



A Hundred Things

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Academy of Fine Arts, University of the Arts Helsinki
Master of Fine Arts Thesis

04.10.2022



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Summary

The artistic component of my Master's thesis project consisted of an installation called *Tempo Dulu*, which was exhibited during Kevan Kevät in 2021. My work was shown at Exhibition Laboratory (B) in the month of May.

Tempo Dulu is an installation with sound, moving image, light and objects in a live environment. On an area covering thirty square metres there are plinth-like constructions that are used to present objects, mirrors, video screens, surveillance cameras, flickering lights and hand-made screens.

The displayed objects generate images, reflections, shadows and silhouettes, starting a chain of associations as it builds a narrative. Before the spectator's eyes a diorama unfolds into itself. Trapped in a feedback loop, one is thrown back in the context that only exists in one's head. Everything that is hidden deep in a culture, shame, sorrow, pride and hope, manifests in various forms on the surface, in the superficial, the mundane, in utensils, in popular culture, in everyday life. At times seemingly trivial and ubiquitous it layers a multiplicity of meaning.

This written part of my thesis is a documentation and description of the practical work and offers a personal background that explains some of the topics my work touches upon. I will elaborate on the importance of fiction, narrative and cultural position and explain some of the formal aspects of my work, with a special interest in how things are perceived.

This text is not a documentation of my installation in the way that it will give you a crystal clear image of what has been shown. It has a similar strategy as my artistic work *Tempo Dulu*, which is site- and time- specific, in that it has live elements and offers different viewpoints.

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Introduction

A hundred things can define a person quite accurately. A hundred mundane, daily life facts are all that is needed to pinpoint an individual. In the Indonesian archipelago of the Moluccas a person is mourned and remembered when he passes away with the lament *Hundred Things*.

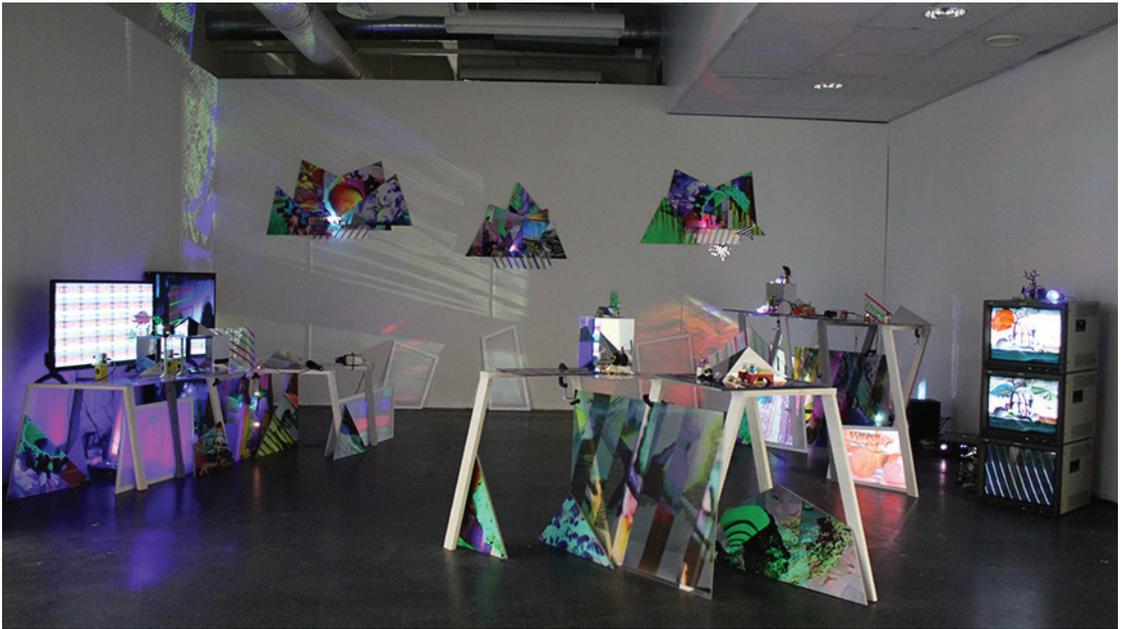
The “hundred things” - that was the name of the lament -the hundred things of which the deceased is reminded, which are asked him, told him. Not just the people in his life: that girl, that woman, and that, this child, that child, your father, your mother, a brother, or sister, the grandparents, a grandchild, a friend, a brother-in-arms; or his possessions: your beautiful house, the china plates hidden in the ceiling, the swift prahu, your sharp knife, the inlaid hand shield from the past, the two silver rings on your right hand, on the index finger and thumb, the tame wood pigeon, your clever black louri; but also: hear how the wind blows! - how white-crested the waves come rushing from the high seas! - the fish jump out of the water, and play with each other - see how the shells are shiny on the beaches - think of the coral gardens underwater, and how they are colored - and the bay! - the bay! - you will never forget the bay, right!¹

