existing link between code and architecture.

Many fine buildings can be reduced to a few lines of code, and a quick glance backward in time shows that this is a deliberate consequence of architectural theory.

This workshop will start with a broad overview of this longstanding connection between programming and architecture, as well as explain the basics of programming. The main part of the workshop will be consisting of a hand-on approach to design a city with code.

Technical skills are not needed for this workshop. No Computers will be used. This workshop is ideal precisely for those people who think that programming is not for them.

The workshop "Programming for Cities" will be given by Wilfried Hou Je Bek, socialfiction, who has a long history in developing computational systems without traditional hardware.



A Walk

**Saturday, December 4th at 12:00**

**Boaz Bar-adon**

The ones who want to serve as human GPS's, to explore the city in search of human signs are invited to join Boaz Bar-adon for a walk in the city.

"Not to find a too quick definition for the city, it is too big, the chance to get it wrong is too great....

City: stone, concrete, asphalt, strangers, monuments, institutes.

Mega metropolitans. Octopus cities. Arteries. Masses. Ant nests?

What is the heart of the city? What is her soul? Why is it said over a city that it is beautiful, or that it is ugly? What is beautiful or ugly in a city? How do you get to know a city? How does a man know his own city?"

Georges Perec 'Species of spaces and other pieces'

Lecture

**Saturday, 11 December 3 p.m.**

**Michael Bull**, Sociologist, Lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies, UK  
To Each Their Own Bubble: iPod Culture

When was the last time that you had a conversation with a fellow passenger on an airplane- rather than grabbing the headphones and immersing yourself in one of the movies or music channels available to you - have you noticed that there is a level of embarrassment about speaking now - communication becomes subservient to the consuming pleasures and desires of the passenger - to be sure it is also an escape from suffering the tedium of listening to someone you aren't interested in. This doesn't mean that we don't socialize, but that we socialize with only a few people and increasingly only when we want to. We increasingly use the media to accompany us on our journeys - like taking home out with you- we privatize the public spaces that we move through or inhabit.

*Michael Bull wrote the book Sounding out the City on the ways that individuals use personal audio devices (mainly Walkman) to transform their experience of urban space. On Saturday, December 11th at 3 p.m. he will speak about the iPod as a mean to create your own private space in public.*

Work presentation

**Saturday, 11 December 5 p.m.**

**Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec**, composer and sound artist, Slovenia

Tao G. Vrhovec Sambolec will speak about REALITY SOUNDTRACK - transforming the perception of reality by means of sound intervention the intervention took place in Amsterdam 2004. It was organized and supported by Public Space With A Roof. RS (REALITY SOUNDTRACK) is sound intervention in public spaces as post offices, passages, and shopping malls... Sound carriers are people equipped with small radio receivers – around 25 people, each one having 1 radio receiver. All these radio receivers transmit the same electronic composition, which is transmitted from a (mobile) pirate radio station, or from an existing radio station. All the participants – carriers – are walking together through parts of a city following a given score of movement. The audible result of the action is a moving cloud of sound, which is traveling through a city.

Film screening

**Tuesday, 7 December 9 p.m.**

The movie series on City and Architecture is organized and curated by Manutau

'Mon Oncle' directed by Jacques Tati, France, 1958.

All the films of Jacques Tati, criticize mindless modernization. Only Mon Oncle was actually a praise of the past. France was then undergoing a huge reconstruction. This film crystallizes an architectural anxiety. Not without sentimentality, and a lot of humor. Manutau will introduce Mon Oncle with a short cinema-performance.



(III sub theme)

## **Dialogue/Critical practice**

### **Friday, 17th of December from 7 pm**

Originalfassung presents Travel reports 3: Amsterdam Travelogue

### **Saturday 18th of December from 3 pm**

3 pm Discursive Picnic by UNWETTER, with guests

5 pm Mohamed Benzaouia and Kobe Matthys present the Universal Embassy in Brussels

6 pm C-CRED presents the Counter Cartography Archive including the materials collected in Amsterdam

Screening

### **Tuesday, 14th of December 9 pm**

Tron, by Steven Lisberger (USA 1982), organized and introduced by Manutau

### **Originalfassung**

The resident navigates within the city according to daily needs, functions and force of habit. In what way do we know a city and how can we speak about it? To whom does that city belong? Who may speak about a city at all? We would like to invite a group of people to wander and observe Amsterdam collectively and independently, searching for fragments, experiences and narratives of the city. These 'guided' tours will be led by residents from Amsterdam as well as by 'tourists.' The walks will deal with and develop from participants' practices, outlooks and from the spaces visited.

For appointments with Heimo and Geoffrey, call 0611174239 or 0628128003 or mail to [pswar@xs4all.nl](mailto:pswar@xs4all.nl)

On Friday, 17th of November at 7 pm Geoffrey Garrison and Heimo Lattner will present the outcome of meetings and walks in Amsterdam in an audio-visual presentation.

### **UNWETTER**

You are we are invited to join the DISCURSIVE PICNIC at Public Space With A Roof - on the floor, on the blanket. Be a guest, be a host. IDEAS.FOOD.TALK.

Bring, give, take, share: food + thought.

UNWETTER is an international, Berlin based group of artists, curators, critics, theorists and activists. The most important goal of UNWETTER's work is knowledge production in and about the drastic world-changes brought about by the process of globalization. UNWETTER brings together artistic, theoretical and political practices. We operate in public space as well as in the art-context. We cooperate with local initiatives and establish temporary situations (picnics, walks, camps, etc), which connect strands of research and streams of knowledge.

