























TENTACLE TOGETHERNESS

304 Participants, Happy Birthday to You, Het Vijfde Seizoen, Den Dolder, NL, 2011









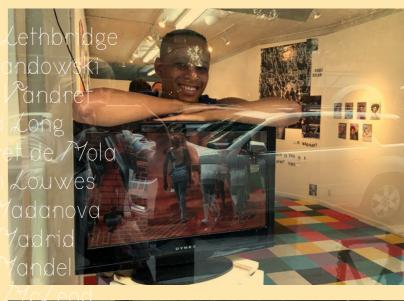


Alexandra Ƴan Lew



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Meron M Devin M Lucia M Christo Idrian Octo Christoph Evan Ryan Max M Max M Mater Chant Cohan Ro Mafael M Javid S



enghistab Morris





Perro Penny Christia Michael V Clemen Erik van de Omrich Mary Voor Chanto





















In the 1960s, many artists ventured outside the cities and museums to escape the limitations of the art market and to question the ideology of the white cube by working directly in natural or sparsely populated environments. These personal quests are still very vivid today; linked to attempts to question institutions and authorship, they also seek to reinvent them by exploring new ways of working inside from outside. As artist Daniel Steegmann Mangrané says: "If an exhibition is an experiment to articulate reality, to confuse the inside and the outside of the exhibition is one of the first duties of art: the space of the museum can no longer be a space for the accumulation of artifacts, isolated and protected from the outside, but a place where our relations with objects and reality is reconfigured." 1 Like Steegmann Mangrané, Anouk Kruithof creates exhibitions as reconfigurations of relations, where sculptural elements, images, sounds and scenography include the viewer in a complex perception of reality as fundamentally composed. One important aspect of her practice is the place of waste materials, seen as a strong component of our reality and possibly an active element in our transformation. As biologist and philosopher Donna Haraway poetically expresses: "We are compost, not posthuman; we inhabit the humusities, no the humanities."² Waste is seen as a resource material that we must deal with, and learn from. Anouk Kruithof works with composting processes both metaphorically and, importantly, directly in nature, for instance taking printed photographs into the jungle and observing the visual transformations affecting their materiality as a positive step to reinforce social imaginaries.

Anouk Kruithof spends a large part of her life creating projects with found objects in natural landscapes or rural contexts, collaborating with others on social and environmental issues. She follows a line drawn by relations between human and non-human, learning from others and from situations. Her artistic process points to the necessity of exploring "beyond nature and culture" as proposed by Philippe Descola³, or "below nature and culture" as Bruno Latour prefers to put it ⁴. Following Descola's perspective, let's ask this preliminary question: how can we learn with others, with those societies and rural communities who never forget to invite even the most modest plants and animals into their conception of social life? The people Anouk Kruithof works with are very diverse - children, local populations, students, artists, passers-by - and so are the contexts, from New York City to the Amazon rainforest in Suriname. She collaborates

1. Daniel Steeamann Mangrané, catalogue of the exhibition A Leaf-Shaped Animal Draws the Hand, Pirelli HangarBicocca,

2. Donna Haraway, Staving with the Trouble, 2006.

3. Philippe Descola, Beyond Nature and Culture, The University of Chicago Press, 2014.

4. Bruno Latour, Facing Gaïa: Eight lectures on the new climatic regin Polity Press, 2017.

with plants and vegetation, collecting, mixing, arranging forms and following intuitions, but without nostalgia for a state of nature. Reality is stratified, nature is composed with culture, and even life in the rainforest in Suriname is in relation with cities, with technics and production. An exploration of her projects is a journey through her artistic process and her everchanging life because they are all linked to actual places she has lived or stayed in, and to the digital world where the internet is a resource.

