# LODEWIJK HEYLEN

## Portfolio
*Selection November 2023*

# INTERVENTIONS IN THE

# PUBLIC SPACE

## Übermenschlich: Pulver und Sand (II)

During this rapid simulation of erosion as a performance, visual artist Lodewijk Heylen is slowly engulfed by a stream of sand and water. The work is a visualization of the human urge to control, direct and exploit natural processes and landscapes — an urge that is omnipresent at sites such as the Port of Antwerp, where the first iteration of the performance took place.

The work was freely accessible during the performance and could be modified by spectators.

2023

Performance (indefinite duration)
*Pile of sand, water, garden hose, water pump*

During The Golden Mile Festival 2023 (Antwerp, BE)

## Clasp

Temporary installation using site-specific equipment. By placing two bulldozer blades in an upright, clam-like position, the ostensibly banale objects become a sculpture. They are testament to one of the most usefully shaped commodity in human history, being able to quite literally move mountains.

2023

Installation of found objects
*Steel plate, two digging blades*
As part of the exhibition ST.Arts 2023, Herstel (BE)

## Magic Highway 1958

The Magic Highway is a techno-optimistic, didactical videoclip produced by Walt Disney in 1958, aiming to excite a young audience for the futures of transportation. That same year, Belgium launches its plans for the grand renewal of the country with an awe-inspiring World Exhibition, promoting the possibilities of an all-encompassing highway infrastructure as a leitmotiv. After 60 years this optimistic and romantic vision of the highway as progress has all but faded, leaving behind an atmosphere of hyper-pragmatism instead. One would forget that this was once the future.

Magic Highway 1958 was presented during the ground exhibition Outdoor Hiking, a walking exhibition through three adjacent parks in Antwerp; Den Brandt, Middelheim and Vogelenzang, from the 26th of February until the 3rd of October 2021.

There was nothing to see. More than 30 artists were invited to create an experimental audio work that may or may not react to the relationship between artistic creation and nature, sound and historical environment. Curators Glenn Geerinck and Josine De Roover invited visual artists, writers and/or musicians to present a new auditive work within their own boundless and undefined artistic practice.

A musical or narrative soundscape, an experimental piece of music or sound work, or a walking performance between point A and point B were your guides during this walking exhibition with the natural landscape as their stage or museum hall. As a visitor you walked a self-chosen or mapped out route, armed with your smartphone and head/earphones. Via QR codes or other instructions you could activate the various soundworks.

2021
www.outdoorhiking.be

## Reformator Universalis

*Reformator Universalis* questions the evolution and influence of path-finding digital applications by applying the same logic onto the physical space. The work consists of a device proposing pathways to pedestrians in the public environment. It tracks the presence of passers-by in a defined area and consequently leads them to different predefined points of interest through a mapped projection of paths on the ground. The calculations of these paths take into account the movement of the 'involuntary participant' in real time, adjusting them according to deviations, but also organises them in the most efficient way in relation to every other person or obstacle in the area, based on time-distance—efficiency and collision avoidance, not unlike the systems governing automatic vehicles or GPS navigation.

When a passer-by swerves from her of his path, the system recalibrates and proposes a new relevant path, making it impossible for someone to not follow the advised route. It is in this notion that the question arrises: are the most efficient paths also the most desired? In other words: does the installation obstruct the sense of free will, even though it does not interfere in a structural way?

The new social welfare campus 'Contant Janssen' in Turnhout (BE) could not be a more relevant site to introduce *Reformator Universalis* in. Having lost their way in the complexity of society, the intended guests of this building are invited in to find psychological or financial guidance, shelter or food, answers to life question, protection against violence, or just a sympathetic ear. The artwork subtly projects the possibilities before them when entering the building. Outside leads to inside, the digital efficiency becomes a human person.

2018

People-tracking system, laserprojection,

In collaboration with Architects in Motion, CAW De Kempen, JC Productions and Martin Schneider
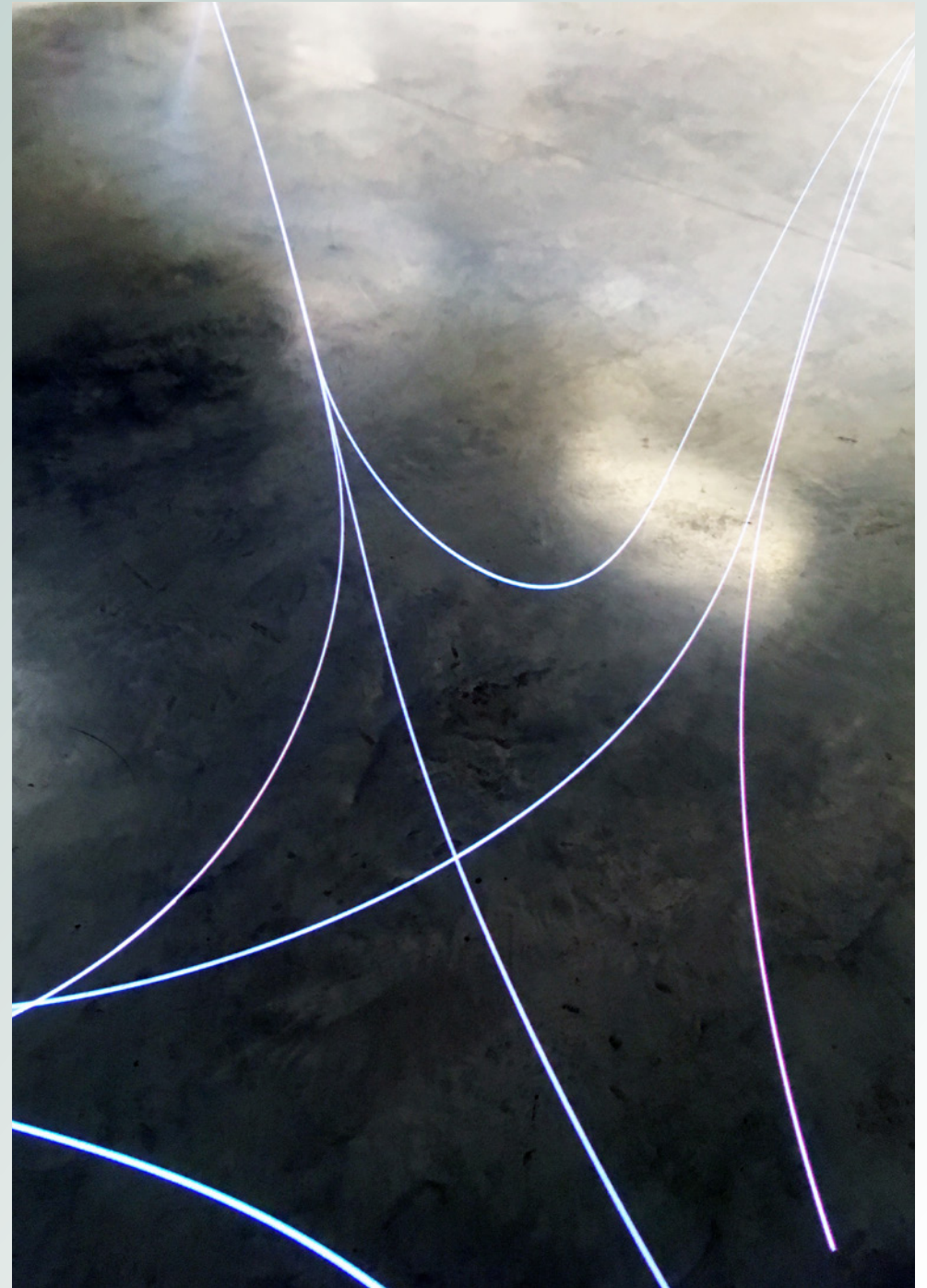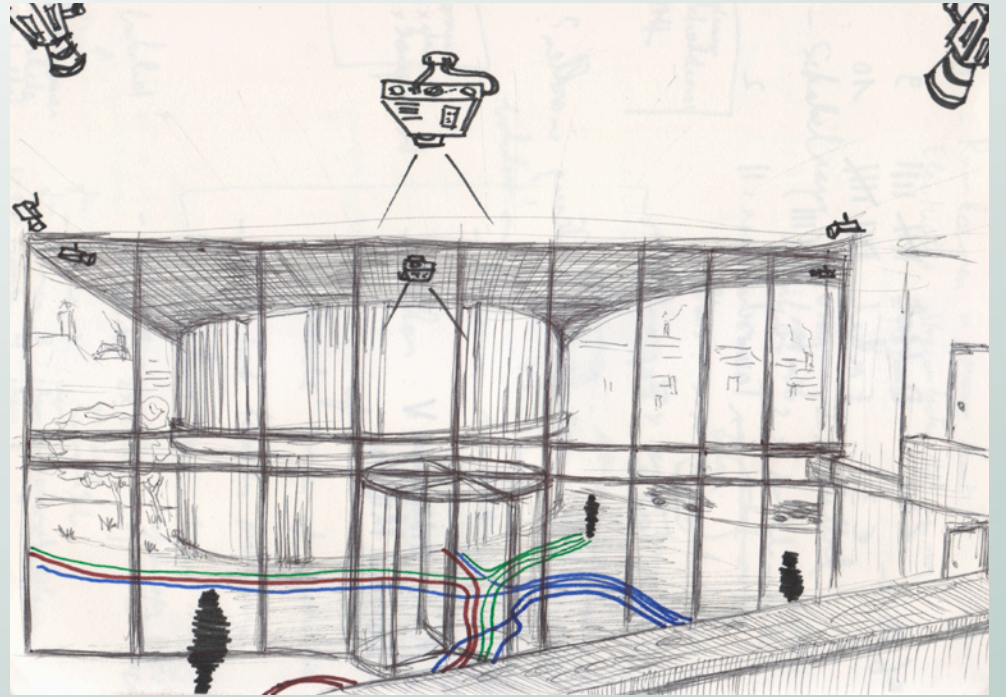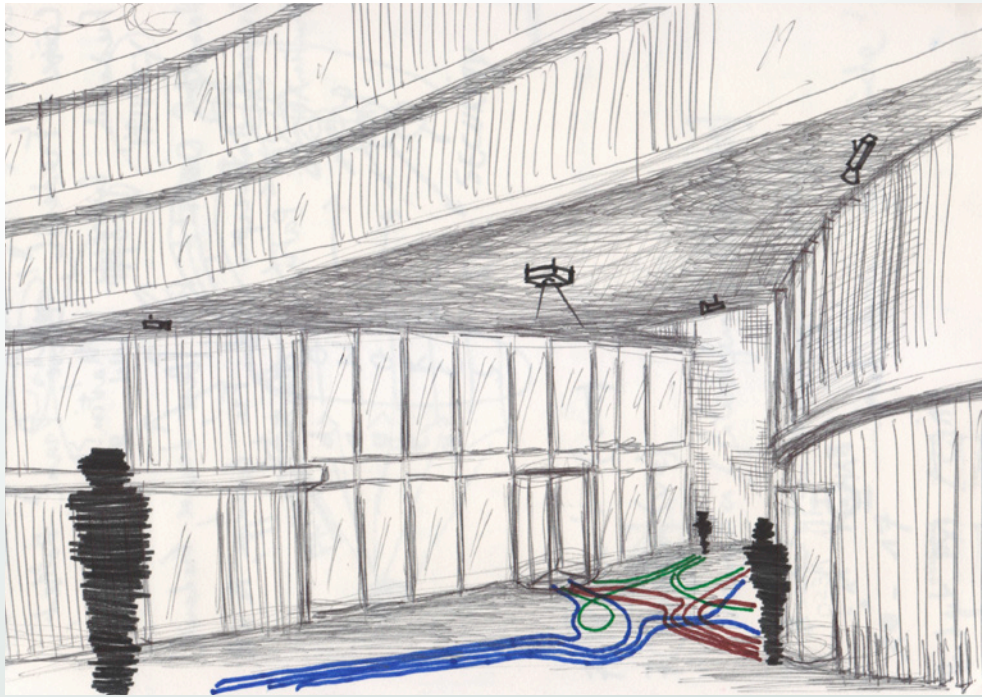
## Concrete Evidence: Waiting

