

Guide of thoughts

The Borgerstraat studio complex in Rotterdam, embedded between Spartastadion, Melvlana Mosque and Spaansepolder in Rotterdam Spangen, is a place where artists met after the financial crisis and the cuts in the cultural budgets in 2010, when a lot of art institutions and art initiatives in the Netherlands had to close their doors and artists had to leave their studios to find new workplaces.

In 2013, within these common turbulences, approximately 20 national and international artists found a new stay there. Coming from different places and departments they met there as individuals, mainly by coincidence, as a group in the same building.

In 2014 Art Rotterdam reached a new destination, the Van Nelle Fabriek, located in the neighbourhood of the Borgerstraat studio building, and injected the idea to initiate something as a group/collective and to open the studios as a side program to the Art Rotterdam spectators, as well as to edit 2015 a first magazine (with the title by coincidence at the same place) that presented artists working there, formulating their positions, and to start a discourse about contemporary art contexts and conditions in our century of expanded arts and self-design debate of society.

In 2015 the open studio exhibition program started to open up to guest artists, and the decision was made to edit a follow-up magazine for the 2016 show - which you are holding in your hands right now. For the purpose of this second magazine the photographer Geisje van der Linden, working at Borgerstraat, initiated an artists studio photo shoot. It also includes guest artists in their studios at other collective studio buildings in Rotterdam, like "Kaus Australis", "B.A.D.", "Hammerstraat" and studio spaces run by SKAR (such as Borgerstraat 24 is). The inlays of this second magazine are again independently edited and individually designed by the artists.

"By the artists themselves as responsible entity in the production of art" is the title for this second magazine which is chosen from a dedicated text that declares and defends the artist as autonomous entity in the self-responsibility of art production.

That text was written as a funding application for the Borgerstraat-initiative, suggesting a kind of parallel story writing other than the ongoing expanding, restrictive neo-liberal competition-culture. It declares and defends the artist as individual and as member of a collective, responsible for the direction of its art and public discourse.

The text provides a discourse about communication with audiences both in- and outside the art world and encourages an open minded, engaged research which is being held by the artists themselves as the responsible entities for the production of art. It underlines the importance of smaller art-initiatives and artist run spaces in the Netherlands and abroad - organisation structures that are based on the disposition and motivation to present art in a self conducted way, to enable and encourage experimental art-production and to prevail an independent and flexible attitude towards integration of new positions in a lively discourse.

It points to the reality of a flourishing art-industry and successfully conducted exhibition- and marketing circumstances, which are only true for an exclusive, small group of artists,

presumably not more than 5% of the players in the broader field of art. For the majority of artists reality appears to be different. According to this situation the text suggests to invest in exchange. Promoting a discourse that should be an apparent part of the artist's practice, the text proposes to take the procedure of art-perception and presentation as far as possible in one's own hands. The Open-Studio Borgerstraat-magazine as well as the hopefully emerging dialogues with audience-as-performers within the exhibition is such an opportunity.

This second edition of the Borgerstraat-magazine is in this sense also dedicated to Chris Bouma, director of the SKAR (an independent organization that offers affordable studio to artists), who died in summer 2015. From him we can learn that initiatives that are important for societal others often stem from committed individuals/collectives that act on their convictions - also in the arts. We wish to thank Chris Bouma and express our respect for his efforts for providing and organizing good working places for artists and actually making them real in engaged collaboration with the authorities of Rotterdam.

As edition-collective and as production-crew of this magazine, we hope to contribute something to the visual and contextual discourse about the wide field of contemporary positions related to art and society.

*On behalf of the Borgerstraat-initiative,
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