

# Father, Can't You See I'm Burning?

## A Suggestion of Facts

### A Reluctant Statement on the Politics of Compliance

Whistleblowers, Trendsetters, Firefighters, Arsonists, Situationists, Modern Heroes, here we are now, we want to burn, don't we? Who said so? Who put the matches in our aprons?

#### I

In 1959 the Situationist International (SI) proposed to Willem Sandberg, the director of the Stedelijk Museum, to build a labyrinthine structure connecting the inside of the museum to the outside world. Sandberg responded that it *could* be done, but under two conditions: the SI should collaborate with the fire brigade and secure additional financial support. The Situationists withdrew.

#### II

What can be conjured from the ashes of this historical non-event? In this instance, we respect the radical decision of the Situationists (in withdrawing their proposal on the basis that its integrity would be jeopardized by Sandberg's caveat), but at the same time, we would have loved to see possible outcomes resulting from this proposed labyrinth. If today's art institution is so much shaped by rules and regulations, external expectations and internal fears, can the dream of an impossible labyrinth compel us to enter the realm of the possible?

#### III

The exhibition *Father, Can't You See I'm Burning?* voices skepticism towards a certain legacy of rebellion that we – contemporary artists and active curators at large – have inherited. It is the legacy of non-compliance – as performed in the instance of the labyrinth that didn't happen. We find ourselves in a kitchen with ready-made radical recipes for Molotov cocktails, with ingredients like the ideology of the avant-garde, institutional critique and art as propaganda. We drag this heritage of inhibited hopefulness into our present, we impersonate it, we disobey, we rebel, and then burnt down we come to a halt. Because that is what we learned from our patronizing fathers and modern protagonists, who linger in cast shadows of misguided radicalism. We do not want to fall into that trap of fulfilling expectations and pre-molded formats. We do realize the urgency to continue, to carry

the weight, but we are not going to be anchored down by this legacy. We'd rather carry the matches lightly in our aprons and cook with uninhibited intuition.

#### IV

So what kind of fire do we cook with? It is not the aggressive fire of artistic activism. Nor is it the ethereal fire of beauty and sheer formalism whose only use is to keep the art market simmering. And it certainly is not a temporary glaze of fireworks – a mesmerizing spectacle aimed to dazzle. It is rather a material and sensual fire, inside a slow-burning stove, where meals are shared and stories are told. A rhythmic, repetitive and bodily fire. A phatic fire ignited by the energy of language, permeated with music. A fire of alchemy, not chemistry. An irreducible fire that was present in the caves of Lascaux, burnt the incense in medieval cathedrals and left the ashes for Malevich's Black Square. A fire that – while appealing to different senses – propels incessantly and spreads in different directions without having any special purpose. An uncontrollable internal drive to perform, engage and experience. A fire that offers possibilities, not solutions.

#### V

We are dancing to prolong that fire in our belly. We are swaying in the present, blindly pursuing the call of the future. What can we give you? No saints. No sinners either. Only this: a fantasy of transmutation, a transmutative fantasy. Can't you see the flames already dancing under our feet?

Renata Cervetto, Kris Dittel, Lara Khaldi, Emma Panza, Aneta Rostkowska, Kate Strain

*Father, Can't You See I'm Burning?* is a project which unfolds in multiple parts: a prelude, an exhibition, a series of events, and a publication – bringing together a score of newly commissioned artworks and texts, to be presented across time and space.

With accomplices: Marinus Boezem, Justin Gosker, Jan Hoelt, Krōōt Jurak, Sarah van Lamsweerde, Ieva Misevičiūtė, Robertas Narkus, Pavel Pepperstein, Michael Portnoy, Jan Rothuizen, Reinaart Vanhoe, Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries, Katarina Zdjelar

The project is curated by the participants of de Appel Curatorial Programme 2013/14: Renata Cervetto, Kris Dittel, Lara Khaldi, Emma Panza, Aneta Rostkowska, and Kate Strain, who have a continuous presence in the space of the exhibition throughout its duration.

