

See You in The Hague: The Clash of Clans

"Is it possible to think like an artist in a domain that isn't artistic?", was Susan Schuppli's key question in the debate 'Evidence on Trial' during her finissage on November 16. In hindsight it could be the key question of the majority of the activities of the cultural programme *See You in The Hague*.

See You in The Hague, the multi-faceted narrative about the ambitions and reality of The Hague as international city of peace and justice, kicked off September 2013. In the past fourteen months of exhibitions, presentations, lectures, debates, workshops, (tele) conferences, masterclasses, student projects, theatre plays, concerts, film screenings, guided tours, radio broadcasts and texts on this website and through social media, we tested the potentialities of artistic interventions and artistic imagination in the non-artistic domains of international law and peace. What were our experiences, which lessons can we learn from the confrontation between art and justice and peace? For an overview of the activities and the extensive reports by our blogger Renée Borgonjen with links to several articles, see the entries on the site. Here I will discuss briefly a few of my own observations.

The worlds of Justice & Peace and Art clashed several times this year. "Rwanda is not a piece of art," lawyer Jan Hofdijk yelled furiously at the artists of Model Court during their talk at the opening of their presentation 'An Ecology of the Courtroom'. During the conference 'Evidence on Trial' former ICTY prosecutor Dan Saxon and international law expert Jill Coster van Voorhout of The Hague Institute for Global Justice accused artist Susan Schuppli of making issues more complicated than they already were. Saxon in particular filleted Schuppli's text 'Entering Evidence' to demonstrate quite vehemently that the research of media materials in the ICTY archives should be left strictly to legal professionals.

Significant were the idiosyncrasies of the artistic and legal practices. In the art world we speak of truth production, where a lawyer would talk of truth finding. Whereas technology is presented as a neutral instrument in the legal world, media theorists like Walter Benjamin and Marshall McLuhan and artists like the Model Court group and Susan Schuppli show that technology on the contrary is political. The fact that an original document in a court case is transformed during the process by different kinds of legal apparatus and translation in different forms of technology (Schuppli's double articulation) may seem obvious to the art world, but is an unacceptable premise for a lawyer: even though s/he has to cross-examine the use of a document in a trial, its status quo as document will never be questioned. Indeed it would make any court case and especially a genocide trial virtually impossible: how to investigate the post-production treatment of the astronomical amount of 9.3 million entries in the ICTY archives? But maybe the issue is not so much practical, as fundamental. If the actors in a trial question its very fundamentals, the trial becomes a farce, as the ICC recently experienced with the case against Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta.

Does this make artistic research in the field of peace and justice futile? Is it realistic to examine the very nature of peace and justice and collective and individual responsibility from an aesthetic point of view? Philosopher Gilles Deleuze may give a beginning of an answer, a quote Schuppli sent me: "There are notions that are exact in nature, quantitative, defined by equations, and whose very meaning lies in their exactness: a philosopher or writer can use these only metaphorically, and that's quite wrong, because they belong to exact science. But there are also essentially inexact yet completely rigorous notions that scientists can't do without, which belong equally to scientists, philosophers, and artists. They have to be made rigorous in a way that's not directly scientific, so that when a scientist manages to do this he becomes a philosopher, an artist too." (Gilles Deleuze, *Negotiations*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 29.)

Truth and justice are two of these essentially inexact yet completely rigorous notions, two concepts that are claimed by the legal world, but why do they demand a special status above two disciplines with a long history in the research of these notions, i.e. art and philosophy? Exactly by critically challenging the presumptions of the legal world with *tools for rupture* (Marieke de Goede, Professor of Politics at the University of Amsterdam) from the artistic realm like media critique, imagination, aestheticization and visualization, artists expose narratives and uncover frames that otherwise would have remained below the surface. Artists give us new insights in the contemporary complexities of truth, justice and peace and offer a new language to open up the discussion on the ethics of universal jurisdiction, which for many people in the world is a white man's justice. And they can imagine alternative futures, together with the strategies and tools with which these can be realised. Not fuzzy or vague, but precise, analytical and empathetic.

In the programme of *See You in The Hague* Trevor Paglen showed secret missions and rendition centres in super aesthetic photos that would never pass as evidence, but do address the issue of kidnapping and torture by a democratic state in a new and unexpected way. In the installation 'Double Centre' Charles van Otterdijk's twilight zone of secret locations and control centres confronted us with a reality that nearly seems fictional, but is more present than ever. With sensitive radio broadcasts Christian Nyampeta asked us gently and tentatively how to live together after genocide; Archis researched in the exhibition 'The Good Cause' the role of architects in the design of a sustainable peace in a more academic way. Sam Durant built with Scaffold an ambiguous jungle gym/superimposition of historical scaffolds and invited us to reflect on the death penalty and democracy. Florian Göttke's lecture gave us an insight into the use of effigies in public protest and mock trials, while Taf Hassan played 'Some Cruel & Unusual Records' with songs about executions from over the whole world. The actors in the theatre plays 'Holland redt Syrië' (Holland Saves Syria) at the theatre festival De Parade and 'Hangen & Wurgem' (Hanging & Strangling) on Sam Durant's Scaffold tempted us to creep inside the heads of aid workers and their recipients; a murderer, victim, executor and public servant, putting ourselves in their shoes, if only for thirty minutes. In collaboration with the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, artists from Syria and Palestine kindled the fire of engagement in hundreds of students, who often for the first time in their life actually experienced first-hand what it is to live in a war or conflict zone, in an openly controlled society like Palestine or the invisibly controlled culture of The Netherlands. And the central question of Susan Schuppli's project week 'Tribunal of Uncertain Objects' at the Royal Academy - "How do you take an iceberg to court?" - may have seemed totally ridiculous at first, but opened up a new direction in the thinking about climate change.

"Is it possible to think like an artist in a domain that isn't artistic?" Yes it is, although we have to acknowledge that the artist has a different role than the non-artist. To think like a non-artist in an artistic domain seems to take more of an effort. Yet there are individuals who move fluidly through both domains: the prosecutor becomes an artist, a philosopher too (Jason File, prosecutor and artist). I hope *See You in The Hague* will continue to create clashes and convergences between the worlds of art, justice and peace.

See You in The Hague!

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