*The avenue, which was supposed to be perfect, remains numb, without vision — there is hardly any progress. It is as though she is waiting for a cure, expecting a future, cut loose from the world, away from purpose and efficiency. She is on the verge of change, but awaits it rigidly petrified. She waits, as she has done since forever, throughout the centuries.*

*At first she wasn't. Then, she was built and she has been abiding ever since. She awaits the arrival of the next year, the next hour, the next second. She was given a new layer of sludge, a row of trees. The wheels that drove over changed from wooden to iron to rubber. The clogs that walked over transformed into shoes, the slippers into high-heels. Foundations were cast, first in sand, then in concrete. The walls became thicker and stiller and higher and closer.*

*But all of that wasn't what the road was waiting for. From the instant the pools and sinkholes were covered with rocks and stones of all sizes, the lane anticipates being blown to bits, cut and drilled into pieces and reduced to powder and gravel. She awaited the uselessness, the unstable and foundationless redundancy that would offer her debris back to the earth from which she was erected. The liberating detente after ages of enduring and maintaining. To finally cease being a lane and to never be a lane again.*

———

*Excerpt from the book: "The Ugliest Street In The World" by Lodewijk Heylen (2012)*

III, 2016
*Concrete slab lifted with screw jacks, wood (12m x 3m x 0,2m)*
Temporary intervention at Citadel'Arte 2016 (Diest, BE)

II (Expresweg), 2014
*Concrete, hammer, crusher*
Exhibited at Clay!, Print!, Space!, Trade Mart (Brussels, BE)

I, 2012
*Concrete slab of a street, lifted by an excavator*
Temporary intervention in the public space

## Übermenschlich: Diestiaan

*Übermenschlich: Diestiaan* is a site-specific work, consisting of a natural rock and a cement-bound metal duplicate, referring to the industrial, cultural heritage of region around Horst (BE): the exploitation of iron-sandstone.

2015

260 x 200 x 50 cm (each)
*Sand, cement, iron and water*

Permanent installation at Kasteel Horst, Holsbeek
In collaboration with Geert Laermans NV and Das Natuursteen
Exhibited at Horst arts & music Festival 2015, group exhibition, Holsbeek, 2015. Curated by Gijs Van Vaerenbergh

# Concrete Evidence: Übermenschlich (Pulver und Sand)

The *Übermenschlich* project started out as a investigatory travel. The goal of this journey was the collection of four granite plates from all over Europe. The 2000 km long voyage was set out between former nazi concentration camps. They were constructed in the vicinity of stone quarries with the sole purpose of supplying granite for the planned transformation of Berlin into the Welthauptstadt (World Capital) by Hitler and his architect Albert Speer.

Together with photographer Philipp Külker, visits were made to the camps and the nearby stone quarries to document this obscure part of history and make the link to the production of granite today. With the focus on the material, an attempt was made to find the exact meaning of granite and its characteristics, and what its functions were during the nazi regime compared to now.

The destinations during the journey were: Natzweiler-Struthof (France), Flossenbürg (Germany), Mauthausen (Austria) and Groß-Rosen (Poland).

The plates were then transported to Berlin and placed next to the Schwerbelastungskörper or Heavy Load Bearing Body. This 12500 tonnes concrete cylinder was constructed in 1941 as a test object to research the supporting capacity of the Berlin soil. The monolithic object was supposed to simulate one of the four pillars of the soon to be constructed Triumph Arch, one of the many megalomaniac constructions thats were planned to reorganise the city. The Schwerbelastungskörper is nearly the only edifice that was actually built.

2014

*Granite, Sandblasting; Set of 3 (150 cm x 60 cm x 2cm (each))*
Permanent installation at Schwerbelastungskörper, Berlin
With the support of the museum Tempelhof-Schöneberg
Exhibited at Correction Lines, group exhibition, various locations, Berlin (DE) Curated by Frederiek Weda & Julia Martha Müller

**right there in front of you, All the darkness in the world**



2016

*Two DAF XF Euro 6 Trucks*

Temporary intervention in front of Hypercorps Artspace, Brussels (BE)
In collaboration with Elise van Mourik

# Concrete Evidence: 1m (Berlin)

In may 2015, Concrete Evidence: 1m was presented to the public at the Hans Baluschek-Park in Berlin, a sculpture existing of one meter of highway (scale 1:1). The artwork exemplifies a fascination for the effects and impact of large scale building projects in our post-industrial environment and the process of regulation, standardisation and normalisation associated with it. In his conceptual work, the transcendence of humanity through the means of machines and the temporal and spacial scale of change, caused by technological en intellectual development, takes a central place. Which consequences do these transformations of the urban landscape have on our current and future society?