## Ground Floor

1) Robertas Narkus describes his practice as the management of circumstances, which involves chance encounters with unpredictable results. Narkus is a founding member of the Institute of Pataphysics in Vilnius and currently pursues an MFA degree at the Sandberg Instituut in Amsterdam.

### Robertas Narkus

*Turbulence 3*

2014

Installation with cooking pot and squid ink

Squid ink is the black viscous liquid released by the inking cephalopods in order to create a dark, diffused smokescreen to obscure the view of predators. This dark matter has been traditionally used for writing and culinary purposes, but here it is left to simmer in the infinite abyss of the exhibition space.

2) Voice, authority, and community are central lines of inquiry in the work of Katarina Zdjelar, whose practice encompasses video and sound pieces, publications, performances and platforms for exchange. Zdjelar lives and works in Rotterdam.

### Katarina Zdjelar

*Shoum*

2009

Video, 7 min

In this video the globalized language of hegemony is employed not to entice a young audience to rebel. Rather, its *telos* is overturned, the meaning of the words, of language, is emptied out. Perhaps our curatorial position is akin to that of B-rated musicians, who do not respond to calls of generational rebellion dressed in the order of language and its authority, but rather attempt to sing their

own out-of-tune and delirious songs revealing the shells of institutional structures for their own uncertain purpose.

3) Jan Rothuizen is an artist who describes the world in his ongoing project, *The Soft Atlas*. His drawings can be read as diagrams, maps, notes, or even novellas that describe the world surrounding us full of comments that range from the quantitative to the qualitative, altogether a kind of concrete poetry of the real.

### Jan Rothuizen

*Fantasio Again and Again*

2013–2014

Wall drawing

Rothuizen revisits his wall drawing, originally commissioned in June 2013 for the foyer wall at de Appel arts centre. *Fantasio* takes viewers on a guided tour of a particular moment in the building's history, drawing on popular myths, recollections, and factual sources from 1968/69. For *Father, Can't You See I'm Burning?* he adds another narrative layer on his existing work.

4) Jan Hoelt is an artist based in Cologne, who until recently held a studio at the Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. In his work he often interrogates contemporary globalized society by working with design interventions inside the buildings of companies, where he distracts the employees by hanging uncomfortable installations directly above their heads.

### Jan Hoelt

*Surface Drainage*

2014

Installation

A leaking building is what remains of an institution, burnt down by fire, and extinguished by water. The extreme nature of fire regulations, and their influence in shaping the physical space of an institution, become part of the architecture and design of the building. However these safety interventions can become worn with time, amassing dirt and garbage. Hoelt's gesture of installing a series of gridded drains around the steps of the building, almost invisibly, is like providing ashtrays for the art-addicted.

5) Ieva Misevičiūtė is a former Lithuanian clown and a practitioner of unproductive gymnastics. She has a background in Cultural and Political Studies as well as various movement and improvisation techniques.

### Ieva Misevičiūtė

*There is no stopping this institution*

2014

Clay, instructions coming from speakers activated by a button

Showing the instability of an object without a defined shape is showing the precarious nature of an art project, often subdued to a number of influences and compromises. Simultaneously its potential re-definition breaks the boundary of authorship and authority. 'Touching is permitted' and everyone willing can constantly reshape the material available on the plinth, by following the audio instructions. The outcome of this piece is a set of decisions that one is invited or forced to face, listen to and act upon. It then results in a personally moulded institution and is left on the plinth for the next sculptor.

## 6) Robertas Narkus

*DVD*

2013–2014

Performance

It vibrates, flows and shimmers: the flickering slow motion captivates the eye and carries away the mind. Also known as 'the flying belly piece', this work appears at unexpected moments behind the curtains of the darkened space. Performed by Valentina Lacmanović.

## First Floor

7) As a self-proclaimed 'Relational Stalinist', Michael Portnoy is mainly interested in challenging his audience in various ways, which promote inventive forms of exchange between participants. In his performances and installations he creates an atmosphere of confusion, destabilization and ambiguity. Before he ultimately switched to visual arts he worked simultaneously in the fields of dance and experimental comedy.

