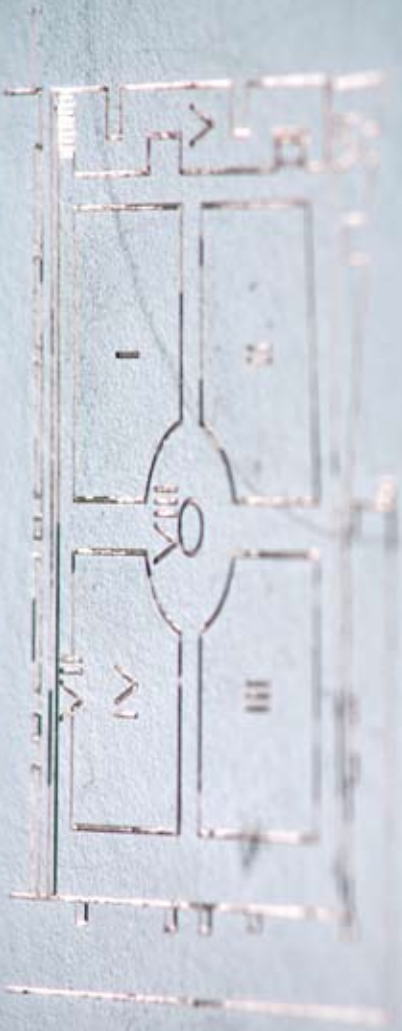


Symbiosis



CHARACTERS OF AN INDEFINITE SQUARE

Niets is in het intellect dat niet eerst in het zintuigelijke is waargenomen.

Nothing is found in the intellect which was not first found in the senses.

Aristotle

About half a year ago we started a project at Mariaplaats as part of the MAHKU project 'share the square', curated by the Finnish curator Mika Hannula. We decided to work together in our part of the project. The first idea we had for our Mariaplaats project was to make a performance in the form of an intervention: a kind of real life musical about the square. By doing so we wanted to turn everyday life into a special event showing everyday reality of Mariaplaats from a different perspective.

In this project we started a collaboration between all kinds of people who were, in one way or another, related to Mariaplaats. First there was the group of women who voluntarily take care of the cloister garden. They inspired us to use the garden as a first starting point for our project. We considered the gardening women to be a kind of mediator between the different visitors and users of the square. The name of the square invites to such thoughts since the name given of the square herself is commonly known as the mediator between mankind and the divine.

The direct consequence of this idea was that we started to involve other users of Mariaplaats and its garden. We decided for instance to involve musicians of the nearby HKU conservatory. We found three opera singers who were willing to take part in the project and we invited the carillonneur of the Dom tower, a former teacher of the conservatory, who could not participate because of his agenda in spite of his willingness to join the project.

During the rehearsals we started learning for instance that inviting the users of the square to read the texts inspired by the Magnificat, might be more fruitful for our project than singing it because it would change the position of our intervention: from performer to spectator while at the same time the position of the users and visitors of the square would change from spectator to performer. So we started to ask the public at Mariaplaats to take part at our project and read the texts of the songs that were sung by the opera singers. We were amazed by the energy that was released by this

intervention in the project. The visitors of Mariaplaats turned out to be the real stars! They showed much more of their personality than we had seen during the contacts we had during all the months of our previous research.

We learned from it that we should abandon our concept of the real life musical, imposing at the square our own definition of the people that are related to it. We discovered that the experiences we had during the process were more important to the everyday reality of Mariaplaats than the use of a fixed concept that was formulated at forehand. While doing the project, we ourselves got more and more involved in the place. We became insiders, part of the habitat of Mariaplaats instead of outsiders only trying to give a comment on the place.

We gradually started experiencing the project as a kind of symbioses between the different characters at the square. We found the concept of Symbiosis a striking characterisation of the cooperation between the different people involved, including ourselves, as well as it characterises the way all the people concerned use the square. The concept of Symbiosis

gives expression to our vivid experience of the significance of difference as the heart of the matter of working together. In this sense we actually experienced the statements on this matter in the lyrics that are used in the project. We also experienced the importance of listening to our senses. The quote of Aristotle at the beginning of this introduction (that has been repeatedly emphasised by successors like Kant, Nietzsche and Deleuze) became a vivid and enriching experience for us during the full time of the project.

While working at the project the appearance of the symbiosis constantly changed. Thus the Mariaplaats project can be seen as a constantly moving assemblage that differs every time in a similar way Mariaplaats itself changes every time you visit it. For us as artists all the different compositions and happenings at the square and during the project turned out to be the most interesting working material. We used the experiences that appeared during the collaboration itself, as a product of all our senses, to get a better understanding of what a place like Mariaplaats is and can be. This made the outcome of the project very surprising and made working on it an enjoyable and interesting experience.

Luciana Benaduce & Ron van Grootel

The songs for the performance at Mariaplaats were inspired on the twelve sentences of the Magnificat. Magnificat ('Magnificat anima mea Dominum') was sung by Mary when she visited her cousin Elizabeth and the latter recognised her as the mother from the messiah.

The Magnificat not only has a strong religious meaning, it also has a strong social-political connotation. It became a symbol of protest against dictatorship and is still being used as a protest song all over the world.

