

# Public Space

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT NO.3 WITH A ROOF (CONTINUED)

PUBLIC SPACE WITH A ROOF are a group of dutch curators whose projects are aimed at getting creative individuals to evaluate their surroundings. 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 they questioned which potentials of the public space could be revitalized through artistic practices. The research project was clustered in four thematic focuses: Architecture As Analyses, Psychogeographic Data, Dialogue/Critical Practice and Urban Articulation. Since the success of 'Intervening the Urban Void' they have been involved in putting together many other exciting projects which you can find out about at pswar.org. This is what Tamuna Chabashvili, Adi Hollander and Inga Zimprich have to say about what they do and why.

How did the idea for "Intervening the Urban Void" come about?

**A.H:** We talked about the city in general.

We tried to find out what drives the group of young artists, architects, curators to collaborate and to look for a new way or a new platform. The question was whether something they are looking for just does not exist or does exist but does not function for them. As well as from our interest in public spaces, the question what is the meaning of public space, public art, and public and if those artist are interested in reaching different public outdoor than the ones they reach in the galleries, museums, etc. The need to see the difference between the participants we invited in their way of working/researching and approaching and how to communicate those strategies and interests in Amsterdam to our public.

**I.Z:** Public Space With A Roof defines itself pretty much with its title, but it never gave a clear definition or profile of how it wants to function. So our approach was, to deal with a theme that many people can relate to, and can recognize - the city - because they are in it, involved with it, and we tried to work with a format that is active (instead of the "have a drink at the opening - culture") a format, which is inviting to many different people (workshop & lectures).

### IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT NO.3 (CONTINUES)

AT THIS POINT THOUGH I WAS GETTING CLOSER TO UNDERSTANDING. I HAD TOO MANY OPEN QUESTIONS. THINGS I SIMPLY DID NOT UNDERSTAND. THINGS I WAS AT HOME AND I MISSED SOME WORDS. MAYBE THE VOYAGE WAS TOO LONG. ONLY I'M NOT DUTCH, I DO NOT KNOW MANY WORDS IN DUTCH. I LIVE IN AMSTERDAM THE NETHERLANDS. I STARTED LISTING WORDS IN ENGLISH, I THOUGHT THE MORE WORDS, THE SIMPLER IT GETS. THE MORE WORDS THE MORE SENSE IT COULD MAKE

EMPTYNESS -	leegte	VACANT -	leeg
BLANK -	blanco	HOLLOW -	hol
GAP -	gat	IGNORANT -	onwetend
HOLE -	gat	NEUTRALISE -	neutraliseren
LACK -	gebrek	NEGATION -	afwijzen
QUALITY -	nihiliteit	NOISE -	afwijzen
QUALITY -	nihiliteit	DESIGN -	afwijzen
NORMLESSNESS -	nihiliteit?	UNHAPPY -	afwijzen
BLACK OUT -	nichtigheid	OFF -	afwijzen
FIX -	blackout	ABANDONED -	afwijzen
ELIMINATE -	nik	DESERTED -	afwijzen
CANCEL -	elimineren	UNIMAGINED -	afwijzen
END -	annuleren	VACUATED -	afwijzen
ANUL -	annuleren	UNKNOWN -	afwijzen
CLEAR -	annuleren	INTERVAL -	afwijzen
UNFILLED -	annuleren	USELESS -	afwijzen
UNMARKED -	annuleren	INEFFECTIVE -	afwijzen
UNTOUCHED -	annuleren	NEGATIVE -	afwijzen
UN...	annuleren	...	...



I WENT OUTSIDE TO THE STREET AND ASKED  
TO DUTCH FOR ME, HE DID SO. WE WENT ON

Weg

SOMEONE TO TRANSLATE THE WORDS

What does "Intervening the Urban Void" mean?

A.H: It is not that negative as it sounds.....Living and working here in Amsterdam, as artist and as spectator we understood that we would like to have more than we were offered. That drove us to ask certain questions about the city and its limitations, function, impotence and its power. We wanted to test the city, its citizen and the possibilities. We were interested to find and to analyze the strategies of artists/architects/philosophers and curators responding to the happenings around them and criticizing the existing environment, those who try to find different solutions or just to point out on what they think has been ignored.

I.Z: To intervene means for us to come up with strategies to approach a phenomenon with which you do not agree, or which you want to cause to change for the better. The void was the term we chose to describe "abandoned areas" in the city or its society, which doesn't refer only to physical space, but also to communicative, social or legal space. Intervening the Urban Void was thought of as a platform to exchange on artistic strategies, how to meet voids that we observe in our practice and in our lives.

The project is split into themes, can you explain these and the reason behind having different themes?

A.H: By making this division we tried to create a weekly program presenting few groups or individuals every Sunday. By creating this we had an open discussion giving the opportunity to people that deal with those issue from different background and different nationality to share and to discuss.

