

NICKEL VAN DUIJVENBODEN  
JACK SEGARS AND  
IN CONVERSATION WITH  
MAARTEN OVERDIJK

OPEN

hey you!

25/1/2013

Maarten Overdijk [MO]  
Jack Segbars [JS]  
Nickel van Duijvenboden [NvD]

MO

Dear Jack Segbars,  
As I am writing this email you are probably working on the preparations for the show at 1646. I hope all is working out nicely, and considering the temperature outside, I hope your studio has central heating. It is my intention to make some inquiries into your work, and into the upcoming show in particular. I started by doing some reading about it.

As I understand it, your work examines (and even shapes) forms of discourse that are current in art practice besides 'the work of art as exhibited', such as text-as-art, critique and reflection. It also addresses the various roles that are involved in this, including that of artist, curator and reviewer.

I understand that the upcoming show in a way revolves around a previous show, namely 'How to look out' by Marijn van Kreijl at the Hallen in Haarlem. In fact, there is this previous show, a text by Nickel van Duijvenboden that accompanied it, and a published review of it by your hand that are together taken as a point of departure.

I can see how the various actors and forms of discourse are set into place here. Also because you have invited Marijn and Nickel to participate, which makes you curator of the show, and them your artist accomplices.

When reading I came across the notion of 'transitory environment'. It seems to refer to a process that is somehow important in your work. What do you mean by it? A state wherein roles and forms of discourse briefly merge into each other and produce the conditions for each other? Is this what you are aiming for with the show? An intriguing thought. I am sure you have something to say about it.

JS

Dear Maarten,  
Thanks for your questions. The idea for the show is to take the constellation of positions of art-production as starting point and to forgo on solely that of the artist position. By this I mean to focus on the different positions besides that of the artist as producer of artefacts, that together constitute the conglomerate of art-production. Besides the figure of the artist this means the figure of the curator, the institute, education, critique, theory and politics of course. These together produce the artistic field in which the notion of and on art is formulated, and in which through cross-pollination and feedback the very notion and function of art is generated. For this show I bring into play two of these positions that normally are considered problematic toward and/or have an ambivalent relation with what is conceived as the artist-idea: curatorship and critique.

The last years I have focused on curatorship and writing as artistic practice. I have been engaged in a curatorial program called Brak in Rotterdam in which I took on the role as curator

THIS FOLDER IS PART OF A SERIES OF PUBLICATIONS LINKED TO THE PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES OF 1646

Anybody invited to realize a project in 1646 is asked to engage in conversation with a previously unknown correspondent.

This conversation takes place via e-mail and stretches through the whole period during which the artists develop their initial idea into final results. 1646 invites the correspondent at the other end of this contact to figure his/her way through this actual process.

In trying to picture what result the artists' work is going to, such exchange can become a reflection on the amount of otherwise untraceable choices of the moment which make up to the artists' practice.

Issued as part of the exhibition *Hey You!* by Jack Segbars in 1646 on January 25 2013.

This artist  
Jack Segbars + Nickel van Duijvenboden

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and worked with artist along this clear divided working-relation: I produced shows in collaboration with these artists. Result of these shows in the form of photographs of these shows will be part of the installation at 1646.

The other element is the position of critique. I've been engaged in writing reviews and writing in general on art or art-related topics the last years and in producing projects and publications in which, of course, the role and form of writing is prominent.

The review of Marijn's show at De Hallen became a perfect vehicle to explore these relations between the 'original' artwork and the usual considered derivatives: curatorship and writing/reflection since Marijn himself has addressed these issues in his work: he has incorporated the writing of Ad Reinhardt (and reflections on Malevitsj's work) into his show and has acted as curator. As interpreter in the form of critique my review, again is a new reflection in the long chain of reflections we call tradition, and in which theory, appropriation and the notion of originality play their role.

It was perfect that in this set-up Nickel van Duijvenboden, who is well versed in the topic of the relation between the artistic event and experience and the translation of these qualities into text/literature wrote an accompanying text in the catalogue that accompanies the Hallen show. He is a friend of Marijn and they share a history together. With this an extra element comes into play: that of the subjective history, the individual history and genealogy of artistic ideas. So here we have a set-up of an intricate and complex relationship between text and image, curator and artist, original and derivative, appropriator and

appropriated. To again take this as a starting point and to invite them both in a new show, all these issues are once more re-set. This maybe is the 'transitory environment' you mentioned in your question. It's the moment of overlap and transition. In this case between, which I believe to be insufficiently addressed relations.

