

I want to believe

A performance evening with Bas Schevers (NL/B),
David Sherry (UK), Jean Charles de Quillacq (F/CH),
JODI (NL) and Pablo Wendel (D)

I want to believe was a night of performances that took place on September 15, 2012, during the Incubate Festival in Tilburg (NL). The performing artists were selected by pietmondriaan.com. Their works are defined by gestures and tend to blend with daily life, at times appearing inconspicuous. They are carried on through stories - perhaps the most powerful proof of their existence.

and people started talking and drinking. They also watched Sherry and his ladder. For a longer or shorter time they stood still, walked around him, came a little bit closer, and looked. But there seemed to be a certain distance that - at least most - people kept. A circle with a diameter of about 2,5 meters around him was empty most of the time. And Sherry stood there, still, not changing posture or mimic. But the meaning of this living statue changed during this hour, at least for me it did. It kept changing.

One of the reasons for this change was Jean Charles de Quillacq. De Quillacq's work is partially defined by referencing works of other artists. In this case he was referring to the work Sherry was performing at that moment. About fifteen minutes after Sherry entered the space, de Quillacq followed. In his mouth there was a clothes hanger with a shirt hanging from it, in his right hand a stepladder. He took a spot between a group of people, stood still and manoeuvred the stepladder in such a way that it was leaning on his forehead. The image he created was rather absurd and comical, in contrast to the serene and poetic image of Sherry. The situation that De Quillacq created had a certain air of 'what happened?' and 'what will happen next?' to it.

Of course the people who were in the spot that De Quillacq chose backed off a bit. But during the hour he stood there, it was obvious to everybody there that there was no such thing as a sacred space of 2,5 meters around him. But why not? The serene, vulnerable and poetic image of Sherry

versus the absurd, comical, but just as vulnerable image of de Quillacq. A number of reasons could be given: the location both artists chose within the room, the fact that Sherry was already there when most people entered the space, the fragility of Sherry's ladder.

While both Sherry and De Quillacq were still present, four young persons with smartphones entered the room and started moving. Holding the phone in one hand, they were obviously trying to do something that the phone was telling them to do, and by doing so, making the phone show them something else to do. Moving up and down, holding the phone high up in the air or close to the floor, letting the phone rest on their heads or moving it forwards and backwards they looked like people who are alienated from their environment and controlled by a technology they can not really grasp.

It reminded me of people trying to calibrate the compass of their Nokia or the GPS on their smartphone. Looking just as silly, trying to gain control of their world by handing it over to technology. Forgetting that they are also being watched by others who could actually help them. Should I help or should I wait for them to ask for help? On the other hand, these performers also seemed to enjoy themselves. They were playing a game, going through various levels with a variety of tasks that ask for different skills and techniques, strategies and ideas. I actually want a phone that tells me what to do, and I want a phone that makes sure I don't walk in the wrong direction when searching for the NS-plein in Tilburg.

This performance by JODI added yet another layer to the whole performance evening. Moving in-between Sherry and De Quillacq, the performers made the air move, the visitors move. They redirected attention and challenged the people to stop talking and start looking again. People tend to forget the durational presence of non-moving performers and the playful intervention of JODI made them aware of the space they were in. Just for a while. Ignoring people that are jumping up and down and holding phones with flickering lights is just as easy.

During the performance of JODI, I noticed four strange rucksacks in the room with four booklets on top of them. They seemed to be a promotional tool for a company called Performance Electrics. Pablo Wendel, CEO of this company, promotes his products that deal in electric current. There is a Power Station that saves the energy (or what is called Kunststrom, art(ificial) current) collected by other products like the Off-Road and the Varta Bande. This last product is the rucksack shown in NS16. These packs can collect energy from public venues like libraries and bars and the carriers can transport it back to the Power Station or a venue that needs a source of energy. What about the wheelie bin outside? It is the Ottomobil: a mobile current point for Kunststrom. The presence of these objects stimulates thoughts about the possibility of stealing energy from businesses for the arts and the exchange of energy in general.

After an hour, Sherry detached the ladder from his head, walked towards the wall where I spotted the ladder

in the first place, and left it there. Walking up close, much closer than I dared before, I saw that this time, the climb up the ladder would end at an image of a sign saying 'fantastico'. Fifteen minutes later De Quillacq also left, taking his step-ladder with him. The presence and energy of Sherry remained, the spot where he stood was never touched during the evening. The spot where De Quillacq stood was soon forgotten and occupied. No physical trace was left. This is in contrast with the two performances that Bas Schevers did with the help of various people.

Schevers announced his performances, putting a written sign on the wall: 'Performance 21.04'. Twenty minutes later a new sign read: 'Performance 21.24'. At these times the performers – who were all present in the room already, either as artist or visitor – started doing something that could be described as typical gallery-behaviour. A woman with some papers in her hand seemed to be the catalyst of all this. Others were talking with each other, clacking their heels, tapping on a beer bottle, watching works, walking around and – something a bit more odd: singing in the toilets. Suddenly a wine glass fell on the floor and shattered. Or were there two wine glasses? After the first time I wasn't sure. Glass was scattered around the place and was picked up or swept together, left in a corner or next to a pillar. The second time, I watched and listened even more carefully and now I knew, although I didn't see or hear it: two glasses were dropped. I also noticed the noise of a plug being taken out of an amplifier, causing a buzz through the speakers. It seemed to



JODI, 'ZYX'

