

ROBIN YERLÈS

Writing Art 2018 – Portfolio

INTRODUCTION

Here is my portfolio.

REFLECTION

I mostly enjoyed the program. The richness of approaches is very valuable. I liked the regular rhythm of having to finish a piece of writing every week; for me this could be even more systematic. The balance between hands-on and brain work during the classes could be addressed; as well as the group aspect of the experience, the missing “team-building” elements that would have helped to learn about each other at an early stage of the course. For example the performative experience with Anna was quite fruitful in that aspect.

1. & 2.

Janneke—Art Criticism

Judging from the gallery's window, displaying the artist's name in big white letters, Lawrence Lek's exhibition at Stroom is a highly designed proposition, a catchy product. The London-based artist is known for his use of 3d graphics deploying his visions of an aestheticized future. Indeed, entering the main space the first impression is of the sleek control room of a spaceship. White glossy surfaces, neon green lights following the perfect curves of the installation, high definition screens welcome you in what is actually a corporate lobby which could be straight from a science fiction movie.

A text invites the visitor to discover the object of this multimedia installation: Nøtel Corporation, a hotel chain for the wealthiest people, promoting a fully automated highly secured luxury lifestyle. Lek's sensibility for architecture is displayed here through different printed plans and cuts of the building.

The main installation is articulated around a spheric futuristic bench and proposes two different ways to experience a visit to the hotel. Firstly, with a controller in your hand, you're invited to explore the digital environment as in a video game. While this may be visually the most impressive part of the show—the 3d graphics show a real mastery of the medium—without any goal or mission you quickly end up frustrated in your exploration of this empty and cold space.

Secondly, you are given a guided tour with a virtual reality helmet. Although technologically spectacular, unfortunately the narration given by a computer generated voice seems a bit redundant with the text you read when entering the exhibition. Also, the visual experience lacks the high definition crispness of the surrounding displays.



Lawrence Lek's Nøtel Corporation
at Stroom, den Haag

Through a fictional marketing campaign and simulation of architecture, this work constitutes a reflexion on the issues raised by technological development in urbanism and speculates on the future of housing in an ambiguous dystopian scenario. The city of The Hague, known not only for its peace and justice institutions but also for the security business, being home of important experiments in that domain, provides the right context. In the accompanying leaflet, the (very real) Dutch security cluster 'The Hague Security Delta' is evoked and integrated in the narrative of the exhibition.

By blurring the border between reality and fiction, Lawrence Lek's work inscribes itself in what is called speculative design, a niche in design especially trendy in the Netherlands. Speculative design raises questions about the future, anticipating the challenges of the coming decades and addressing ethical or philosophical questions. Unfortunately, in that field, which is mainly occupied by graphic designers, an overly aestheticized treatment very often overtakes the actual and mostly pertinent content or message of the work.

In the case of Lawrence Lek's installation, after a few minutes and the « wow effect » induced by the flawless presentation and the eye-candy graphics, it is hard to hide the fact that the whole story fits in a few sentences. A perfect illustration of our times, when the very reconfiguring of any work of art into the condition of the image—think of the role « social media » like instagram take in the dissemination of art nowadays—leads to the emergence of somehow superficial experiences once you physically step inside the art gallery. Perhaps this lack of essence is precisely what the dystopian imagery of the artist is trying to alert us: the future is going to be superficial.

This is disappointing, especially as Stroom is recognized for hosting intellectually challenging projects, and also because Lek's previous video works, two of them exhibited in the exhibition space downstairs, display deeper visual experiments and artistic research. *Geomancer* is a beautifully poetical CGI film immersing the spectator into the consciousness of a wannabe-artist AI, where *Sinofuturism* is a video essay full of insights on china's culture linked with its technological development.

3.

Nicoline — Artist Writing

INTRODUCTION

For this assignment, I picked the project I'm currently working on, *Adventure(s)* which consists of a series of street performances.

The three connected examples I chose are:

- A. *Carte blanche to Tino Sehgal*, an exhibition in Palais de Tokyo
- B. *SON[II]A #248*, a podcast with André Lepecki.
- C. *"Making Public: The Writing and Reading of Public Space"*, an essay by Vito Acconci.

A

I was very moved when I saw Tino Sehgal's work in Palais de Tokyo in 2016. The way he completely emptied this gigantic space, revealing the magnificence of the architecture and creating the space for a radically new proposition really astonished me.

After digesting the experience I realized there was nothing radical in the work itself. The real achievement is that he managed to do something really new in terms of working with the museum: to create truly immaterial artworks which are still products that can be sold and collected, therefore shifting what is possible within the system itself.

Basically his work is not very different than performance art from the late 60's, except that he doesn't have to sell pictures or drawings to survive. This is where I feel like I may try to build on his legacy in terms of dealing with the visual art institution. The space he created for artists to step in the contemporary art conversation, I plan to extend it by opening the doors of the museum.

As he said in an interview with Claire Bishop for ArtForum: *"I'm interested in the political efficiency of the museum—it is still one of the main agents of cultural values, and over time, offers a possibility for long term politics. It is a place where one can influence discourse in the future perfect tense: "this will have been the past"."* By coming up at the right place and the right moment, with a limpid understanding of the forces acting in his field, through his efforts he inscribed his name into art history. In that sense he constitutes an important model to study for me.

B

I picked this podcast as I am very much interested in the way Lepecki, who is a scholar in performance studies in NYU, approaches the notion of choreography with a political and performative angle to analyze how kinetic methods are in use in strategies of control; to identify in which instances of power these phenomena emerge and eventually may be counter-acted by artistic gestures.