In this written part of my thesis I will describe, explain, define my artistic work by using one hundred concepts. These concepts relate to things that could be experienced in my installation shown at Kuvan Kevät 2021 and range from objects to ideas, or from nouns to adjectives. Together these descriptions will form a patchwork enveloping the reader, creating a text that will help to grasp and understand the work without forcing the viewer into a certain direction, but leaving room for a personal adaptation of the work.

The choice for this strategy is not as trivial as it might seem and I will explain this by elaborating on my background and where my artistic work stems from. Both the written and practical part of my thesis and its research are rooted in fiction. Dutch East Indies Literature, which contains both colonial and post-colonial fiction, forms the rudiment of my practice.

To understand this I have to answer the three following questions: “Who am I?”, “What is my position?” and “What are my intentions?”

¹ (Dermoût, 1955, 19)



Installation view *Tempo Dulu* (2021), projections, screens, prints and objects 6m x 6m



Detail *Tempo Dulu* (2021), TV-screen, toy animals, light, gemstone, cut-outs 20cm x 10cm

Claim Heritage

To see and accept oneself helps to understand why one makes art. I have come to the conclusion that my artistic work has its roots somewhere, that it is grounded in a specific place; and I have accepted that fact. This has led to the ambition to make work that is meaningful to me. My genuine belief is that if my work is meaningful to me, there is a significant chance that it might be meaningful to someone else.

My artistic work has entered a new realm. I have opened a door and let out things that have been forever disregarded and ignored. The important shift that now has occurred is that I, via my artistic work, claim my cultural heritage. It might not be in a very obvious or visible way, but I have now acknowledged the fact that my ethnic and cultural background defines me in the most rudimentary way. Everything that flows from me artistically is built upon this fundament. This realisation has made it possible for me to claim a certain space in my practice too. I have claimed a space where I don't have to question myself and what I do, which by no means implies that there should be no place for critical reflection.

I am a product of the colonial past of the Netherlands and I have always denied this. Now I have come to a point where I no longer can hide this. All that defines me has its roots in my and my ancestors' past. My father is Dutch caucasian, my mother's side of the family is from the former Dutch colony Indonesia. I am what is called an *Indo*. A person of mixed European and Indonesian descent. During the colonial era Indos were not considered fully Dutch and neither were they considered Indonesian. After the independence of Indonesia in 1949 everyone that was remotely Dutch had to leave the country to repatriate to the Netherlands, including all Indo's. They have never really belonged anywhere, other than in their own culture and own language and were forced to assimilate abruptly when they arrived in the Netherlands after the second world war.

Although the Indos have always considered themselves Europeans and whites, as distinct from the natives, the colonising Hollanders from any rank in the Netherlands still feel superior to the Indo. There has gradually grown up in these colonies a caste society consisting of natives on the lowest level, Indos on the second level, and the imported whites on top.²

The termination of the Dutch East Indies put the Indos in a compromised position. It meant they lost access to their place of birth and that their mixed language was destined to go extinct. The Indo culture became a culture of longing and nostalgia, which was prolifically expressed in post-colonial literature, a body of work where I feel I belong.