The singers sang two songs in Dutch, inspired by the magnificat that were written by us in collaboration with our friend Etienne Hesen. The first song "Zinding in de tijd" or "Vibration's in time" is following the second sentence from the Magnificat.

"Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae:
Ecce enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes."

*"His choice fell on his simple maid,
From now on all generations will call me blessed."*

The second song "Lied Van de Aanwezigheid" or "Song of Presence" is following the eight sentence from the Magnificat.

"Esurientes implevit bonis et divites dimisit inanes".

*"He gives plenty to the needy
But the rich will sent away empty-handed".*



Since we started our project we have been frequently visiting Mariaplaats. We talked to people, listened to stories, observed the place, got involved with the women that take care of the garden, listened to the music from the conservatory at the square, ate food together, discussed a lot about what we found by our senses and in the end we shared different experiences with different characters. This place became part of our space. Our project started as a laboratory experiment. We found out that Mariaplaats as a crossroads in the city not only has a beautiful garden; it also was confronted with social problems. We noticed that the neighbours were involved with the square and wanted to protect it against unoccupied people, the homeless and teenagers that spend their time there. We found a contrast between the use of the place and the constant threat of overruling it by one group or the other. The youngsters and the homeless people for instance constantly tend to try to dominate the garden by means of the specifics of their behaviour. On the other hand there is the high pitched mosquito sound used in the corridor, that can only be heard by children and teenagers, to expel the teenagers from particular places at the garden.

Mariaplaats always was a meeting point as well as a departure point. We talked to people who say that they still prefer to wait for their train to catch at MP instead of waiting at the nearby station. But the word collection point has a sour connotation if you imagine that the square was used as a collecting point for the confiscated goods of the Jewish inhabitants that were expelled from the city during the second world war as well as a departure point for prisoners during that dark period of time.

Lied 1

Zinding in de tijd

Vinden lavendel en rozemarijn
Hun kleuren en geuren
Hun geuren en kleuren
In de zinding van de tijd.

Geven lavendel en rozemarijn
Hun geuren en kleuren
Hun kleuren en geuren
Aan de zinding van de tijd

Wat er klein is gemaakt
Overwoekerd geraakt
Door eenvormigheid van de orde
Met vrijpostigheid groot geworden

Maak plaats! ... het toont een pril gezicht
Vindt plaats ... het zoekt een evenwicht

Op dorre grond bloeit jasmijn!!!
Op dorre grond bloeit Jasmijn!!!

Op dorre grond bloeit de lelie!!
Op dorre grond bloeit de iris!!
Op dorre grond bloeien rozen!!

Song 1
Vibration's in time

*Do lavender and rosemary find
their colors and their fragrances,
their fragrances and their colors
In the vibration of time.*

*Give lavender and rosemary
their colors and their fragrances,
their fragrances and their colors
On the vibration of the time*

*What is made small,
What became overgrown
By one-sidedness of the order,
That became great by brutallity*

*Give space..... it shows it's youghtfull face
Takes place and seeks a balance*

*Jasmine blooming on dry ground!
Jasmine blooming on dry ground!*

*On dry ground the lily blooms!
On dry ground the iris blooms!
On dry ground the roses bloom!*

Lied 2

Lied van de aanwezigheid

De aanwezige verschijnt steeds in volmaakte gebaren
De afwezige verschijnt steeds in een andere gedaante
Wie rust zoekt voor de drukte van het leven
Wie plotseling moet schuilen voor de regen

Een drankje
Een praatje
Een rustpunt, een kruispunt,
Verzamelpunt, kwartierpunt, vertrekpunt

Het afwezige verschijnt steeds in volmaakte gebaren
Het aanwezige verschijnt steeds in een andere gedaante

In kleine dingen
In exclusief verbannende geluiden
In resoluut ontzeggende gebaren
In dingen

In nieuwe gedaante
In dingen
Gedaanten
Van de dag
Gedaanten

Song 2
Song of presence

The presence always appears in perfect gestures
The absence always appears in other shapes
Whoever seeks peace to hectic life
Who needs shelter from a sudden rain shower

A drink
A chat
A haven, a crossroads,
Collection point, quarter point, departure point

The absence always appears in perfect gestures
The presence always appears in other shapes

In small things
In utterly exclusive sounds
In resolutely denying gestures
In things

In the new shapes
In things
Forms
Of the day
Forms



The gardening women

Since 1987 this group of neighborhood volunteers took over the responsibility for the garden from the municipality. They are a group of seven women that take care of the garden, working every Tuesday during the spring. The whole garden is constituted with Mary plants. We were following the work of these women for several months. They inspired us to use the garden as a first starting point for our project. We considered the gardening women to be a kind of mediator between the different visitors and users of the square.

Ron talking to the women in the garden during their break at work.





Although Mariaplaats is a public space, it's closed everynight





The garden around 1940

St. Mary's Cloisters corridor is all that is left of the Church of St. Mary, which formed the centre of the Mariaplaats (St. Mary's Square). The courtyard and the remaining buildings of the 11th century cloisters surrounding it are known by the name Pandhof Sinte Marie



Here is the high pitched mosquito sound used in the corridor, that can only be heard by children and teenagers, to expel the teenagers from the place



Thanks to

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