*Concrete Evidence:1m* takes reference to ‚Richtlinien für die Anlage von Straßen - RQ 36‘, a technical regulation for the design and construction of highways in Germany. This standardised road has a cross section of thirty-six meter and consists of two ways which each three lanes, capable of supporting between 50.000 and 100.000 vehicles per day, freight traffic included. The highway is only accessible by car or by truck. It forms a landscape of permanent movement, at a speed that fluctuates. But movement is imperative: onwards, without reversal, without stagnation.

The current highway network of Germany measures about thirteen thousand kilometers. It exists of an interconnected web from city to city and functions as a link between local communities. This modern building project is constantly being developed and will do so in the near future. It is a constant interference in our living environment and requests a continuous reevaluation of its relation towards the individual. *Concrete Evidence:1m* brings the dimensions of the highway back to the human scale. The work outlines the systematic correlation between the human creation and the natural supremacy.

2015
*3600 x 100 x 800 cm*
*Concrete, lamppost, crash barriers, road markings*

In collaboration with Acta, non verba - Straßenbau Berlin, Grün Berlin, Dipl.-Ing. Jürgen Möller, VTO Verkehrstechnik GmbH and the department Arts, Culture, Museums in Tempelhof-Schöneberg. With the support from the Flemish Government. Exhibited at Concrete Evidence: 1m, solo exhibition, Hans-Baluschek-Park, Berlin. Curated by Frederiek Weda

## Concrete Evidence: 1m (Kemzeke)

Another iteration of Concrete Evidence: 1m, at the Verbeke Foundation sculpture park in Kemzeke, close to Antwerp.



2013

*Concrete, lamppost, crash barriers, road markings (3150 x 100 x 2200 cm)*

Permanent installation at the Verbeke Foundation
In collaboration with Agentschap Wegen en Verkeer and Fero NV
Exhibited at PARK + RIDE, group exhibition, Verbeke Foundation, Kemzeke (BE)

# PARTICIPATION AND

# COLLABORATION

## The Gaze

Intensive workshop with 400 students of the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture in Ghent. During one week groups of students were asked to analyse and abstract specific typologies of functions within the city. Every day, one group had to explore the city, while the other was building structures that represented the typologies. The next day, the groups switched and had to intervene onto each other's existing structures.

The workshop brought together concepts of living together, democratic deliberation, city typologies and urbanism, challenging students to critically engage multiple fronts of urban design and architecture.

2023

Workshop with the students of the 3rd Bachelors in Architecture and Interior Architecture and the 1st Bachelors in Interior Design.
*27 - 31 April 2023*

In collaboration with the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Leuven, Campus Sint-Lucas Ghent
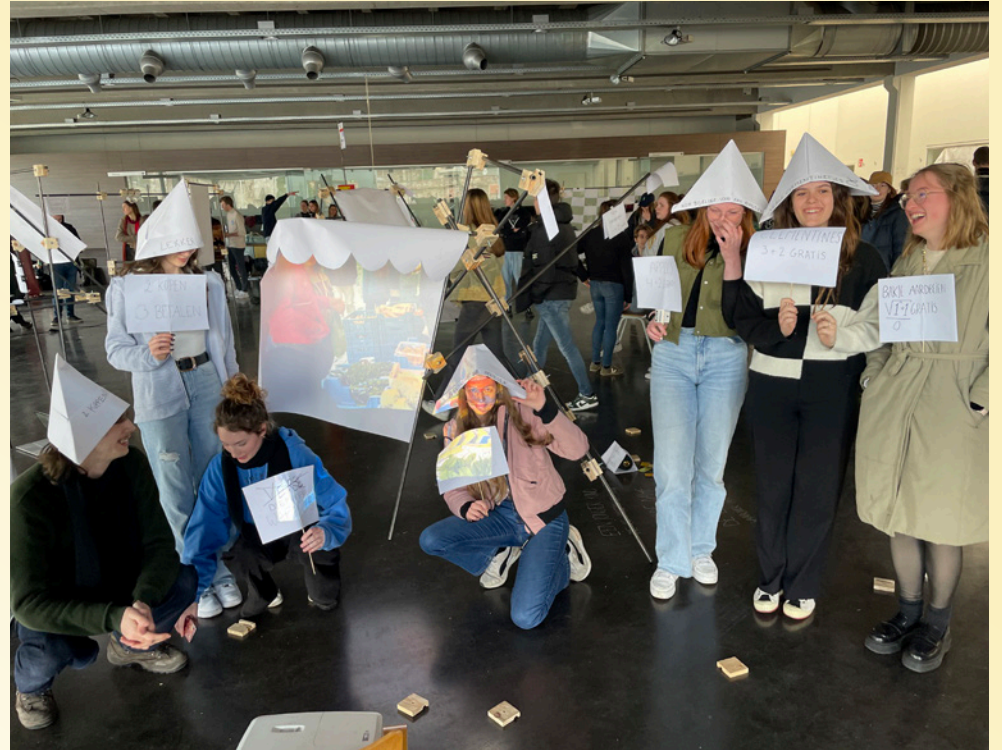
## The Intercratic Experiment/Congress

Can we automate democracy? That is the main question of the *Intercratic Experiment*. This project became the focus of my PhD in the last two years, in an attempt to materialise the broad topics of my research. The goal is design blueprints of an automated society, taking into account the possibilities of current technology and the limitations that human interaction present. This semi-fictive thought-experiment is an attempt to lay out the ground rules of all encompassing datafication in order to find errors or loopholes with which the artist of the future will be able to work.

During my 4 year research, I have conducted several isolated 'preliminary' experiments, which will lead up to the *Intercratic Experiment*. They are small parts of the larger project, and consist of installations and performances about a specific type of technology.

One of them is the *Intercratic Congress*, where I intend to use the archetype of the 'meeting' as a test case. An automated meeting room will be the scene of a full scale, technocentric data mining architecture, where its users will be monitored, analysed and given a direct feedback about the meeting itself.

2018
*Exhibition Insight Analysis*
A preliminary experiment during which an extensive logbook of dialogues used by visitors during the exhibition using speech to text technology was gathered.

'48 Stunden Neukölln' 2018, KINDL Kesselhaus, Berlin & Symposium 'Art and Science in Symbiosis', KVAB, Brussels

In collaboration with Martin Schneider

hello. a good dissertation on the air. ... and another with the sentence and enable works ok. but it's still creating bullshiter. ... ... ... match today. Mr. Yeah you're in Belgium. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... Norwich. ... come on. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... now. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... come on Alice. ... no. what's going on. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... 12th March. ... ... Amazon. aystar Geko. ... ... the Peking restaurant. the IRA leader Wanted Down Under. ... ... audition. pictures of Build-A-Bear Build-A-Bear Bluewater. ... ... blame. hello hello. ... yes hello. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... rr300 near A4. ... de Rosa. ... ... Google. ... ... ... ... ... ... Biggles forum. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... where's the bus from. ... hello. ... BBC Game of Thrones. runny boiled egg. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ok just sit around on them. ... ... ... I turn my back for getting. ... ... ... ... what are unicorn toy. ... ... ... they are my Wi-Fi here. ... ... Anderson tapes. c4d hendys to Mac. ... Magna. ... ... ... ... English league 1. ... I'm just sticking it on because I don't know which is Which. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... The Scream. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... so this one is connected to me. these guys are done I have green. ... ... ... ... yeah. book competitions. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... call Monica cool. ... see I shut the body one of us made it. ... ... ... ... not at all mate. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... umbrella. ... ... ... ... ... ASDA Green Room. ... ... ... ... ... ... do you want to try to put on the forth one also on your computer. ... ... hello Dorothy. ... ... running. ... ... ... the printer Philips connect to printer. ... ... ... ... ... I don't know how we can do that. no I mean the screen. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... no I think it's fine that you can switch between. ... ... ... ... also don't you think. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... manually arrange. ... ... ... ... ... Gill instruments. kill everyone. I will destroy everyone. ... ... ... ... ... ... I'm just never done on your computer to my computer. ... ... ... ... ... what's the best way what is the black cable Cars Nottingham. ... ... ... little red donkey ringtone. ... ... wait. wide awake wide. wide awake wide awake. ... ... I think you have to look here you can see it on the screen. but I've been saying all the time. we live in Birmingham. ... ... ... ... ... I don't have any. I have seen the candidates. ... introduction in Sri Lanka. it's not working anyway. ... get my screen fixed. ... ... ... do you like to have like two of them here. ... ... ... ... ... ... I don't know what to say. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... so now me and I'll explain. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... hello it's performance. ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ...