Anouk Kruithof is involved in an interspecies quest inspired by the populations she meets and the materials she finds in landscapes - forests, beaches, jungles where humans are co-living with many other species. Being conscious that human is indissociable from nature and that nature doesn't exist as a separate entity (if we follow Descola), means we inhabit an environment where so-called waste is a resource like any other. Anouk Kruithof plays with discarded materials and plants, she prints and frames images produced in collaboration with natural processes, she explores a way of living and seeing which welcomes coincidences, is open to the poetics of 'inframince', which all result in exhibition formats. The titles she gives to her series of actions, made alone or with others, add a narrative dimension.



For example, El Camino Abierto (The open way) is the title of a workshop held during her residency at Fondazione Casa Wabi, Mexico. She asked a group of children to invent their own piñata, the traditional Mexican decorated papier-mâché sculpture filled with candy 'treasure' and smashed open during a celebration. Piñata is now a globalized product, in South America and now in Western countries, where it's completely decontextualized and sold cheaply. However, with this workshop Anouk Kruithof restored a personal relation between the children and the piñata, inviting them to create their own ritual. She asked them each to bring a personal object from home and to collect plant material and other items while walking around Casa Wabi together, sharing with the children their love of treasure hunting and their ability to fantasize around even very poor material. Together they created their own piñata, using bright colors and imagination as a way to appropriate the real. Even if her work often starts from found materials, objects, memories, narratives, referring to an impoverishment of Western cultures, Anouk Kruithof likes to produce atmospheres where one finds sensual forces and happiness through water reflection, music, food, drinks, and attention to others. With the children, she shared creation as an inspiring and joyful activity, linked to their personal memories and to their collective walks and discussions, but also as an educational resource. Artistic process is one way among many others to open non-predetermined paths,

to cultivate one's ability to extend imaginaries instead of 300 images and gave the final task of the selecting process consuming poor replicas. In this workshop, the artist takes to a person, Harrison Medina, who had never taken a photo part in a collective effort to go back to cultural skills - in this in his life case, creating piñata - and she learns from the situation as much as she teaches. Her quest for a virgin photographic gaze may have had

Exploring non-dominant ways of creating and seeing

an element of irony, but it also relates to her commitment to opening up her personal sensibility by leaving her own structures of vision in the background. Finally, after a Anouk Kruithof works with the natural environment but discussion that is transcribed in a newspaper publication, she makes exhibitions in gallery spaces too, inviting the 75 photographs were printed in different sizes and hung viewer to rethink his/her/their way of seeing in a museum, from the ceiling, suggesting the viewer reverse their to follow a pathway, to question classical representations direction of sight by using a mirror. Opening up the field of where the human is always looking at a distance, from vision has been a central issue in art since the 1920s, and above, and has that same relation to nature. Her exhibitions Herbert Bayer demonstrated it very clearly in his series of diagrams Extended Field of Vision developed at that time. are composted in a sense of being a stratification of ideas and emotions, closely combining inside and outside, One person, or simply one giant eye, is looking not only including diverse personal choices. She troubles the in front of themselves, as the perspective construction dominant position of the artist as unique vision and taught them to do, but also down, up, and even backwards. explores collaborative process to create with others, to This was revolutionary because it meant that optical compost reality with multiple perceptions. perception was flooded by a diversity of sensations that contributed to the art experience.

Anouk Kruithof develops projects based on active cooperation with others, with a real concern to encourage artists, for example organizing The Anamorphosis Prize (2015-2017) which supported self-publishing in the photographic field. She was involved in all the processes: communication, selection, celebration. She has designed a website and made short videos to give visibility to the best 20 projects, organized public events at the MoMA library to introduce them in an important place in the art world, and encouraged personal meetings and physical relationships with books. In addition, she secured a funding of 10,000 dollars for the winner, no strings attached. She curated the 6th Zine and Self-Published Photo Book Fair, designing the stands for the books with curatorial intent. Hosting other artists, being curious about others, is very important in her vision of art. During her residency at ISCP (International Studio & Curatorial Program) in New York, instead of showing her own work in the open studio event, she chose to host BYOB (Bring Your Own Beamer), a series of onenight-projections initiated by the artist Rafaël Rozendaal and curated by different people around the world.