I.Z: We tried to interrelate the participants we had invited, so that people do not only give presentations, but also learn from one another and can contribute in the discussions, and react to each other. From the number of people that we were interested in, we tried to make clusters of approaches. There are such active and intuitive ways of interfering with the city as Toyshop's and Swoon's cutouts and drawings that are pasted on the street, and often remain for years because they're so peculiar. This is a very different approach than AnArchitektur, for example who together investigates an issue as architects and develop a publication from it. So we divided into the following themes: Architecture as Analyses, a rather analytic approach to built environments. Psychogeographic Data collected strategies that can be carried out by one person alone, walking instructions, programming for cities, day codes, etc. Critical Practice/Dialogue was dealing with group-practices by e.g. CCRD and Universal Embassy, which use the form of a collective or social group as a strategy. Finally Urban Articulation was investigating a more activist approach, posters, stickers, cut-outs and stencils as a way to articulate yourself visually in the city.

How did you choose the artists involved?

A.H: We were active like a research online, therefore some of the participants were invited through learning about them and the curiosity we had from their strategies and representation of their works. Some presented themselves to us during the ITUV project, we invited them when we felt it is relevant. During the IUV project we have been approached by different groups, some of which we selected to participate.

I.Z: Even while the project was running we still came across people that we hadn't heard of and that seemed very interesting in the framework of IUV. We tried to involve them, still; one artist group for example brought more guests along, Stealth from Rotterdam that gave a short presentation in the project space as well. We tried to stay open towards people that related to the project, for once because we would like to bring (not only like-minded) people together in PSWAR and we have to be flexible to create that possibility, on the other hand because we're such an absolutely chaotic ad-hoc organization.

ongersakt  
ongebuikt  
k22l

indiscriminate  
nutteloos  
inefficient  
negatief

Weg

SOMEONE TO TRANSLATE THE WORDS

WENT OUTSIDE TO THE STREET AND ASKED  
' DUTCH FOR ME, HE DID SO. WE WENT ON  
ABOUT THE VOID, BUT JUST ABOUT THINKING  
KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THEM YET, AT LEAST

...MORE PEOPLE ARE TALKING IN PUBLIC SPACE  
...THE SECOND THEME OF PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY  
...NOVEMBER 28, AT 4 PM,  
...JEAN-BENOIT WILL TALK ABOUT SOCIAL FUNCTION, AND  
...FROM CONGRESS WILL SPEAK ABOUT THE SUBJECT  
...WILL SPEAK THE CITY FOR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES  
...WILL SPEAK OF SPREADING NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

INTERVENING THE URBAN VOID  
...ON STRATEGIES OF INTERVENTION IN THE CITY  
...MEMBERS OF PSWAR - FEBRUARY 12, 2005  
...FOR FURTHER INFORMATION OVER THE PROJECT AND PEOPLE SEE  
...PUBLIC SPACE WITH A ROOF IS OPEN FROM THURSDAY TO SUNDAY  
...IN THE PSWAR  
...SOME OF THE  
...WILL



What inspires you about urban spaces?

I.Z: I think that this is an interest, which is probably defined by contemporary vocabulary. It is easy to refer to public space, whereas also society, social changes, public time might be terms that describe similar phenomena. What is so inspiring are the different ways to read urban spaces. Whether you go into a visual archeology of the city's surface or you manage to be literary enough to read yourself through architectural models and styles, or to read urban spaces according to their legislation and regulations, or to focus on its different intensities of interaction: I think that's the most interesting, how many layers and levels of factors that are at work in our society can be deciphered looking at an urban organisation.

A.H: Their possibility and limitation, how you can find a hole in the system to reach your target without a fight or be an activist against the authorities, the possibility of reaching the opinion or the interest of citizens not only in the formal art spaces.

Do you think that the ideas from this project might link with other cities or areas?

A.H: We chose artists from different cities/countries to learn their approaches and to see how they can communicate it here in Amsterdam and whether it is possible at all. Is it the same everywhere or every place has its own codes and behaviour roles. We wanted to see how the artist perceive Amsterdam, and how do they research the city in order to create new project, which is not a ready made project that they bring with them.

I.Z: We recently had a meeting with two artists from Rotterdam that created the project Op Trek. They are working specifically with their surrounding, which is a city district in Den Haag that undergoes the process of complete social and architectural restructuring. Here, the area is not only a case study, but it is really the target of artistic projects. IUV functioned more as an exchange platform for different approaches and strategies, rather than that it took Amsterdam or the old west area as reference. Of course we found many references in IUV that relate to specific situations in other cities or areas, and by bringing them together in Amsterdam, we try to make the different approaches available.

What have you enjoyed from doing this project?

A.H: The knowledge we gain, the open discussion, and the new collaborations that emerge during the program.