## Michael Portnoy

*The Roaster*

2014

Installation with an artist inside

Portnoy has installed another artist, namely Rán Flygenring, within the exhibition space for the purpose of relentlessly 'roasting' and 'improving' all the other works in the show. By means of their cooperation, Portnoy and *The Roaster* metaphorically put all the artworks of the exhibition 'on fire' with unpredictable results. *The Roaster* is sporadically present throughout the duration of the exhibition, producing drawings on site. The goal is to accelerate the evolution of new breeds of art making. *The Roaster* was selected through an open call procedure. Her residency in Amsterdam is kindly supported by the Lloyd Hotel & Cultural Embassy.

## 8) Jan Hoefft

*Exit Strategy*

2014

Video, sound, 5 min, looped

In his work *Exit Strategy*, Hoefft has employed a motion tracking software-technique to shoot the portrait of an emergency hammer. 'In case of emergency break glass', 'Use in case of fire': these are admonitions we read almost every time we take a bus or a train. We notice them on those long boring night journeys, during which there is nothing to see through the window, or on those jostling moments of sweaty anonymity, squashed among the travellers like a sardine. These warnings have become part of the everyday design of public space, and appear before us as both artificial and regulated. But what if these safety measures, internalized as conventional rules of our society, suddenly start to resonate in our exhausted minds as invitations to perform inappropriate behaviour?

9) Sarah van Lamsweerde has a background in performance and collaborative projects. Through her work she attempts to extract new sense from conceptual pairs such as language/image, body/memory or performer/spectator.

## Sarah van Lamsweerde

*Tell/Sell, a common story*

2014

Performance installation

This work centres around a story, authored by the artist and relating to an object presented on a plinth. Taking the form of a classical art auction – as opposed to a conventional artwork – each word of the story must be sold to willing bidders before it can be told as part of a narrative whole. These auctions take place as part of the public programme. The audience in attendance will blindly shape the tale, through the frame of their own consuming desires, in advance of the story being spilled. *Tell/Sell, a common story* is a performance work created in collaboration with Esther Mugambi, and was originally commissioned by Ellen de Bruijne Projects.

10/11) Marinus Boezem is one of the major representatives of conceptual art and Arte Povera in the Netherlands. *Podio del Mondo per l'Arte*, which opened in 1976, is one of his public art initiatives, and can be seen in Middelburg, where he lives and works. In 1969 he took part in *Op losse schroeven* (Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam) and *When Attitudes Become Form* (Kunsthalle Bern).

## Marinus Boezem

*Paper Events*

1967–1969

Plastic bag, burnt papers

## Marinus Boezem

*If you'd like to see this photo in colors, burn it*

1967–1969

Postcard

*Paper Events* and *If you'd like to see this photo in colors, burn it* each present a challenge to the viewer, who is involved as co-actor in the activation of the intended artwork. What seems at first paradoxical is the fact that the realization of these works also imply their own destruction. *Paper Events*, for example, consists of a charred booklet inside a plastic bag. It is the material result of instructions as they were presented within the booklet. In presenting the postcard (*If you'd like to see this photo in colors, burn it*), framed as an artwork without the possibility of alteration, an inherent contradiction confronts you, who is no longer able to perform the original action; the possible outcome is only present in our imagination.

**12)** Justin Gosker is a poet, photographer, sculptor and the house painter of de Appel arts centre. He currently lives and works in Amsterdam, and is artist in residence at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten.

**Justin Gosker**

*Sphere*

2014

Polystyrene, black pigment

Various locations in the building:

**Justin Gosker**

*Ummm...*

2012

Publication

Gosker's black sphere seems stuck, lodged between the upper walls of the fire escape staircase. The strength of the piece is latent, its energy is contained. This creates a mounting tension, which culminates at the exit. Abstract language also makes an entry in the exhibition space, punctuating the building in marking a possible end, or a new beginning.

