



Art goes out of the gallery and way beyond the confines of the exhibition at SMART, PSWAR and Veemvloer.

NEW AND ACCESSIBLE INTIMACIES

Art

CODED CINEMA

Smart Project Space, program changes monthly

BEAUTY UNREALIZED

PSWAR, until 30 June

FREE

Veemvloer, ongoing project

By **Marinus de Ruiter**

In their quest for new forms of art presentation, several Amsterdam cultural institutions have been separately developing alternative ways for their audience to delve into the minds of contemporary artists. SMART's 24-hour Coded Cinema theatre, PSWAR's Beauty Unrealized library and Veemvloer's free artwork project offer spaces for viewers to experience, on their own terms, what makes artists tick. All three projects successfully induce the awareness that the experience of art goes beyond the traditional exhibition set up.

Visiting a contemporary art show can feel like going to class. In their attempt to bridge the gap between the visitor and the artist's ideas, museums and galleries often accompany their presentations with theoretical texts, lectures and guided

tours. This can be illuminating, but unless you have the opportunity—and the desire—to follow these guidelines, contemporary art can easily create an unintended and irreconcilable distance between the artist and the viewer. This problem calls for new concepts.

Entering the Coded Cinema feels like physically going inside the mind of the artist. From the outside, it looks like a small anonymous service building, adjacent to the large conglomeration of artists' studios and exhibition spaces that make up the SMART Project Space. By pressing a four-digit code, the door is unlocked. Inside the tiny, windowless building is a dark cinema with 12 seats and a toilet. With 24-hour access, the self-service theatre is SMART's unique gesture towards its visitors.

Every month, the art institute in Oud-West sends out an email to subscribers with new film programme and a new access code to the cinema. The first programme was related to the exhibition inside SMART and comprised the favourite films of the artists on display. Thomas Peutz, director of SMART, explains that the programme is not necessarily related to the other activities of the institute. In June, for example, an eclectic mix of video art, documentary and experimental film is scheduled.

'It's like a birdhouse,' says Peutz about the Coded Cinema. 'We've put it out there, but we basically don't know who is visiting. Every morning we just clean up whatever's left in the room.' Until now there haven't been any vandals or drifters staying overnight and the clientele have been quite tidy, according to Peutz.

The minimal design prevents equipment from being stolen. The video screening device is mounted deep in the ceiling and projects images through a hole, via a small mirror, onto the painted screen on the wall. The theatre's set-up, which didn't require an architect or designer, was conceived through deliberation among the SMART staff.

In the future, SMART intends to open a five-screen movie house in its basement, with the option of on-demand cinema, where visitors can request private screenings for small groups. Because of the delay in renovation of the building, a former pathological anatomical laboratory, Peutz hopes the institute's audience will appreciate the generosity of the Coded Cinema project for the coming period.

The Beauty Unrealized project at Public Space with a Roof (PSWAR), the art space at OT301, can be described as an artistic laboratory. In the past six months, a series of exhibitions, screenings and discussions has slowly unfolded into an unusual collection of artists' favourite things.

At the start of the lengthy project, the space was furnished with a two-storey wooden structure full of shelves and desks. During the project the shelves on the ground floor were gradually filled with books, CDs, DVDs, tapes and objects that inspired the artists involved. Visitors are invited to take items and view them upstairs on a second level, where private niches with desks have been constructed,

24-hour cinema: 'It's like a birdhouse.'

either empty or with monitors and viewing equipment.

Currently 94 artists, architects, designers, musicians, writers and thinkers each have a shelf in the Beauty Unrealized library. Most of them had a part in the project's performances, concerts, screenings and discussions. Some have delved into the intellectual section of their bookcase, with titles by French philosophers and American sociologists. Others have made more nostalgic choices by selecting pop albums and movies from their youth. A few have even picked items from their gardens or wastebaskets.

The collection of texts, visuals, sounds and smells that can be visited at PSWAR until 30 June deliberately goes beyond the category of exhibition, as the organisers explain in a collective email statement. 'Our main inspiration was the German art historian Aby Warburg, who invented a system that allowed him to constantly change the arrangement of the items and objects in his personal library and create new narratives and interpretations of art history,' it reads.

'Our second inspiration was Godard's film *Histoire(s) du Cinema* and his particular way of montage. [He arranged] visual documents, texts and sounds of various moments in history in a non-linear way, opening them up for new interpretations,' the statement continues.

The library installation is an expression of the policy of Tamuna Chabashvili, Adi Hollander and Vesna Madžoski, the artists who run PSWAR. 'The installations we create for each project are made as platforms for our interests, but also to accommodate the works of other artists and ideas we do not necessarily agree with, but that we think are important for the general discussion,' they say. '[On the other hand we create a] hidden space in which visitors can have an encounter with the inner worlds of various persons they never met.'

Many artists have invented ways to become intimate with their audience through radical installation formats, but the best way to become acquainted with an artwork is probably to buy it and take it home. Amsterdam art space De Veemvloer has eradicated this last barrier between artist and viewer by commissioning artists, illustrators and designers to make free works in a digital format that can be distributed through email.

The FREE project is not just commenting on the current debate about accessibility of art through exhibition spaces and art institutions. It is also a reaction to the way the art market is selling luxurious multiples of works by famous artists in limited editions. Now, Veemvloer pays the artist for a new copy and sends multiples to subscribers of its mailing list; the works can be printed at discount rate at local print shop Repro's.

In all three projects, these Amsterdam institutions have admirably sought ways to make art more accessible and turn it into a more intimate experience for the viewer at the same time. This goal requires new ways of thought and offers different ways of experience—and isn't that what contemporary art is all about. **VI**