The DISCURSIVE PICNIC starts on Saturday, 18th of December at 3 pm

<http://people.freenet.de/unwetter/>

### **Universal Embassy**

Universal Embassy stresses the urgent situation of 'personnes sans papiers', people without papers and tries to help them out of their social isolation. In 2001 the former Somalia Embassy in Brussels has been squatted by personnes sans papiers, after Somalia had lost state-status through the severe civil war in that country. Universal Embassy brings individuals together that suffer the discrimination of not belonging to a nation. Universal Embassy announces its own diplomats and produces its own Universal passports. Mohamed Benzaouia is the first person that got a Belgium passport through the Universal Embassy and he will tell his and the Embassy's story on Saturday, 18th of December at 5 pm.

<http://www.universal-embassy.be>

**C.CRED** [Collective CREative Dissident], Ola Stahl, Kajsa Thelin and Carl Lindh

What is a network? What are the potentials and limits of the network as a mode of artistic production? What are the

possibilities, problems and limits encountered when working politically as an artist in the city? C.CRED is a London-based artist collective that maps critical art-practices, initiatives and individuals in the counter/cartography project. In Intervening the Urban Void C.CRED uses a mobile workstation to organize meetings in public spaces in the city where you can discuss and exchange about questions, accompanied by music, hot wine and screenings.

The meetings will be followed by journeys around the city based on sites brought up during the discussion. These meetings and journeys will then form part of our archive and the expanding counter/cartographies of the project. See details below.

The MOBILE MULLED WINE COUNTER/CARTOGRAPHY BAR will take place this Wednesday at 7 pm on Jonas Daniel Meijerplein, between Waterlooplein and Hortus Botanicus, and this Thursday at 3 pm at the Rietveld Academie, Fred Roeskestraat 96. Please see separate mailing.

For appointments with C.CRED call 0611174239 or 0628128003 or mail to [pswar@xs4all.nl](mailto:pswar@xs4all.nl)

On Saturday, 18th of December at 6 pm C.CRED will present the extended counter/cartography archive.

<http://www.c-cred.org>

## **Sunday, January 9<sup>th</sup> 4 pm**

### **Sophia Tabatadze**

Sophia Tabatadze is a visual artist from Georgia, who lives and works currently in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Her works deal with the human body placed in (new) surroundings and the human being in relation to architecture. "Home" is a theme that returns in her installations, as a temporary place that exists during the building up process only and that can be left behind like a shell after it is completed. How much of the notion "home" is mental and how much physical? The relation between façade and the backside, the chaos and order in one, are the key words in her work. How far does one want to, or is able to see the other side of the coin, the other side that doesn't fall within one's own perception? How one tends to perceive the world from our standpoint only and try to fit everything we see and experience into our thinking patterns. Meanwhile, the sides change constantly and dramatically over very short periods of time, whether it concerns people, architecture or the social and political situations of countries.

### **m7**

m7 is an urban network based in Buenos Aires. m7 is the last development of the former m777, an initial group of people trained in architecture that since its beginning in year 2000, has been developing tools and platforms for supporting networks and researching into the constitution of nowadays public space through the fields of non state urban planning, heterodox resources policies and do it yourself initiatives. As the former group was enlarged by the exchanges with people involved in other areas of thinking this posed a question on the nature of the organization, and the self improvement of the group. Deconstructing its own situation, m7 has been taking advantage of critical and even catastrophic situations and encouraging participation of civil society on topics mostly dominated by state and corporative bureaucracies. The story of how m777 became m7 will be displayed through the challenges and the opportunities the crisis has set up in the urban research and practice in Buenos Aires during the last years.

(IV sub theme)

## **Urban Articulation**

With Toyshop Collective, Swoon, Monika Vykoukal

Workshop

**Saturday, January 15th from 12 o'clock**



## **Decorating Amsterdam**

With Leslie Stem, Polina Soloveichik and SWOON

We need your knowledge of places that deserve some celebration. We will create different means of decoration, as in medals, certificates, and otherwise, to affix to various locations around the city, i.e. celebrating a particular lamppost with a medal around it.

Later in the evening we will go on a tour to hang the made works and contributions of the open call (see below).

Work presentations

**Sunday 16th of January from 4 pm**

### **Monika Vykoukal**

Monika Vykoukal has been investigating graffiti since 1998. With a background in art history, she has contributed regularly to Graphotism magazine, London, and Springerin, Vienna. She is currently assistant curator at Peacock visual arts, Aberdeen, Scotland. As a curator of street-art related exhibitions she collaborated with Banksy and other artists.

Monika will outline the historical development of graffiti and present her own research on street articulation on Sunday, January 16th at 4 pm.

### **Toyshop Collective**

Toyshop Collective is an originally New York-based street art group that has organized street theater performances, creates and pastes posters, stickers and drawings. In 2003 the Toyshop Collective won the first prize in the competition "Evolutionary Cells – how do you actively shape your society" with their poster changes. In underground trains in New York and Berlin they replaced commercial advertisements with self-made prints and posters. Leslie Stem and Polina Soloveichik have been traveling Europe for the last six months and left their drawings and portraits in each city they visited.

Toyshop will speak about their inspiration to create works for streets and the questions deriving from this practice on Sunday, January 16th at 5 pm.

### **SWOON**

On my way to work I greeted a chubby lady every morning that watched me from a house corner. I went close to detect that this life size woman was cut out by hand from a large or maybe many sheets of paper, no lines of a drawing remained. Two years later, a bit washed out, the lady is still there and it still puzzles me how many hours the maker had spent on creating her, to then surrender the paper woman to the coincidences of the street.

Swoon's work often causes attention for the delicacy and uniqueness with which her pieces are made. Her cutouts can be found in the streets of New York and Berlin and many other cities.

SWOON will speak about the development of her work on Sunday, January 16th at 6 pm.