**13)** In his work Reinaart Vanhoe often subverts established forms from the domain of marketing and the art world. He also consciously resists and mocks the external pressure for an artist to be professional. As curator of the Kunsthalle Beijing he is one of the proud sponsors of this exhibition.

**Reinaart Vanhoe**

*Banner*

2012

10 meter PVC banner

*Banner* is a specific *détournement* of the form of a banner as such in that it mimics a popular form of advertising, but at the same time does not advertise anything. Vanhoe's installation, on the façade of the building, shifts between being a real attempt to reach out and a tongue dangling out of the corner of the institution's mouth – a rhetoric of openness without a real commitment?

## In Other Spaces

Various locations in the building:

**Reinaart Vanhoe**

*Permanent Loitering Space*

2014

Installation

*Permanent Loitering Space* is an inscription placed by the artist in various spaces of de Appel's building, inviting you to sit and loiter aimlessly, idly and at your leisure.

On promotional materials:

**Reinaart Vanhoe**

[www.kunsthallebeijing.org](http://www.kunsthallebeijing.org)

2011

Webpage and logo

Kunsthalle Beijing is a fictional art institution located on a webpage, the domain of which was purchased by the artist to prevent it being used by any other potential art organization. The artist has made six yellow sweatshirts for the curators, each bearing the logo of Kunsthalle Beijing.

Since 1989 Pavel Pepperstein has been an independent artist, writer, critic, art theorist and rap musician. His practice as a self-titled 'psychedelic realist' has developed out of a desire to forge a new Russian representative style that will salvage the remnants of a rich cultural history being woefully destroyed in the name of progress.

In an online newsletter:

**Pavel Pepperstein**

*Tunnel*

1987–2011

Literature (short story)

*Tunnel* is the title of this short story, which has been translated from Russian into English. It tells a semi-existential, semi-science-fiction tale of a tour along a very strange tunnel. The story has been distributed online via a newsletter.

Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries is the Seoul-based collaborative practice of Young-Hae Chang and Marc Voge. They have created signature works incorporating animated texts set to their own music in 21 languages, and have shown many of them at some major art institutions in the world.

On the website:

**Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries**

*ART IS A LIE THAT JUST WON'T DIE*

2014

HD Quicktime movie, 6 min  
www.burning.deappel.nl

For the seven weeks of the exhibition, Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries' work occupies the exhibition's website. The website is one of the platforms of the institution. The institution is on fire. YHCHI have been invited to set this fire, so that the inside of the material institutional space protrudes into digital materiality. Using digital concrete poetry, YHCHI ask paranoid questions about what happens to all the artworks that do not make it into a museum's collection. The museum's limited and selective archival conquest suggests that there is 'good art' deserving of retention and 'bad art' relegated to forgetfulness. The work places both the economy of the museum and the flux of artworks under suspicion.

Krõõt Juurak is an artist whose work deals with performance in the extended sense of the term (i.e. performance of work, people, objects and animals). She was born in Estonia and has graduated from the Sandberg Instituut, Amsterdam. Her most recent projects include *Bad Mood*, a mood, and *KroOt*, where her name became a venue rented out to other artists.

Ongoing performance by participants of the Curatorial Programme:

**Krõõt Juurak**

*Internal Conflict*

2014

The work exists as an appearance of disagreements and internal tensions between the curators of the exhibition, enacted throughout the duration of the project. This ongoing performative condition and its potential consequences on the realization of the exhibition, expose the tension between emotional labour and the constructed professional personality of the six participants of the Curatorial Programme.