I.Z: I enjoyed mostly to listen to so many spokesmen and women that have their very individual approaches, and to hear how they developed them and their projects. Understanding artists, people, architects, and theorists on this level is really enriching, I think, to our practices as artists, or organisers, architects or just people.

I WALKED BACK HOME, FROM A SHORT CUT, THINGS SEEMED TO BECOME CLEARER. I WAS NOW THINKING OF PEOPLE, HOUSES, THE GAPS IN BETWEEN, MAPS, SYSTEMS, THE KNOWN AND THE UNKNOWN. ACTUALLY NOT MUCH WAS KNOWN, BUT IT WAS ENOUGH FOR A START.

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT NO.4

SOMEONE TOLD ME NOT TO BE SO NEGATIVE, I GAVE IT A THOUGHT. IS ME BEING NEGATIVE NOT A RESULT OF MY SURROUNDINGS? IS IT NOT WHAT I AM EXPERIENCING THAT DETERMINES MY STATE OF MIND? I REALISED THINGS HAD TO BE CHANGED, OR JUST BE DIFFERENT, BUT I WAS WONDERING HOW IF MY SURROUNDINGS ARE NEGATIVE IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO MAKE SOMETHING POSITIVE. IF IT WAS A MATTER OF SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH MORE SIMPLE, NEGATIVE AGAINST NEGATIVE IS POSITIVE, BUT IS ME AGAINST THE VOID, OR THE VOID AGAINST ME, IT DOES NOT REALLY MATTER. I SKETCHED MYSELF A FEW POSSIBILITIES TO SEE IF I CAN MAKE SOMETHING OUT OF IT.



## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT NO.2

I CAME UP WITH FOUR POSSIBILITIES. THE FIRST, ME BEING NEGATIVE AGAINST THE EXISTING NEGATIVE, WHICH GAVE A POSITIVE RESULT. THE SECOND WAS ME BEING NEGATIVE AGAINST A NON EXISTING POSITIVE, WHICH ONLY LEFT ME WITH A NEGATIVE. THE THIRD WAS THE OPPOSITE OF THE SECOND BUT STILL REMAINED NEGATIVE, AND THE FOURTH WAS UTOPIA, ME POSITIVE AGAINST A NON EXISTING POSITIVE RESULTING IN POSITIVENESS. THERE WAS NO REASON FOR ME TO BELIEVE IT WAS POSSIBLE THOUGH, AND IF IT WAS, IT MUST BE BORROWED FROM SOMEONE ELSE.



What are you hoping to achieve from this project?

A.H: One is the model of exhibition we are trying to find/test/build. The other is the continuity of the new collaborations and information exchange that took place during this project between the different groups and individuals.

I.Z: We hope that from the amount of material that we gained in weekly lectures with so many participants we can extract a toolbox of strategies that were introduced, mentioned or tried out. We would like to be able to pass the knowledge that has been gathered in IUV on to other projects and initiatives. Also, we're trying out how Public Space With A Roof can work. As a debate platform? As an initiator for projects and productions? As an archive? As...?

Are the final pieces of work displayed indoors or outdoors? Was this important?

I.Z: This was not very important. We are working with a classical 60 square meter white space, which is PSWAR. It didn't function as an exhibition space at all, but more as a display of a growing archive and as the meeting point for workshops and lectures. There were many works that took place outside the space, as the posters of IUV, the cutouts by Swoon and Toyshop Collective, the tour by Originalfassung or the meetings in CCreD's mobile counter cartography bar. But I think that none of the participants would call that "final pieces of work". Boaz Baradon, for example, sent us out into the city, with different means for mapping. I remember the girl that had chosen for the joint and how she returned to the space with her little white dog, quite passed out... I guess Boaz still has tapes of my voice commenting people and places while walking and while having talks in bars, so, it is far from being a final work.

## IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT NO.4

What do you think about the increased interest in urban art?

I.Z: As I mentioned before, I guess that people willingly picked up the term of urbanism in order to address very complex processes that are working in and also shaping the society we live in. The city became the network, in which we are able to detect subjects of personal interest. The city is maybe the epitome of the overlap of cultures, music, transport, identity, home, money, contact, speech, interaction, buildings, ideas, individualism, collectivity, etc, which we experience in our lives. Such a thing as urban art – I don't know whether that exists. Eventually, I think that any person, whether artist, curator, theorist or other cultural producer finds a motor to his work, questions, fascinations, riddles and challenges; and in the first place that's a personal question, and only on a different layer this can be summarized as works that deal with urban phenomena.

A.H: It comes from a certain need, we are as well looking for its root and are happy to exchange the outcome of our research with other projects, which deal with this subject.

Tamuna Chabashvili, Adi Hollander and Inga Zimprich curated Intervening the Urban Void.

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