In 2012, she created a spatial installation called *Untitled* (I've taken too many photos / I've never taken a photo) for the Hyères festival de mode et photography, which is very typical of how she questions her own authority as an artist. She decided to go back to her 'automatic archive', the large number of images she makes every day (and barely ever looks at once archived) as the starting point. She selected



Herbert Baver was close to El Lissitzky⁵ and to John Dewey⁶ and he and shared with them the conviction about the emancipatory turn of this new conception of art based on experience. The display proposed by Anouk Kruithof offers a reversal from the habitus of vision, invites viewers to be active agents of their vision by manipulating the mirrors and moving around the room, and has a strong resonance with these avant-garde thinkers. At each step of the process, the relation to images was scrutinized in its habitus, testing the possibility of refreshing one's vision through different tools. Anouk Kruithof describes her installation as "providing a new experience of looking at photographs", which is more than just a new physical position of looking. It's a process relating her to the others in an effort to reinvent one's vision, and to reverse one's prejudgment.

Anouk Kruithof lives each collaborative situation intensely, giving a lot of energy and sharing creativity with others by her presence. This is an important aspect of her being as an artist, with this giving and taking acknowledged

as work. When she put up posters in the street asking to meet someone who had never taken a photo in his/ her/their life, she says that this collaboration will be paid. When

5 ELLissitzky was a pioneer in exhibition design who, like Herbert Bayer, gave a very active place to the spectator

6. John Dewey, Art as Experience,

she launched Universal Tongue (2018-2021), a vast research project on dance-videos shared on the internet and social media, she symbolically paid one euro for each video sent to her (she received 7,500, and added 1,452 found by herself). Making art is work, and to share one's authority in collaborative process means sharing one's economy. When enunciated, this seems self-evident, but instrumentalization and exploitation is a reality in the art world, no matter how good the political intentions are, as it has been pointed out frequently in regard to Santiago Sierra's performances⁷, for which he hires socially invisible and vulnerable groups to be exposed, tattooed or lined up as if by police. Sierra provokes by putting the viewer in a very uncomfortable position, raising political issues by a very direct strategy that uses the same tools as the denounced parties. Anouk Kruithof, on the other hand, does not work with this kind of straight irony and institutional criticism; instead, she prefers to contribute to the struggles by interacting closely with others and building non-dominant relations.

Accumulation and appropriation of images and emotions

Interested by techniques of accumulation and appropriation of images, Anouk Kruithof focuses on our habit of collecting thousands of images on our phones or virtual clouds, sharing them on social media, reinforcing our mental process of creating relations between what happens to us in real life and through these images briefly seen on our smartphones. The fact that we are thinking through 'contamination by image' is more obvious than ever. Scrolling on Instagram, searching on Google, digging into personal memories through the profusion of images made in everyday life, is often described as negative compulsive behaviour and a waste of time, however it may nevertheless provoke the imagination and thinking. The Daily Exhaustion, a newspaper published by Anouk Kruithof in 2010, is a playful series of selfies she made expressing what being exhausted might mean. While there are plenty of reports of people suffering burnout, we regularly exaggerate for comic effect and to elicit sympathy, using 'exhausted' simply to mean 'tired'. So she set out to investigate physical states of exhaustion, doing intense exercise before taking her photographs.

This project has some interesting similarities with Days Are Dogs, the monograph by Camille Henrot⁸ articulated as a week's emotional agenda, dealing with "problems of everyday life, particularly our relationship

art/artists/santiagosierra-6878/santiagosierra-performance-andcontroversy

8. This monograph published on the occasion of her solo show at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, 2017, as part of the Palais collection.