Throughout the building:

**Katarina Zdjelar**

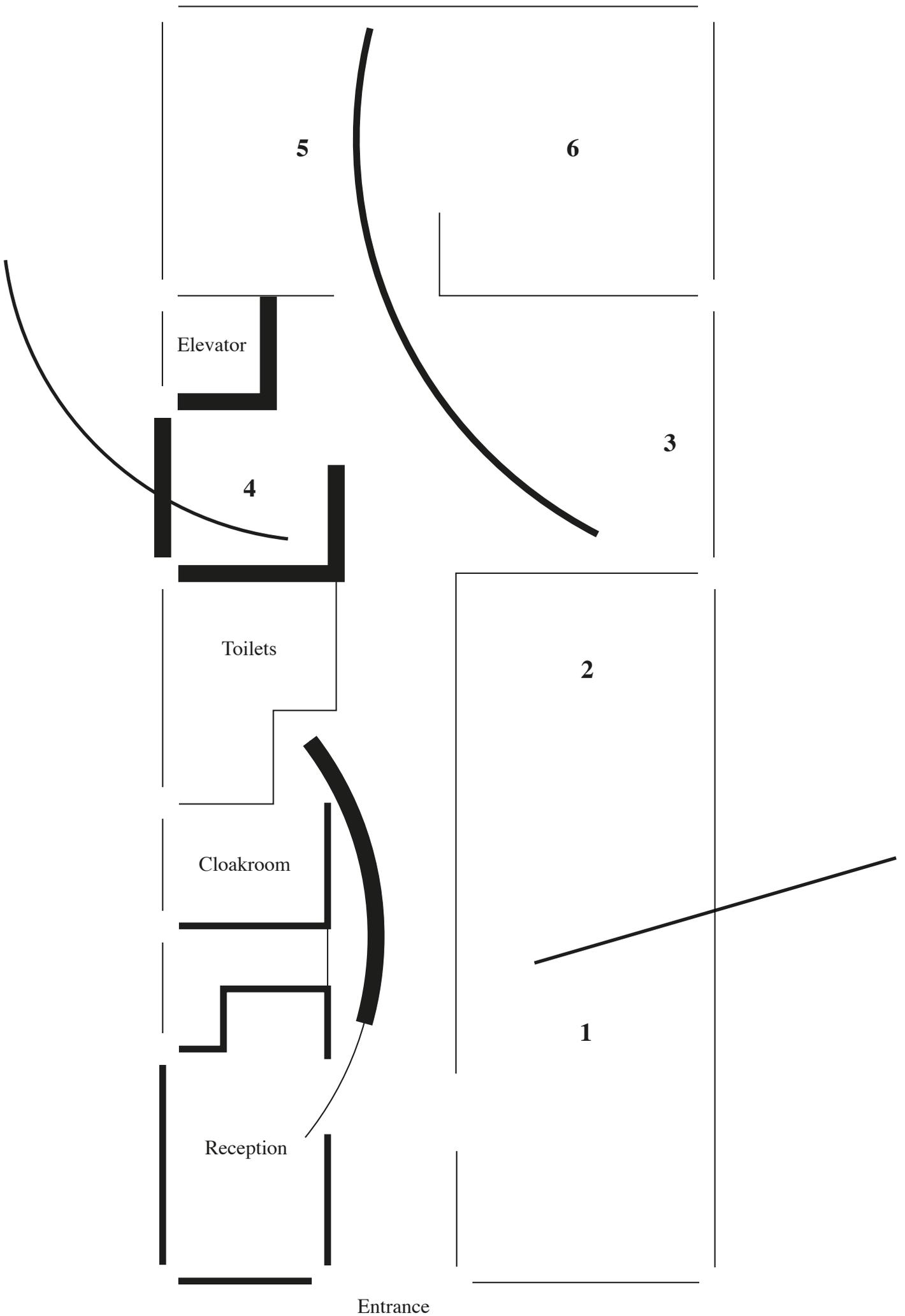
*By Burning We Obtain One Gram of Powder*