# X, Y

In the 4th year of the Hardbakka Ruins Project, participants were invited to reflect on the death of industrial architecture. Several industrial and military sites around Bergen - including the Hegreneset grain silo designed by architect Per Grieg, military bunkers in Sandviken and the famous German WWII submarine bunker 'Bruno' in Laksevåg - anchored our discussion about the shifting role of security and the changing nature of labour practices.

Ruins act as emblems in the built environment, used to prop up political and historical myth-making. What can we learn today from these leftover spaces concerning contemporary ideas of work and production? What does their disuse or obsolescence tell us about the current economic and political situation? How has the idea of work been altered over the last century? How is the city of Bergen 'secured' today?

During the 1-week workshop, we visited, mapped and traced several former industrial and military sites in the Bergen area to gather research for a collaborative exhibition. Throughout the workshop we also had regular discussions about the changing landscape of contemporary capitalism - from theories concerning the widespread 'feminization' of labour (generalized precarity, waning social security) to the ever-insidious practices of 'securing' individuals and nations.

X,Y was one of the results of this workshop and discussions, as the final project of a collaboration between participants Lodewijk Heylen and Morten Falbach. It was a drawing machine, utilizing the existing infrastructure of the exhibition building, that required 3 people to operate and communicate synchronously.

2016

*Wood, paint, crayon (2,4m x 3,6m x 2,5m)*
Temporary installation at Hardbakka Ruins workshop and exhibition, Bergen (NO). In collaboration with Morten Falbach
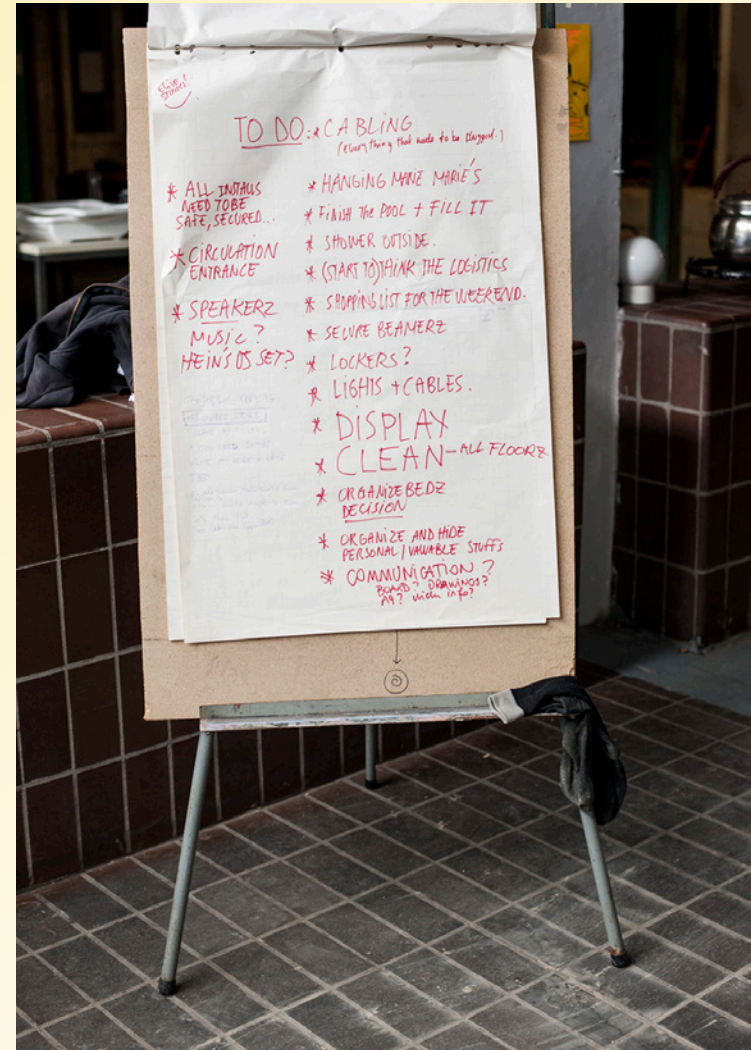
## BIN

BIN or the 'Belgian Institute for Normalisation' is an artistic think-tank initiated by Lodewijk Heylen in 2014. The project started out as an exploration of the possibilities for the artist-run space and the self-sustainable workplace. For one year the organisation was housed in the city of Turnhout, Belgium, where it offered studios, exhibitions, workshops and a gathering spot to artists, designers, writers, makers and students professionals and amateurs.

BIN has since developed into a travelling vessel for contemplation and design, supporting the ideas of emerging and established artists who venture far beyond the reaches of the contemporary art world. The institute mainly focusses on the function of normalisation in society and the role of the artist in it. BIN currently operates as a nomadic organisation in Antwerp.

www.b-i-n.be

TO DO: CABLING
(everything that needs to be charged)

* ALL INHAUS NEED TO BE SAFE, SECURED...
* CIRCULATION ENTRANCE
* SPEAKERZ MUSIC? HEIN'S OS SET?

* HANGING MANZ MARIE'S
* FINISH THE POOL + FILL IT
* SHOWER OUTSIDE.
* (START TO) THINK THE LOGISTICS
* SHOPPING LIST FOR THE WEEKEND.
* SECURE BEAMERZ
* LOCKERS?
* LIGHTS + CABLES.
* DISPLAY
* CLEAN — ALL FLOORZ
* ORGANIZE BEDZ DECISION
* ORGANIZE AND HIDE PERSONAL / VALUABLE STUFFS
* COMMUNICATION? BOARD? DRAWINGS? A4? WHICH INFO?

## Concrete Evidence: 1m (Workshop)

On the Autobahn you are between places or you move from place to place. What happens if you want to change direction? The motorway junction ensures that traffic is guided in the right direction. How does it work?

Workshop with the students from a secondary school in Schöneberg (Berlin) on the subject of motorway junctions and overpasses. Keywords: Different perspectives (frog and bird perspective), exercises to gain insight into the effect of the motorway junction: overpasses - entry and exit areas - observation of the distribution.
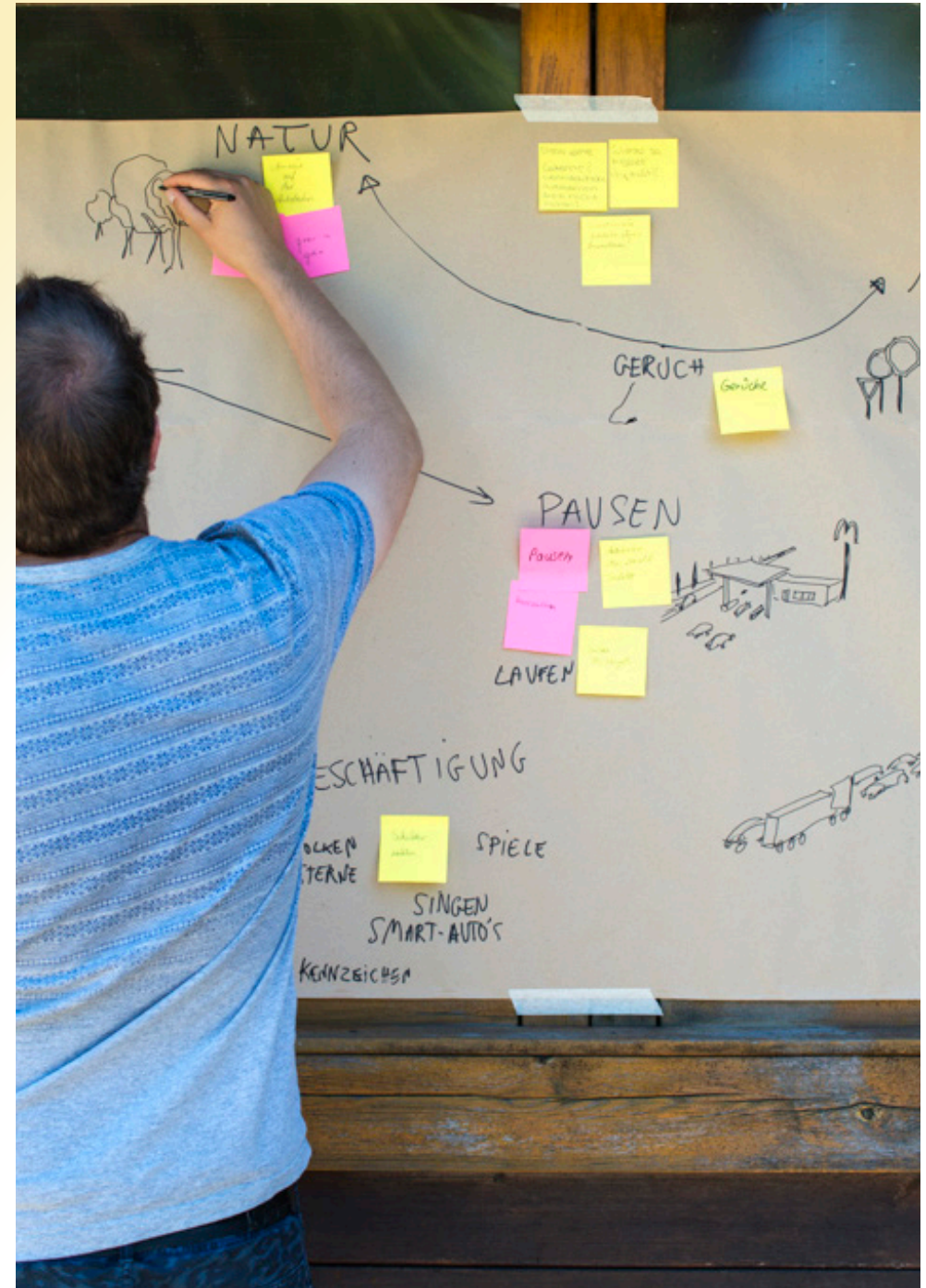
2015