As he builds his argumentation on the work of Deleuze who defined the shift from disciplinary societies to control societies, I'm very much interested in for example the way he describes how neoliberalism molecularly infiltrates our experience of life in society and impacts us, persistently restricting freedom through the illusion of choice typical of a life under an ideology driven by consumerism.

This obviously resonates with my current research as I am concretely considering to act in the most virtually political space, the urban space, and through the usage of bodies moving in space confront the logics and temporalities of our socio-economic system for an unprepared audience. In that context the notions Lepecki explores in this podcast are very precious to me in order to consider the right strategies and ways to construct these sort of experiments.

His study of the selfie is delicious in itself, as he links this emblematic gesture of our times with an essay by Althusser, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* in which the latter describes a scene of interpellation of power: the moment when you're walking down the street, and suddenly you hear "hey you!", which is the voice of the policeman, and at the exact moment when you turn back, you are subjected to power. For him the selfie, in the similar process of turning back the camera to the subject on to himself instead of the world, shares the same mechanism of interpellation.

C

This essay by Vito Acconci has been determinant in my understanding of the forces taking place when dealing with artistic interventions in the public space. He really opened my eyes on a few issues that you face when you step in that field: mainly, the fact that a space is public when it either maintains the public order, or changes the public order (public prison vs public forum). In my work I'm very interested in playing with this duality.

For him, public art is a production: "*a spectacle that glorifies the corporation or the state or the two working together*". Obviously he is more concerned with material artworks like sculptures, however his argumentation also makes sense in the context I plan to deploy my work. By working with public institutions, being aware of the potential instrumentalisation of your work to thoughtfully play with this condition is something to consider with caution.

I also like his view on the strategical implications of working in/with public space: "*A public space is not a space in itself but the representation of space. A public space is a game-board for mating games and war games.*" To me this resonates with Debord and his fascination for war and military literacy, Both Debord and Acconci sharing this avant-garde urge for change and action.

Finally, I really enjoy the warning in this sentence: "*if you know you're in public art, then you're only in a museum that has been transposed outdoors*". When trying to shift the position of the museum as archive to a more confronting one, in order to unleash its subversive potential, I should not fall in that trap.

4.

Sander — Writing Experiment

November 6

what a nice toolset!
we didn't have that before
what a nice toolset!

November 21

it's gonna explode
extraordinary, yes!
woaw, that's so crazy

November 2

it's so wonderful
we can add a country now
a cute little one

November 3

oh! it's perfectly
it's perfectly adequate
indeed my dear friend

November 4

7 or 8 but
we are close to a 9 here
yes, close to a 9

November 16

ah well that's yes yes
we saw him oh, we saw him
that little rascal

November 18

oh oh oh oh wouuh
oh, I am the cathedral
ha! ha! ha! ha! ho!

November 23

Something like plenty,
something like cornucopia,
something with a lot

November 24

Oh, I'm so happy
I'm so happy that you're here
I'm really happy

5.

Anna — Performative Writing

For me it's important that the hobos yell in the streets [...] When I give my money it's usually to the one spread over the whole sidewalk, the one who pees in the middle of the street, who insults my bourgeois condition. The one who stinks. It is necessary that these ones perturb because they are the last ones to do so.

The saddest are those who clean the windows of the nice cars of the embassies neighborhood; or those who do their juggling at the red light and come to beg alms for their pitiful performance. These are the docile clowns of a system which tamed them and is only trying to gradually turn them transparent.

As well, the resigned junkies passively waiting for the few coins which will bring them closer to their next shot; these are the easiest ones to take in empathy, the most miserable. But outside of their sheer presence, their social role is over, and the most human gesture would be to offer them euthanasia in pure civility.

It is essential to have absolute respect for the last gutter punks; the ones who fight and get wasted, who steal and get caught, who still spit on policemen. They are the ones, the performers of neoliberalism, the poets of capitalism. Very often we evaluate an artist to his ability to catch his times and re-transcribe them in his work. In that sense, a yelling bum is way truer than any white cube decorator.

“deviousness, fantasy, laughter”

6.

Miek – Writing Image

“Accompaniment for psychedelic adventure”, 2018

desire the earth

tickle the thunder

tell a secret to the snow

explore a grain of sand

kiss a tsunami

imagine a planet

massage the atmosphere

<http://nature.robinyerles.com/>

caress a river

whisper to a lightning

touch the sea

envision a torrent

raise a cliff

raise the rain

taste the stars

feel the soil

That morning, when she woke up, she didn't open her eyes.
She stood up, took a shower, got dressed,
had some coffee and breakfast, went to work.

The next day, she started writing.
When she finished, the page was empty.

The Work is the potency of meaning.
The Work is a metaphysical cloud.
The Work is made of matter.

In front of his Mother, a children asks to the World:
"What is written there?"
— The kid was Richard Serra!?

The Work seems like it doesn't say anything.
The Work seems like it means everything.

What is the function of art?
Art exists only conceptually.
The Work is a definition.

A question: " ? "
The answer: "Power", but really: "Peace".

Spend, waste, lose, burn, share, give, offer,
time. (*The Work*)

The Work doesn't have aesthetic attributes.
Objects are conceptually irrelevant to *The Work*.
The Work is an investigation.

The Work must be considered as a whole.
A butterfly trapped in a cage.
Let the cloud cry —

"The Work ()"
Robin Yerlès, 2018