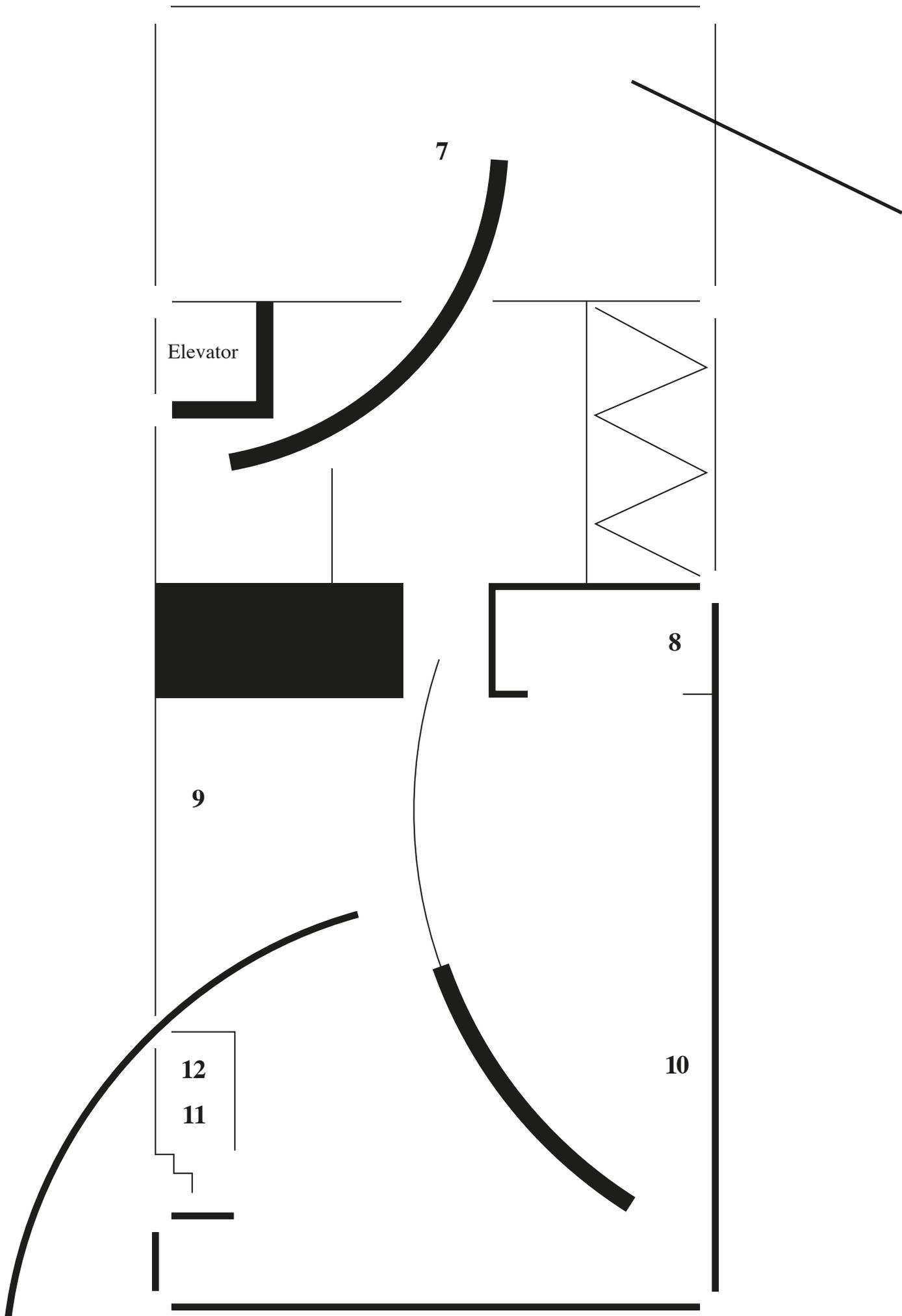
2014

Unannounced and ongoing performance with participants from Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam, and Master Artistic Research, The Hague, including Hannah Dawn Henderson, Philip Ewe, Anne Marie Twigge, and Vasiliki Sifostratoudaki.