9. "Dogs are always hungry", Camille Henrot interviewed by Daria de Beauvais, Palais, 2017, p.15

to dependency. The title comes 7. See https://www.tate.org.uk/ from the expression in English for a difficult, tiring day, a 'dog day'. (...) The stock character of my exhibition is pretty passive. But this submission is a kind of freedom too. In the end, the submission of the dog is feigned, it's opportunistic, sometimes affectionate or playful." These words echo what one feels browsing The Daily Exhaustion,

looking at Anouk Kruithof's mise en scène of her own emotional feelings by associating her clothes with colored backgrounds. Unsmiling, she expresses fatigue and loneliness but the accumulation of images gives rise to humorous feelings and smiles as well. Kruithof continued this research with a project on the streets of New York City, on Wall Street, in 2013. She installed on the ground, at the edge of the pavement, photographs of pixels which were blown up from images found on Google, searching the word 'stress'.



Close-ups from portraits of stressed persons, mainly at work, resulted in monochromes that Anouk Kruithof framed as photographs. Having conversations with pedestrians about their own relationships to stress at work, she mirrored and exchanged emotions using the huge narrative potentiality of abstract images (colored pixels, even if referring to a descriptive image, function as abstract paintings, inviting personal projections). During the conversations, she asked them how much they would pay to take a photograph home, to create imaginary sales transactions, but then gave it to them for free, giving away the ever-present economic relation in order to introduce a gift relation. This project brought about nice meetings and funny situations, as documented in the photographs, transforming stress trauma by personal appropriation, and it tried to open a new schema of exchange based on discussion and gift.

To create photo books is to experiment with ways of seeing. Anouk Kruithof has worked with various international publishers and has self-published many photo books, always giving great attention to the design concept. Each is specific, reinforcing the project's intentions, such as in The Daily Exhaustion where the heaviness of unbound printed pages makes reading difficult, which is a good way to share a kind of discomfort with the reader. Another interesting example is Happy Birthday to You, published in 2011, linked to her social project at the artistic residence Het Vijfde Seizoen at the Altrecht psychiatric unit in Den Dolder. Anouk Kruithof interviewed ten patients about their birthday wishes and then celebrated it with them according to these wishes. The photo book is more than a documentation of this action: it is a present, a collection of words, faces, dreams, and a game inviting the reader into the fantasy of persons with whom we rarely share intimate moments. Self-representation is a particular issue for disabled persons suffering from difficulties

with self-esteem or trouble constructing personal identity. humorous and powerful imaginaries assembled in it. During the birthday ceremony, funny identity portraits were transferred onto their cake's icing, then the cake was cut and eaten. Photography and video are frequently used in therapy as tools for playful reappropriation and reparation, as part of the process to reinforce personal identity through visual narrative. Here, the process is guite challenging because the patients felt first privileged to have their own cake with their portrait and happy to share it with other residents, but seeing others eating one's portrait is not easy and might produce hard feelings that had to be taken care of.



Anouk Kruithof asked her assistant to take many photos during her conversations with the residents and during the birthday parties, and then used them in the edition to If Anouk Kruithof's installations are very seductive, it's create funny graphic compositions with faces, gestures, interesting to know that she always delegates choice and objects, recomposing bodies without offending. Seen as display of colors to the participants, distancing her own a visual game, mixed with words and colors, it produces aesthetic sense or transforming it by welcoming others' refreshing and playful portraits, even if the reading of the visions. Working with and within the nature (human interviews with the patients reveals many old psychological traces included), she not only extends her studio by going wounds. Happy Birthday to You is not an art therapy outside, she tries to transform completely the way she project, but by interacting directly with the patients, by interconnects outside and inside, and to live interspecies meetings, as in the series of actions in which she is working through intimate desires, social frustrations, it is a psychological journey for all participants. The photographed in immersed bodily in these elements. documentation includes Anouk Kruithof as an active Troubling the frontiers, exploring what links different life participant, bringing a birthday cake, a plant, offering forms, she expresses a strong empathy with nature and her presents and wishes. The book is also conceived as a creates images highlighting the necessity of care of a birthday present, partially created by hand. It is keeping the devastated Earth. Continuing what Ana Mendieta and memory of these precious moments in individual lives, and Gina Pane started in the decade 1960-1970, she includes it shares lot of positive inspiration to think differently about the viewer in her personal attempts to overcome the our relation to those marginalized by societies. usual limits of human perception and to gain confidence in one's being-in-nature capability. However, she has Niet Meer Normaal (2022) goes further in pursuit of become part of many collective forces, such as The Last Amazonian Congress organized by Lucia Tkáčová with a group of artists living and working for a week in Pol'ana Forest in Slovakia, and continues to develop research intimately inhabited by environmental issues. Anouk Kruithof produces artistic pieces and exhibitions where inside is always a relation to outside, joining the forces of art and activism to transform our way of being-in-nature, to engage oneself and others to care about climate crisis as we care about our self-representations.