The workshop took place on and round the highway and the art work Concrete Evidence: 1m at the Hans-Baluschek Park in Schöneberg, Berlin, from 2 to 6 Juli 2015.
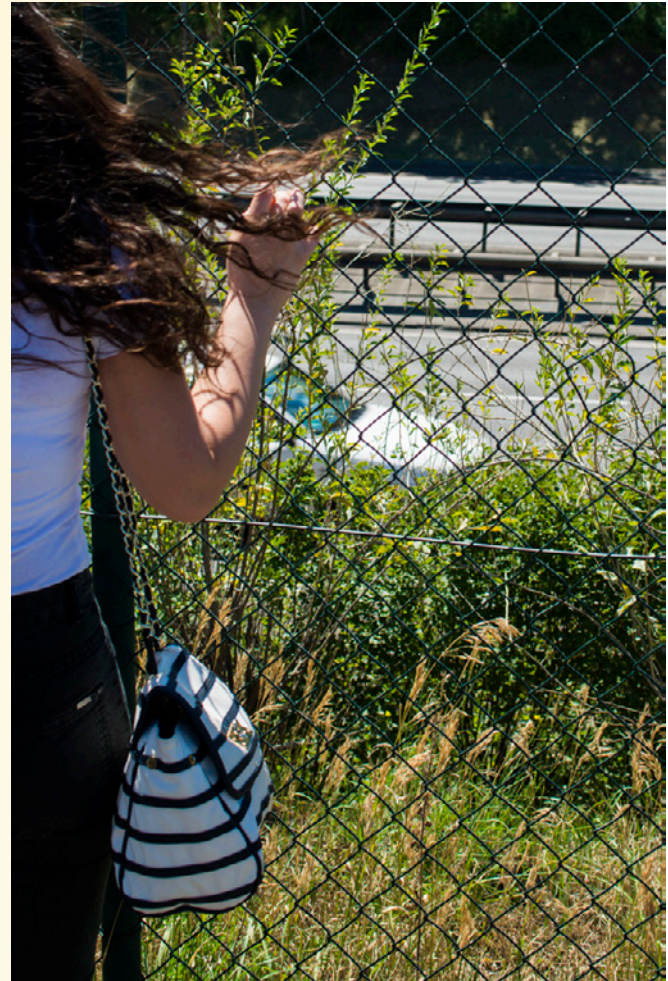
# EXHIBITIONS

## Principles of Precision

Performance demonstrating the Withworth Three Plates Method.



2023
Sandstone, sandbags, rubber, hammer, chisel, brush
Performance at *violet* (Antwerp, BE)

## Past Proposals, Future Projects

Exhibition bringing together a series of impossible artistic proposals or intentionally unrealistic interventions, for past and future projects.
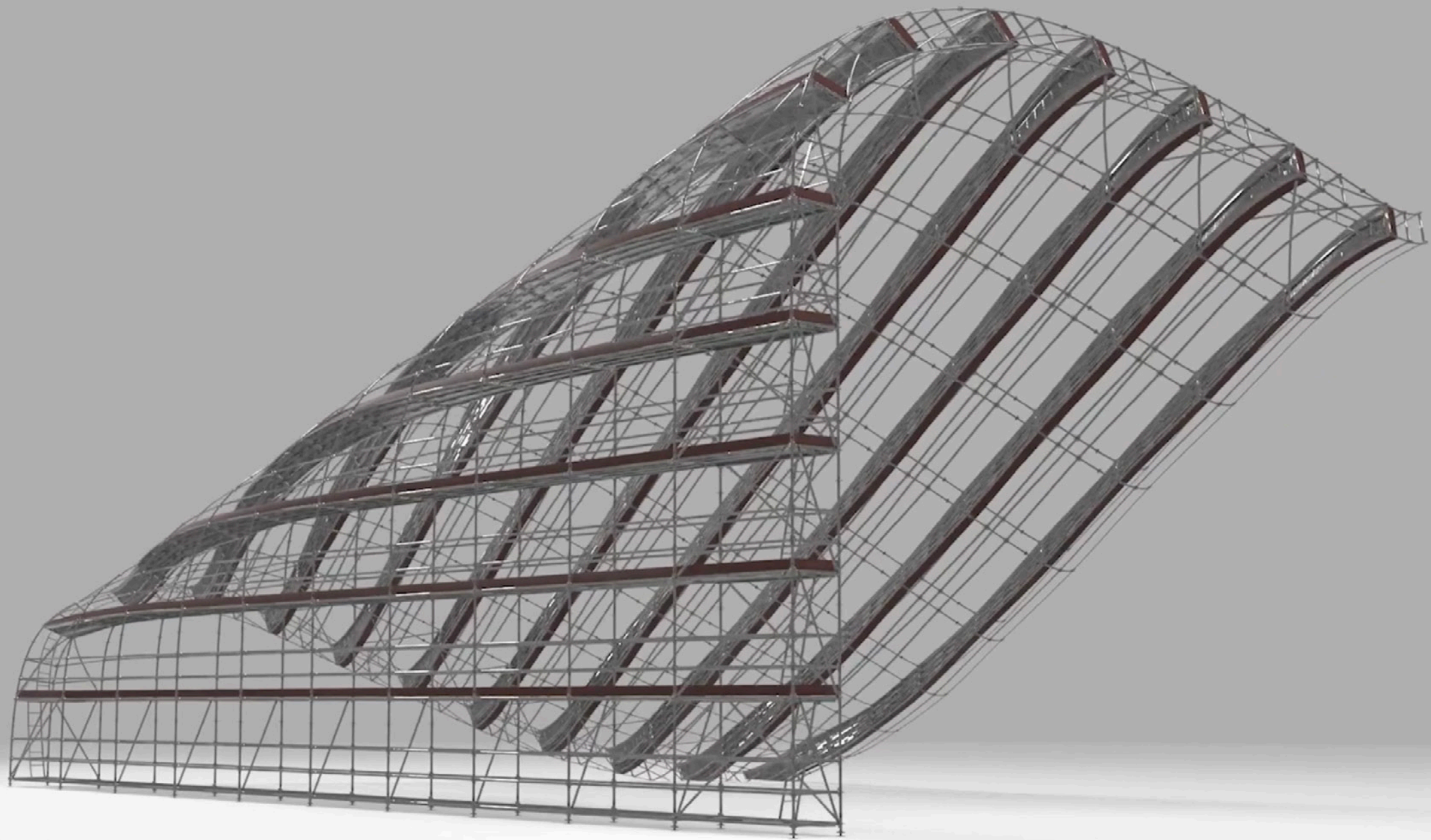


2022
Various collages and assemblages, models and projections
Exhibition at *Dingen Die Niet Verkopen,* together with Aaron Victor Peeters (Antwerp, BE)

## Concrete Evidence: x (III)

Art installation and residency questioning the reusability of concrete as the world's most used construction material.