NvD

*This seems like a good moment to break in and elaborate a bit on the history of our collaboration. In September 2012, Jack and I met at a gallery opening of Marijn's and discussed my participation in Jack's 'Brak' programme (a duo with Remco Torenbosch). It was immediately clear that we shared an ambivalence toward art production, and attempted to make sense of it through writing, each in our own way. At that point, I had grown disillusioned with literary writing within the art context - it felt like fighting a rearguard action - but Jack managed to convince me that this position was relevant and valuable, maybe even crucial. In Brak, text was a prominent element in the art works I showed. The works I now contribute to 'Hey you!' forms a reprise of that show. Simultaneously, they allude to Marijn's and Jack's influence on my process. The diary page diptych actually displays notes made directly after conversations I had with them. I've been in close contact with Marijn for some years now. Our discussions offer ample space for self-doubt, to a point where this in itself has become thematic. Our correspondence has seeped through in my literary work and conversely, his envelope drawing alludes to this correspondence as well. For me, this informal triangular*

discourse now forms an important element of the show - although, because of its confidential nature, it is necessarily oblique.

JS

Coming back, Maarten, your earlier question: "A state wherein roles and forms of discourse briefly merge into each other and produce the conditions for each other?" - I would say it has more to do with the undisclosed status of inter-dependency: theory or conceptual thought has long since been introduced into the nature of visual arts, the institutional set-up of art-praxis has brought to light the alliance with governance and politics and the function and position of art as societal actor. The role of the curator, the institute, theory and politics are kept vastly understated in the public functioning of art. For me it's a research into what remains as quality and possible function of the artistic. And to what extent the notion of the uniqueness of the 'artist' and the artistic event is upheld to serve the exclusive status of the arts.

MO

Dear Jack,  
Thank you for your elaborate response. Indeed, the show promises to be quite rich and multilayered. Heterogeneous might be a better word. Conceptually and materially.

With respect to the latter, I understand there will be a range of different media present in the show. I am curious to see how you will deal with the presentation of such diverse elements. It must be a challenge, or isn't it? With respect to the conceptual, I see two distinct but related

strands. On the one hand, the relations of the various producers that are active within the art world - and as you emphasize, the undisclosed status of their interdependence. On the other hand, there is the genealogy of artistic ideas, the appropriation of these ideas, and the problem of originality. Underneath this, moreover, I sense a critical stance.

I like the idea of seeing your review, Marijn's show, and Nickel's text as parts of a chain of reflections on a set of artistic ideas. A chain that stretches out towards you, and is continued by you, through appropriation, reproduction and adaptation. Appropriation, in a profound way, must be an important part of how artistic ideas develop.

It made me think of the use of this term in cultural psychology. Here, with respect to language, a speaker appropriates a word when he/she adapts it to his/her own semantic and expressive intention. By doing this - by bringing other peoples words into use - the speaker taps into a collective realm of meaning, one that builds on the language-users that preceded him/her, and of which he/she now becomes a part. This echoes an historical dimension, wherein ideas are recreated and revised, and novelty and uniqueness are relative. At the same time, this appropriation is not a static given. By adapting a word - or an image for that matter - to one's own use, that word or image is modified and becomes re-contextualized. It may even transform. With the risk of overstressing this comparison, I think there are some similarities here, wouldn't you agree?

It struck me, finally, that underneath your reflections there appears to be a strong critique of how certain parts

of the art world function. I think I can understand some of it. When you say that the role of the curator, the institute, theory and politics are kept understated in the public functioning of art, I can't help wondering: by whom? And for what reason?

JS

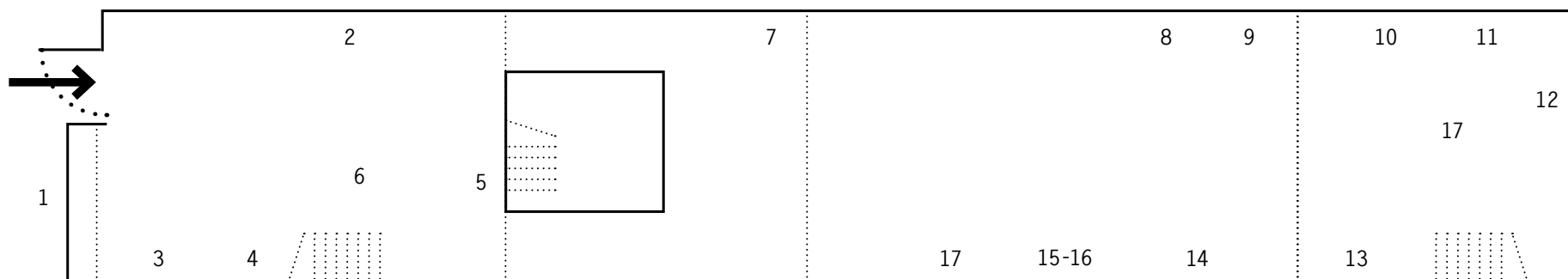
It's interesting you bring up the term appropriation in cultural psychology.