these issues by raising a series of questions about what is normality and how it is defined in a rapidly evolving world. With this collaborative project, she invited 300 participants to send a drawing, photo or text with positive insights on current changes, transforming realities affected by disease, repression and fear into an optimistic and joyful installation. The exhibition was immersive, taking over all the architecture. Anouk Kruithof covered the windows with drawings printed on colored transparent sheets, following each participant's color choice, to make a stained glass out of epherma, and created huge fabric creatures that the spectator was happy to sit on. In this very organic environment, one could feel welcomed in an inclusive quest by reading the newspaper, listening to the sounds coming from very diverse contexts and picking the



This chapter, Tentacle Togetherness, gathers up all Anouk Kruithof's social and collaborative projects, like the octopus, a fascinating animal that feels and thinks with its tentacles. Niet Meer Normaal involved such collaborative processes at each step, from the making to the experiencing, following the desire to unite active communities involved in transformative processes. Linking positive feelings with art processes and exploring Tentacle Togetherness is inspired by the philosophy of Donna Haraway, who encourages the cultivation of pleasure, joy and co-responsibility in order to confront the huge challenges of our times in crisis.

Mathilde Roman

Mibert Algaier Anikó Antalfi Duygu Atceken Miia Auti Resi Bender Daleen Bloemers & Selma Mengeveld

Mictoire Eouzo Priscila Góme Faouzia Maida Peter Nüber Alejandra Muerta Maria Tsabel Ar Ioana T. Pac Trahu éndula Mnopová andra Moumantak Yekongo aka Mirii'ah mara/ Jarcy Moore Paola Paleari Abhinaya Penneswaran Džejlana Pruševic' & Miona Bogovic Francesca Seravalle Reren Shavit Walter Shintani Marald Smart Nina Suramelashvili Kalinca Susin Guergana Zzatchkova Chikara Umihara Ginta Vasermane Tihad Yagoubi Alba Zari

XLE.LIFE



J Atceken Toep de Boer Peter Maynes émo ever 12 aro **MOUK** ruithof Maciej Mandraki Teva Maslinskaite Koen Mutters Maroliina Pärnänen Wiccolò Quaresima Mustin Swinburne Ginta Masermane Rianne Zijl















Summe Marina Bye Nathalie Turner Msuan Chen

Fred Blake Cal McBride ravis roussard Sam erm Mannes Gruber rka Gurnutxaga Arruti Org ier Schrauw Clemence Seilles W²itte W²artena Afke W²eltevrede



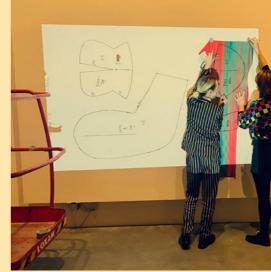














Emilio Bas Bik Donis Boo Varie Dise B Benni Ci Drew E Bonis C Vrinke C Chantal A Eloise A Reinier A Boovar David A Elena Ah Varia

> Lunc Flor Masi Yaroliina M Theo M R.E. Ma Miccolò Qu Mojan Ra Toëlle S Tom Šeb





čová Věen Doorn rummen Gent Raalte nger ker vrede