2017

*Pallet rack (variable sizes), various laboratory materials, sand, cement, pebbles, mattress, pallets, plastic cases, rolling bottles*

Installation exhibited during residency at CC Zwaneberg, Heist-op-den-Berg (BE)

## Concrete Evidence: x (I)

Art installation and residency questioning the reusability of concrete as the world's most used construction material.

2015

*Conveyor belts, concrete, laboratory equipment, rolling bottles, hydrochloric acid, various containers*

Installation and performance during TAILOR MADE, AIR Antwerpen, Antwerpen (BE)

## Cabine de Projection: Powder and Sand

Abrasive blasting, better know as sand blasting, is an industrial technique in which blasting material (often called the media) is propelled by pressurised air onto a surface. Depending on the media, the pressure and the airflow, the surface can be gently scraped, cleaned or destroyed. This projection of media nearly always takes place in confined, well vented areas to prevent the machine operator from working in dusty and unhealthy conditions. Cabins, hermetically closed and suctioned to prevent dust from spreading and blurring vision.

When operating the machine, the pressure sets in and projects onto the target. It scrapes away the surface, slowly but effectively. The nozzle focusses the media into a fine and conic blast. The affected material decays, it disappears layer after layer. In a way, it simulates the natural erosion. The washing of the seas, the raging of the sand in the desert. The friction of the media erases the canvas, transforms it into sand, into dust. It sets again onto the bottom of the cabin, leaving a moon-like landscape. Inside the protective helmet, the operator hears only the soothing hiss of the fresh-airflow entering the mask. Seeing through square glass eye-screen is the only way to control what is happening. That and the constant recoil of the hose.

The room is continuously bombarded by ricocheting particles, everything is exposed. Only the most durable materials can resist, and even then just for a while. The walls are matt, powdery. Nothing remains shiny of polished.

2014

POWDER AND SAND is a research theme, in which the possibilities of sand blasting are investigated. The effects of abrasion on natural materials such as granite or wood are unpredictable and are prone to many factors. Material tests and equipment tests are necessary to fully understand the potential of the technique as way to create and destroy.

The exhibition CABINE DE PROJECTION ran from September 2014 to Oktober 2014 at Odradek Gallery as an overview of this research, exemplifying the blast chamber as a projection room, as an atelier and as a isolated working area. It was the result of a residency at Odradek.

## Reformator Universalis

Neverending project of designing plans of existing and imaginary motorway interchanges. All interchanges are functional in an infrastructural way, but the reality oftentimes prevents construction.

2014

*Plotted graphic, retroflective foil and metal panel (90 x 60 cm (each))*
*Set of 20 panels*

With the support of Fero NV
Exhibited at E, LIIIm3, Antwerp, (BE)
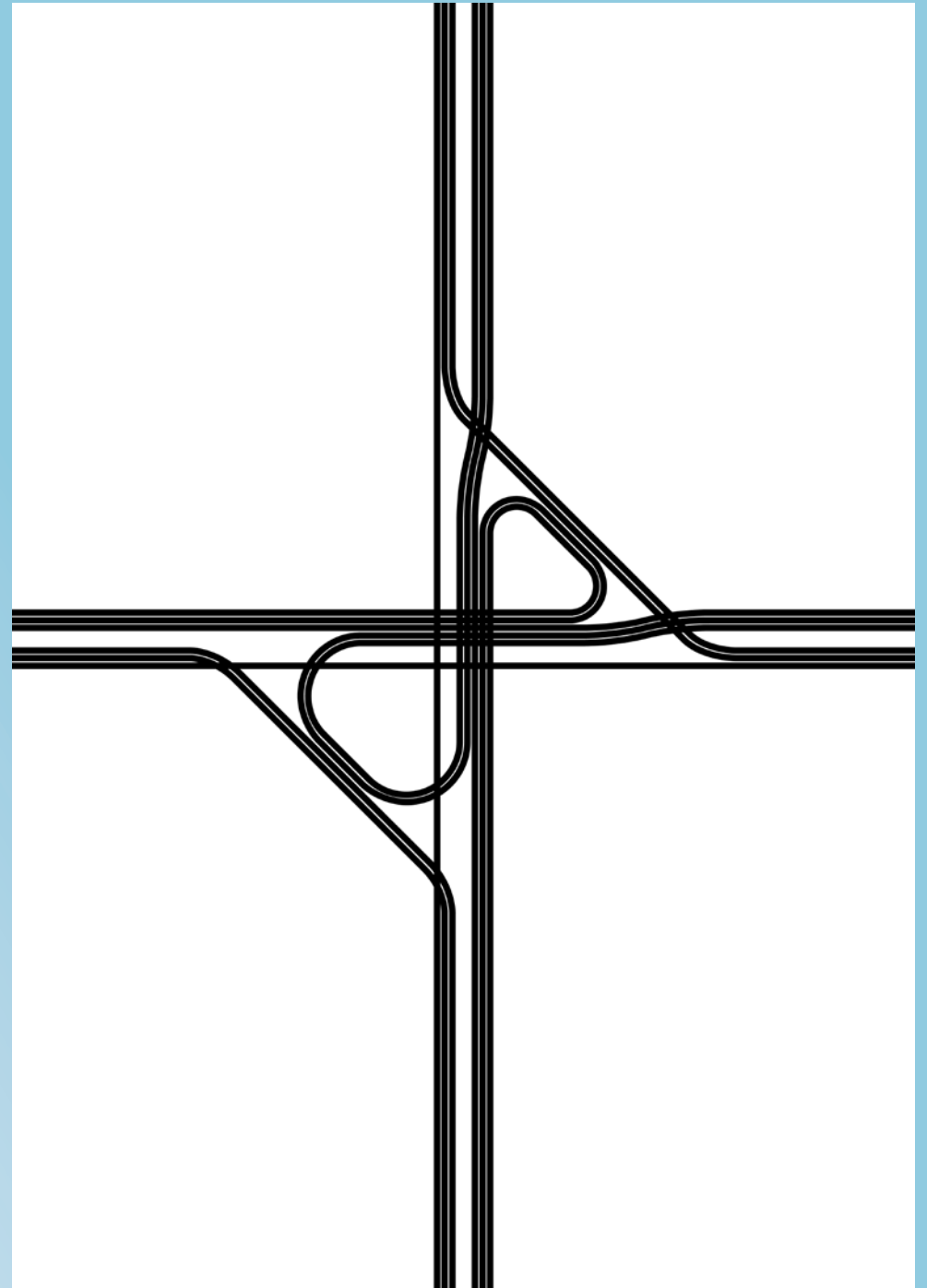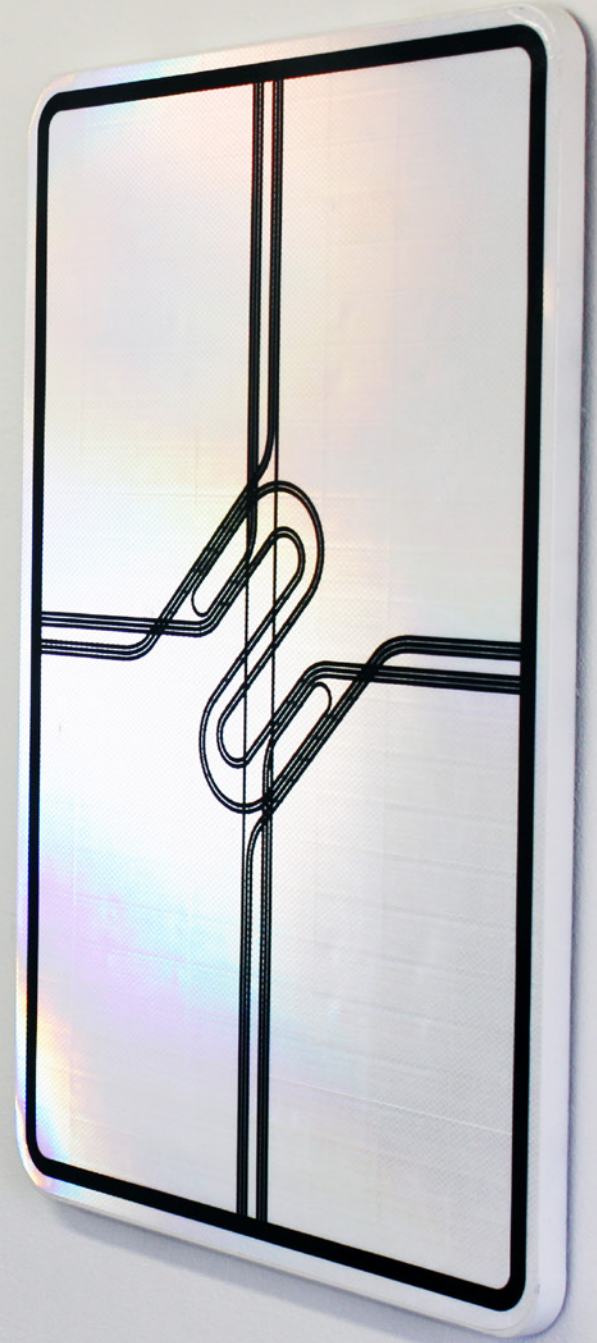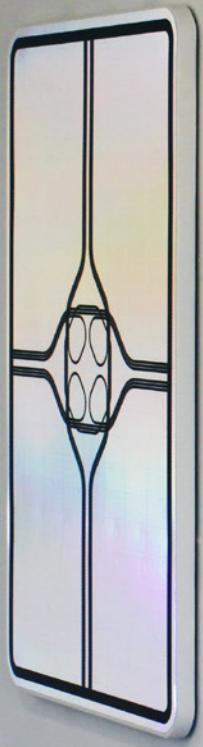
## Everything, Now

