

Introduction to Stedelijk Statements: Patricia Pisters

Worlding the Brain

3 November 2017

Teijn Auditorium

Good evening! Thank you all for being here! I am very happy and honored with your presence and interest in this edition of Stedelijk Statement on Worlding the Brain. Before I introduce the guests and program of this evening, I want to start by thanking the Stedelijk Museum for this wonderful invitation to curate this evening. And not only for the invitation, but also for the enormous efforts of the Stedelijk team to produce this evening. So Margriet Schavemaker, Britte Sloothak, Henri Sandront, Max Litjens, Bente van der Brugh and all others that have been involved from the Stedelijk, my sincere thanks for this collaboration that involved so many elements, including collaborating with our graphic designers Anton Weflo and Johanna Ehde.

The idea of Worlding the Brain was a collectively born idea and as many of you know we are currently also hosting an international conference on this topic at the University of Amsterdam, bringing together artist, neuroscientist, and humanities scholars. And so I also want to thank my partners from our research group on neuroaesthetics and neurocultures at ASCA, Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, for many years of collaboration and co-hosting this second WTB conference at the UvA: Julian Kiverstein, Stephan Besser, Machiel Keestra, Flora Lysen and Halbe Kuipers, thank you! And of course I want to thank all my guests who participating this evening, but I will return to all of them.

I just need to thank one more person before we start, and that is fashion designer Mattijs van Bergen, whose creation I am wearing tonight. I just have to mention that this kimono suite is from his collection "Photo to Fashion" for which he collaborated with the Netherlands Photo Museum. The print I am wearing today is from a photo from one on Netherlands first nature photographers, Richard Tepe. Tepe used glass plate negatives in making his photos, even in the 1930s when the flowers on this fabric were made (and when different options for photo negatives were available).

Let me now move to a very short introduction of the evening. We have a full program and I do not want to take too much time from all my guest, and I would like to start with a short film by Guillaume Dumas, who was with us in Amsterdam yesterday, but today had to be back at the Institute Pasteur in Paris where he works as a neuroscientist. But he also crosses disciplinary borders, and that is what Worlding the Brain is all about.

FILM: PHI

Dumas made this film to explain to his parents (and the world) what his PhD research was about: how to understand the other with neuroscientific measurements; discovering that synchronized brain measurements might be one way of understanding emotions, the other, and the connections between each other and the world and inventing ways to do this. This is one approach towards a more social, engaged and enworlded brain that is very valuable and will continue to offer many new insights.

But what happens when we take the brain even more radically out of the scientific lab, into the world. All my guests tonight cross several disciplinary borders and provide us with new perspectives on the brain, our body and the world, presenting their own perspectives on the relationships between the arts, humanities/philosophy and neuroscience. Because for too long these fields have been separated as unrelated fields, strangers moving in separate worlds. However, the complexity of the problems and questions that we have to deal with in an accelerating world ecology, need a re-opening of dialogue and collaboration. Or, as Hannah Arendt once said: "To think with an enlarged mentality means that one trains one's imagination to Go Visiting". Worlding practices, worlding the brain need this 'go visiting' of Arendt, also described by Donna Haraway in her latest book *Staying with the Trouble*, where she says:

"Visiting is not an easy practice; it demands the ability to find others actively interesting, ... to cultivate the wild virtue of curiosity, to retune one's ability to sense and respond, and to do this all politely! What is this sort of politeness? It sounds more than a little risky. Curiosity always leads its practitioners a bit too far off the path, and that way lie stories."

My first guests tonight, Erik and Ronald Rietveld, are opening that dialogue in their own "Go Visiting" practice of RAAAF (Rietveld Architecture-Art-Affordances) that brings together the practices of architecture, philosophy, art and science. I am very honored that tonight they want to show for the first time their work *Trusted Strangers*, which they will introduce themselves. I will here only say that I think that the concept of 'Trusted and Familiar Stranger' might also serve as a great metaphor for what I hope *Worlding the Brain* stands for: to create spaces of unexpected encounters, to engage in new connections between arts, sciences and humanities that instead of strangers, should become more familiar with each other. I am also very happy that after the presentation of *Trusted Strangers*, Alva Noe will give a response to this project. Alva arrived only a few hours ago from Berkeley and I am grateful you have accepted this invitation to speak since your sharp and perceptive work on art, philosophy and neuroscience is always thought provoking and inspiring.