It's my firm belief that ultimately the paradox that exists in the praxis of modern art still continues and remains unresolved: art is meant to not only address life's key-questions and issues and in doing so (through reflection, abstraction and sublimation) elucidate these but finally needs to dissolve into it, in establishing an idealized co-existence between the two -art and life-. In this utopian state man's ambition, dreams and production would be synthesized. This formula and scenario is artificially kept from being realized by stating that ultimately art needs to remain in this suspended state of falling into life, the appropriation of it into either design, politics, governance or downright superfluousness. In this state of suspension its political status is established: it needs to be on the threshold of this appropriated status, in order to stay art and to keep it's political relevance and function. The end of art has often been proclaimed, the suspension of this final transition is explained as exactly this: resistance against appropriation. But obviously it is riddled by appropriation. Not only as you mention in the analogy with cultural psychology, in its own genealogy: it is an ongoing quality, building on historical tradition but certainly also in a more profound way as medium that is dependent on the perception and reception of it's users.

It is commodified by its usage and perception. In this constellation the other positions play a crucial role as the artist him/herself. Curators who select and translate between producer and user shape culture-production, and who establish the questions that need answering by artists, the topics deemed noteworthy and ultimately co-establish the artistic and cultural canon. The same goes for the theoretical field that provides for the conceptual and intellectual groundwork and societal embeddedness of the meaning of art. And of course politics provides for the bigger framework, regulating the infrastructure expressing ideological ideas. In all of this still the figure and quality of the artist, in spite of the obvious collaboration of production, is maintained as 'original', 'unique' and despite all still the emblematic avant-garde figure. It is a nice agreement in which responsibilities and tasks are allocated, and the public front is kept. In all of this the role of text is of importance, in it the transitions of fields and positions is given shape.

The idea for this show is of course not to pretend to resolve these issues but to focus on the intertwined nature of art-production. It will be complicated to forge these three different styles of artists and to fold the rigor of the conceptual idea for the show back into a visual experience. That I believe is what connects the three of us. A need to explore and to showcase what remains as artistic possibility in spite of it's embedded relation and troubled history.

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1. Jack Segbars  
*Leftovers, No agency (through the looking-glass), 2012*  
Plastic foil letter template  
ca. 50 x 40 cm
2. Marijn van Kreijl  
*Untitled (Zwart vierkant, 1915), 2011*  
Acrylic on paper  
335 x 355 cm
3. Jack Segbars  
*Misère, No More, once more, 2012*  
Acrylic on canvas  
151 x 151 cm
4. Nickel van Duijvenboden  
*Notes of 2011, Superimposed (in progress), 2012*  
Typewriter ink, paper, metal  
22,5 x 32 cm.
5. Jack Segbars  
*No agency, 2012*  
Acrylic on canvas  
51 x 51 cm

6. Jack Segbars  
*Leftovers, Misère, No More, once more, 2012*  
used tape, acrylics  
100 x 90 x 25 cm
7. Jack Segbars  
*Brothers in arms, 2010-2011*  
Acrylic on canvas  
240 x 180 cm and 51 x 51 cm
8. Jack Segbars  
*Brak 2.7, gerlach en koop and Martijn in 't Veld, 2012*  
Photographic print on dibond  
120 x 80 cm
9. Jack Segbars  
*Brak 4.1, Remco Torenbosch and Nickel van Duijvenboden, 2012*  
Photographic print on dibond  
150 x 100 cm
10. Jack Segbars  
*Brak 3, Frédéric Sanchez, 2012*  
Photographic print on dibond  
120 x 80 cm

11. Jack Segbars  
*Brak 2.7, gerlach en koop and Martijn in 't Veld, 2012*  
Photographic print on dibond  
120 x 80 cm
12. Jack Segbars  
*Brak 1, Evi Vingerling and Ton Schuttelaar, 2012*  
Photographic print on dibond  
150 x 100 cm
13. Jack Segbars  
*No agency (Remco Torenbosch), 2013*  
Acrylic on canvas  
51 x 51 cm
14. Jack Segbars  
*How to look out, 2012*  
Pencil on paper  
250 x 360 cm
- 15./16. Nickel van Duijvenboden  
*June 9, 2011, page 2: Is this phase a phase, or is this truly who we are and will we forever keep our friends and our momentum?, 2013*  
Gelatin-silver print, retouche ink, glass,  
20,5 x 25,5 cm

- Nickel van Duijvenboden  
*September 8, 2012, page 2: ...that being without a context was unbearable / ... that you reach a dead end eventually / That at some point you lose control, 2013*  
Gelatin-silver print, retouche ink, glass,  
20,5 x 25,5 cm
17. Marijn van Kreijl  
*Untitled (Tags: ReadyPost, 0409, Go Folks, Go Forth, Trust Your Brain, Trust Your Body), 2013*  
Gouache on paper  
124 x 93 cm
18. Jack Segbars  
*No agency, Marijn van Kreijl (stock), 2013*  
Video, 28 min., looped