Proposal for a performance parcours, complementary to the public presentation and defense of the doctoral thesis *'Everything, Now'*. Multiple non-stop performances take place during the presentation, and reference several speculations on the artist of the future, made in the thesis.

Like one big reenactment of a possible future, *Everything, Now*, presents an eerie, yet recognisable scene of art production in times of all-encompassing computational influence.

The first performance illustrated depicts a setting of workers continuously building a path whilst others are removing it. Like a snake biting its own tail, the path meanders the terrain in a never-ending race of completion versus removal.
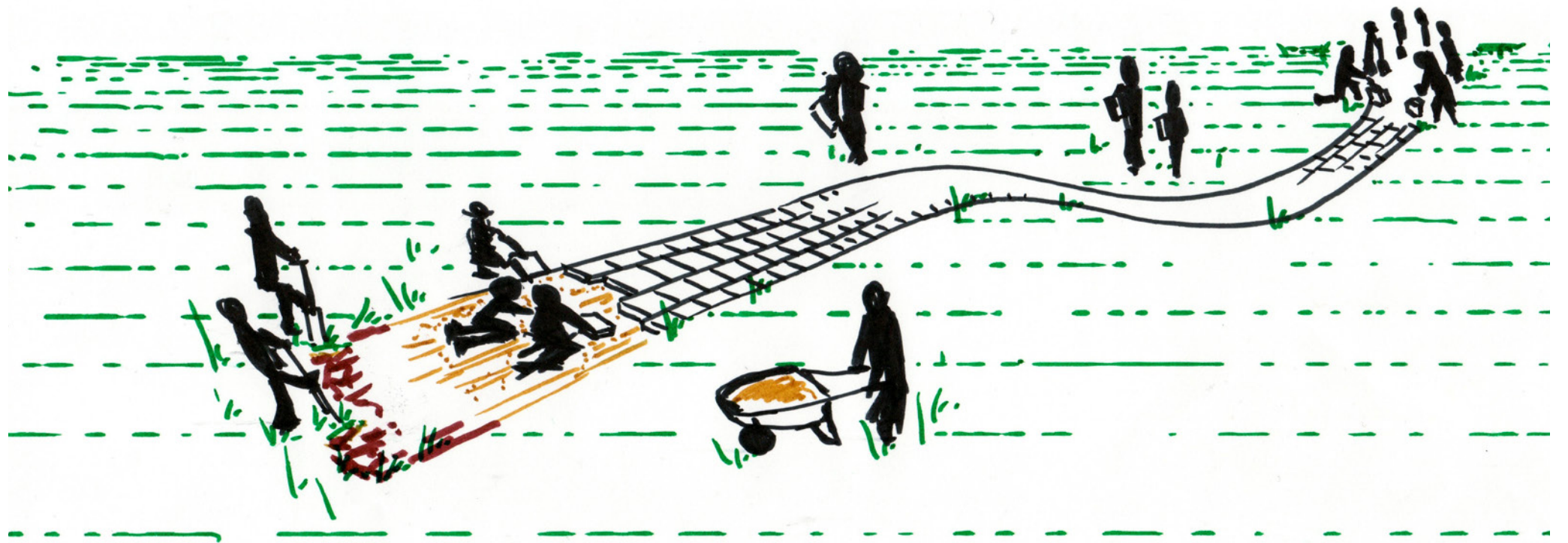
The second is called *Reenactment of a Demolition*, in which a building is first constructed in order to destroy it, questions the nostalgic nature of reenactments and their capacity for the reinterpretation of history. The irreversibility of a demolition makes the idea of a reenactment ever more absurd, but simultaneously also more striking, more permanent.
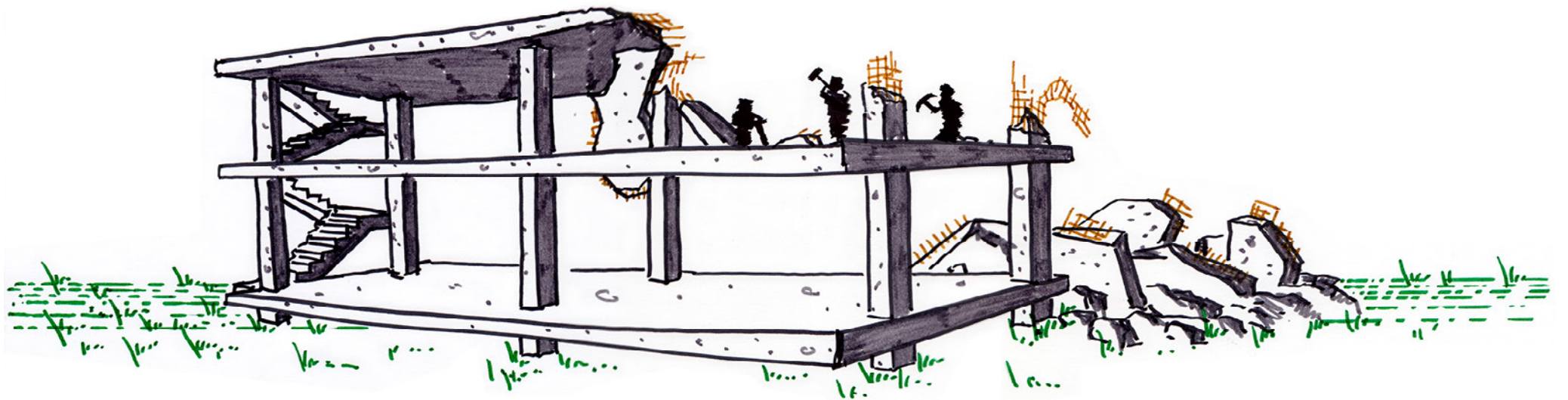
2021
*Everything, Now* took place on the 3rd of May 2021, yet due to the Covid-19 pandemic the performances were postponed.

www.everythingnow.be

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Everything, Now

Lodewijk Heylen

# EVERYTHING, NOW

The Role of the Artist in an Automated Future

Lodewijk Heylen

## Luck of the Draw

*Given for one instant an intelligence which could comprehend all the forces by which nature is animated and the respective situation of the beings who compose it—an intelligence sufficiently vast to submit these data to analysis—it would embrace in the same formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the lightest atom; for it, nothing would be uncertain and the future, as the past, would be present to its eyes.*[1]

Randomness, as we understand it, is a cognitive creation, a concept we apply in the present to classify events without phenomenal precedence or preordained certainty. There are those events during which actions lead to entirely predictable outcomes, and there are events during which actions might lead to any of various, less certain outcomes. When a certain outcome is expected but does not materialise, we commonly associate the deviation with randomness; it is a random "turn of events," we say.

Declaring his die cast, in English translation, Caesar knew that he had to confront the unforeseeable future that followed. But the etymology of the translation from the Latin alea iacta est is notable. The word aleae is a reference to dice by way of a reference to chance, to stakes, or to risk in English. The French aléatoire, derived from aleae, can be similarly defined as "random," or subject to coincidence with uncertain results. But this etymological history holds a telling dissonance in definition: a die-roll is open only to restricted randomness, to the numbers one through six. Rolls of seven and up are discarded as possibilities. Dice give us a sense of security: we may be hit with a four or a five, but never a nine. However, if, by some inexplicable occurrence of unrestricted randomness, we find a 2,649 or the letter f on a six-sided die, we would be flabbergasted by what we once thought a sheer impossibility.