Several performers are perhaps roaming the exhibition as you do. However they are orchestrated by Katarina Zdjelar. They are performing a partly authored, partly improvised script, written by the artist. The script incorporates a discussion about the references that have fed this exhibition, the artworks and the conceptual frameworks, as well as gossip and rumors. The performers

might fight at times, seem bored at others. They appear and disappear into the crowd, practice a haunting, ghostly permanence in the exhibition as a scrutinizing force, one that foregrounds discensus, and the ability for an exhibition to become a field of contestation.





## Programme of events

Most of the newly commissioned works in *Father, Can't You See I'm Burning?* are performance-based. These works unfold throughout the duration of the exhibition both unannounced and ongoing.

All events will be in English unless otherwise specified. For more information please visit: [www.deappel.nl](http://www.deappel.nl) Please make reservations in advance by sending an email to: [reservation@deappel.nl](mailto:reservation@deappel.nl)

### Friday 25.04.

18:00–21:00, Opening

Ongoing performances: *Internal Conflict* by Krōōt Juurak, *DVD* by Robertas Narkus, *The Roaster* by Michael Portnoy, *By Burning We Obtain One Gram of Powder* by Katarina Zdjelar

### Saturday 03.05.

16:00–18:00, Guided tour and Q&A with the curators and artists

Ongoing performances: *Internal Conflict* by Krōōt Juurak, *DVD* by Robertas Narkus, and *By Burning We Obtain One Gram of Powder* by Katarina Zdjelar  
18:00–20:00, Performance: *Tell/Sell, a common story* by Sarah van Lamsweerde

### Sunday 11.05.

15:00, Guided tour (in Dutch)

Ongoing performances: *Internal Conflict* by Krōōt Juurak and *By Burning We Obtain One Gram of Powder* by Katarina Zdjelar  
16:00–18:00, Q&A with artist Michael Portnoy

### Thursday 15.05.

18:00–20:00, Performance: *Tell/Sell, a common story* by Sarah van Lamsweerde

### Sunday 18.05.

16:00–18:00, Sunday School: Screening of *In girum imus nocte et consumimur igni*, by Guy Debord, 1978, followed by a presentation by Sven Lütticken

Ongoing performances: *Internal Conflict* by Krōōt Juurak, *DVD* by Robertas Narkus, and *By Burning We Obtain One Gram of Powder* by Katarina Zdjelar

### Sunday 25.05.

14:30–17:00, Family guided tour (in Dutch)

### Sunday 08.06.

10:00–18:00, Performative event at the Stedelijk Museum based on newly commissioned texts connected to the exhibition

### Sunday 15.06.

15:00, Guided tour (in Dutch)

16:00–18:00, Performance: *Tell/Sell, a common story* by Sarah van Lamsweerde

## Colophon

*Father, Can't You See I'm Burning?*

27.04.–15.06.2014

Curators: Renata Cervetto, Kris Dittel, Lara Khaldi, Emma Panza, Aneta Rostkowska, Kate Strain

Technical realisation: Sjoerd Tim and team

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About de Appel Curatorial Programme:

Initiated in 1994 as an in-house international training trajectory for young curators, the Curatorial Programme of de Appel arts centre offers its participants hands-on experiences and skills for the further development of their professional career. Each year the programme culminates with the collective development of a final project.

This exhibition is kindly supported by: Ammodo, Kunst-halle Beijing, Lloyd Hotel & Cultural Embassy, and all guests of the benefit events, *Apples in the Cosmos // Apples in the Sea* (27.03.2014 & 10.04.2014 at de Appel arts centre).

De Appel arts centre receives long-term support from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Netherlands, and the City of Amsterdam.

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[www.burning.deappel.nl](http://www.burning.deappel.nl)

de Appel arts centre  
Prins Hendrikkade 142, 1011 AT Amsterdam  
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Tuesday–Saturday 12 – 8pm  
Sunday 12 – 6pm

**CURATORIAL**  
PROGRAMME

**DE APPEL**  
ARTS CENTRE

O A  
D M  
O

**LLOYDHOTEL**  
& CULTURELE AMBASADE