After that, we move to Zoe Beloff, whom I have met many years ago when she was pioneering with CDroms, and many times in between, always around new art works, that often involves original archival research and restaged materials, ranging from Coney Island Amateur Psychoanalytic Society Dream Films, to works inspired by 19th century

somnambulists, hysterics at the famous asylum la Salpetriere or n installation about Miss Natalia A. a patient of Victor Tausk, who described in 1919 the influence of media machines in mental disorders. Tonight she will talk about her new installation Emotions Go to Work, which is a critical engagement with corporatization of emotions. Zoe, thanks for giving us a glimpse in your world and brain tonight.

The program here in this auditorium before the break will conclude with a column from Jason Tougaw, who will read from his autobiographic book *The One You Get*. One reviewer about this book starts his review as follows: Aside from being a writer, he's a literature professor at Queens College, where he teaches courses on literature and: dreams, neurodiversity, the mind, the brain, and consciousness. But don't be fooled. He is not stuffy. He is also a DJ and A walking new wave encyclopedia". I don't know how much of all this we get to know in a 12 minutes, but I think it serves enough as an introduction.

At 8.15 we have a short break, just to grab a drink and move to the entrance hall where you perhaps already have seen the beautiful images from The Art of Neuroscience, made by neuroscientist who show us their work outside the laboratory with an eye for the aesthetic qualities of all these scientific images. At 8.30 we will reconvene around the podium in the entrance hall where I will present the guests of the second part of the evening: filmmaker Maartje Nevejan and her VR-team and artists Karen Lancel and Hermen Maat will also introduce their work that can be visited in the Audi room; at 9.15 I will introduce psychiatrist and musician Esther van Fenema who will perform her column together with violist Floor Braam. After which I will return one more time to announce closing images from the National ballet. But for now, let's start with RAAAF, Erik and Ronald Rietveld.

Entrance Hall

We're back again! I would like to introduce you the artists whose work you can visit in the next room here. They will introduce the particular project themselves, but let me just express my great happiness and gratitude that you have been willing to show your work here during this Stedelijk Statement.

Maartje Nevejan is a fantastic filmmaker whose energy and imagination makes every project grow into a completely original, wild and important multi-layered project. Her television series *Couscous & Cola*, for instance, became an expanding universe, with and about multi-cultural youngsters. She will tell you herself why her current project *If You Are Not There Where Are You* is so incredibly relevant for our understanding and worlding of the brain.

Karen Lancel en Hermen Maat engage our brains in a differently intimate way into the world. Their work always involves new technologies exploring new engagement with the world. In Teletrust, for instance, they developed a "data veil" to question privacy and trust in a data driven world; questions that return in a different way in E.E.G. Kiss that you can experience in the next room but which will also be introduced first.

Audi Gallery

And now, my last guests for tonight. Ester van Fenema and Floor Braam. Esthere is violist and psychiatrist, creator of the Depression Gala, to raise more awareness for depression. And Floor Braam is a fantastic violist, performing as solist and with chamber orchestras.. I am really happy and honored that you took the challenge to my request for this experiment, to perform a closing moment of an evening about the brain in art and science. I am as excited as you to see what you are going to present us. After your performance I will just briefly return with one more short image, but now the floor is all yours!

Entrance Hall

We've come to the end of this evening. I want to thank one more time all my guests!!! All the team from the Stedelijk & all of you for your presence. The final words are no words but images from the National Ballet. I could not think of any other better way to close this evening to my thanks also to the National Ballet & makers of this short film on The Human Brain and how we all care for connection.