Aléatoire, therefore can be regarded as the preconditioned, collectively promised limitation of possible futures. It is a game of chance and not coincidence, randomness refined into numbers, into odds and wagers, infinite possibilities into likely probabilities. As with any game, its rules are defined at the start.

Stepping outside of these rules disqualifies the game. The game—and thus, our understanding of how the future could play out—becomes senseless without them.

Similar to the game, the machine transforms randomness into the limitation of numbers. It can only reproduce what is expected. To see in it a device which could produce an intelligence sufficiently vast to comprehend the forces which animate nature, is to confuse random with aléatoire. Yet much like playing a game of Rummikub, hoping for the luck of the draw, we use machines in the hope they allow us a glimpse of the future, only to be disappointed when the odds are against us.

The performance Luck of the Draw (2021) stages two players attempting to play a game of Rummikub, but only play when they can finish it with their first hand. When the right numbers are not picked, they start over by taking new tiles. This continues until the game is won. Displayed next to the game table, is an early version of the mechanical calculator. The standardised logic of the machine contrasts the futile human endeavour of beating the odds.

# Art and Automation: The Role of the Artist in an Automated Future

**Abstract**

Rapid development in automated technology is the catalyst for a paradigmatic change in society. Exponential growth of machine learning and AI applications may bring to an end the monopoly on creative production currently claimed by the arts. In this new world, the position of the artist as the producer of authentic human experience wavers. Considering various models of an automated future, this research aims to outline the possible modus operandi of the artist in changing productive environments.

## Neoliberalism and Automation

Through the past few decades our society has grown increasingly neoliberal in its principles, foregrounding certain fundamental economic ideas — e.g. efficiency, marginal utility, computability, standardization, specialization, globalization — above others. These principles have bled into our personal, sensory understanding and making of the world around us; as such, it is safe to speak of a dominant neoliberal hegemony, unconsciously built into our daily habits. [1] Neoliberal conceptualizations of an endless, expansive commodity market influence our views on, for instance, labor, freedom, safety, authenticity, humanity, and value. Too, they reappear and reiterate themselves in our human interactions.

The purpose of this study is to focus on one of the major excesses of the neoliberal thinking: the rapidly increasing application of automation.

Automation can be seen as the installation of devices, physical or virtual, that replace repetitive or regular actions. Normalization of this sort is based on conventions or statistics amassed through experience, and hinges on the predictability of the future. It is the logical extension of an archaic human habit —that is, to control and anticipate the future, to augment and transcend the human condition of the unknown.

## Efficiency and Authenticity

Yet, under influence of neoliberal thought, automation is mostly an instrument of efficiency. The quest for efficiency, in fact, drives the engine of the automatization altogether. Inefficiency is seen as the source of all problems, as something to be solved by means of ever-progressing technological advance. This constant yearning for efficiency has been largely a frustration of the markets of industry and everything that revolves around it: production, transportation, distribution, sales, stocks, information and services demand less and less loss from logistical friction. But when the world becomes the market, as in the neoliberal model — when the disruptive force of technology surpasses the threshold of commerce, and seeps into the spheres of private and community life — the agency of automation becomes more than a luxury commodity. It renders human action burdensome and ultimately redundant. Automation has become, in many aspects, the opposite of authenticity, creativity, culture, nature, and even humanity itself — the opposite of human production.

The all-encompassing influence of automation will continue to have a profound impact on the fabric of society, as data-driven research presents automation services that had never before existed. Entrenched local jobs are already being replaced by robots, services are streamlined by algorithms, and traditional enterprises are made superfluous by the disruptive technological economy. Through the development of machine learning in combination with the Internet of Things, among other technological advances, these automation services are bound the expand tremendously.

Estimates suggest that anywhere from 47 to 80 percent of current jobs are likely to be automatable in the next two decades. [2] Certain professions are more prone to automation than others, but nothing suggest that the practice of the artist, in its current form and convention, is immune to this evolution.

Still, history proves the malleability of the artistic profession: Under the influence of early industrialization, the anonymous craftsman became a creative author; 20-century advancements further transformed this craftsman into a avant-garde critic. Technological progress in materials production during the modernist era billed the artist as author of the authentic.

Authenticity, defined as the antithesis of automation, implies the involvement of human actions. It suggests that there is a human author, a person who has at some point made a creative decision to produce something: man must be behind the

wheel. [3] Authenticity is the difference between something real and something fake; without necessarily rejecting the use of tools, machines or computers, authenticity defies mass production, standardization and reproduction.

**Creativity in the Time of Machine Learning**
Assuming that
a)        the role of the artist in society is ever adapting to new social situations, in many ways influenced by advancements of technology, currently pushing the profession into that of a producer of authenticity
b)        the urge for authenticity originates from a reaction against the sprawls of the comprehensive generalization and globalization of everyday life, giving rise to the premise that only the human touch can create something genuine or original and
c)        the outsourcing of human action through a rapidly accelerating development of information technology and data driven automation is laying the groundwork for a shift in the general mentality towards established traditions, of which the dispositions are not yet known
it is possible to imagine a future in which art may deviate once again from its present purpose.

Computational learning, neural networking and other systems of data mining will have a profound impact on our perception of the authentic, not only in the field of art but far beyond. Lines will become blurred between human creation and the inauthentically re-created, between human production and the mindlessly re-produced, between imagination and the re-imagined.

What will the value of creativity be if it can be automated? The goal of this artistic study is not only to discover the effects of automated machine learning emulating the labor of the artist, but to imagine what an adaptation of the artist in relation to this evolution could entail.

**References**
1. Srnicek, N., & Williams, A. (2015). Inventing the Future. Postcapitalism and a World Without Work
2. Frey, C.B., & Osborne, M. (2013). The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?
3. Dutton, D. (2003). Authenticity in Art in The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics

2019

Talk at ISCMA Hong Kong on the subject of Art Machines and Machine Learning.
https://www.cityu.edu.hk/iscma/

# The Last Meeting

Information technology has long surpassed its purpose as a lifeless, functional tool—it now has an agency of its own. It has extended our bodies into devices, expanded our brains into networks, and moved us beyond our human capacities through the machine-automated elimination of inefficiency. Social media and telecommunications, service networks and interactive appliances, navigational positioning and tracking systems, personalised search engines and instant, ubiquitous access to the largest collection of data in the world—all of these are active agents in processing and steering our social and political lives.

When humanity—with all its flaws, irregularities and oddities—is transformed into data, a new modus operandi of automation arises: customs and cultural habits become calculable standards; the desires and fetishes of the individual shift into building blocks for citizens of the future; the randomness of human interaction and societal dynamics converts into a prewritten script. When the input we give the network turns into a compulsory feedback loop, the world becomes a digital commonwealth run by data-driven balancing protocols.

The Last Meeting is an attempt to transcend the individual incapability to grasp the complex. Through the gathering, we seek to investigate the possibilities and dangers of incorporating contemporary technology into policy- and decision-making, synthesising the phenomenal and the computational. The Last Meeting is a meta-meeting—a meeting in which to consider the possibility of never again holding another meeting. It is, we propose, the last, final meeting.

2019
The Last Meeting took place from July 11th until July 21st
Verbeke Foundation, Kemzeke, Belgium
www.thelastmeeting.net

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thelastmeeting.net/e2h.php?_=ALastMeeting

Thesaurus    Interglot    Translate
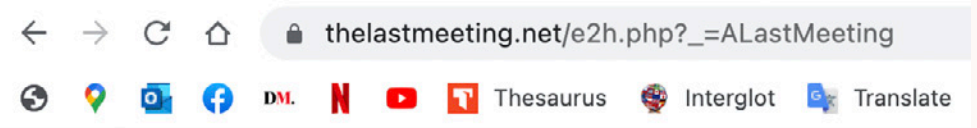
1 *Introduction
2 *Parameters
3 *Roles
    *the guide
    *the documenter
    *the moderator
    *the organizer
    *the initiator
    *the cook
    *the opportunist
    *the guest
4 *The Protocol
    0. Select & distribute resources
    1. Arrive, settle, introduce
    2. Look around
    3. Set up a common ground
    4. Travel together, expand the geographical context
    5. Introduce a new and external feature
    6. Analyse: narrow the scope
    7. Mind your body and space
    8. Synthesize
    9. Stop & share
    10. Evaluate
5 *Tools