² (Sjaardema, 1946, 173)

Large groups of Indos, therefore, are in a very peculiar and unenviable position. They would like to be considered Europeans, but in that group they are not wanted. They consider themselves natives of Indonesia, yet donot want to be absorbed into the native society. Therefore, they are outside that society as well. In the conflict between the natives and the returning Dutch, they find themselves “between the devil and the deep blue sea,” and their position will not change materially as long as the colonial system persists in Indonesia.³

It is this personal history that forms the starting point of my artistic work, but it is important to state that history is not static. History disappears, grows darker, decays and is subject to change. It is reinterpreted and related to the present. This process can be controlled by choosing what is displayed and in what way. Everything that is hidden deep in a culture, shame, sorrow, pride, hope, emerges in a certain way on the surface. I have a great interest in the superficial, in the ubiquitous and the mundane, in popular culture, in everyday life. Seemingly trivial, but full of meaning.

To make art I take from this history. I quote from cultures and use objects I didn't fabricate myself. Therefore it is important to elaborate on the position that I take and to be aware of the risk of appropriation. Being of Indonesian and Chinese descent doesn't mean I am Asian.

³ (Sjaardema, 1946, 175)

Taking Position

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said (1978) explains that there is an ever lasting tradition of generating discourse about the East that is solely constructed by the West. He states that Orientalism is a “created body of theory and practice”⁴ to dominate the *other*.

My relation to Indonesia originates from a structure of power and therefore caution has to be practised. The position I take is not determined by me, but by the system of orientalism in which I exist and in that context I am a westerner looking at The East. My intention is not to claim truth or teach or take from others. I approach my material with a certain distance and try to engage in a personal way, hoping to find common ground between the audience, my subject and myself. An attitude that is described by Edward W. Said like this:

The more one is able to leave one’s cultural home, the more easily is one able to judge it, and the whole world as well, with the spiritual detachment and generosity necessary for true vision. The more easily, too, does one assess oneself and alien cultures with the same combination of intimacy and distance.⁵

Another thing that should be mentioned is the question of representation, something that is also evident in all the literature I take inspiration from. The East doesn’t have its own voice in all material created in *Orientalism*, the West represents the East and speaks for it.

According to Edward W. Said you could even say that “truth” itself in this context can be seen as a representation, because it is implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with many other things besides just the truth.⁶

With this in mind it was helpful to read Susan Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others* (2004) which clearly describes the concept of taking position. Although this book mainly is about photography it can easily be adapted to other areas, because it makes you aware of the material you use and the implications that has. Having well-meant intentions doesn’t guarantee a non-problematic outcome.

The photographer’s intention do not determine the meaning of the photograph, which will have its own career, blown by the whims and loyalties of the diverse communities that have use for it.⁷

⁴ (Said, 1978, 6)

⁵ (Said, 1978, 259)

⁶ (Said, 1978, 272)

⁷ (Sontag, 2004, 39)



Detail *Tempo Dulu* (2021), monitors, cut-outs, mirrors, lights and small objects 40cm x 30cm



Close-up print *Tempo Dulu* (2021), printed paper on board 40cm x 30cm

On Storytelling and Creating Myths

The work *Tempo Dulu* which I presented at Kuvan Kevät 2021 did have a narrative. It was not a narrative with an obvious beginning, nor did it have a clear linear development. It was like a short story, starting at the engagement of a viewer and ended with the aftermath of disengagement. To clarify the relationship I have with narratives I will explain the personal connection I have with storytelling and the role it takes in claiming my identity and making artistic work.

I can connect my identity to a myriad of objects and stories. My grandparents, mostly my grandmother, loved to tell stories from the past. These stories were short and had a general nature. They were incomplete and focusing on single events, as if she was describing a still image. There were no beginnings or ends.

“I once saw a baby lying on a big banana leaf.” “When I walked to school these monkeys were following me, shouting and trying to take my stuff.” “There were snakes between the wooden poles underneath the house.” “When we were living in Borneo you had to be careful of the headhunters living in the jungle.”

These stories were told many times and she had a limited repertoire. When visiting other family members, we would hear other stories. Also these stories were brief and not very detailed, more like fragments.

“We had to flee from the Japanese, hiding under water between the reeds.” “The Japanese soldiers had knitting assignments for us.” “By aeroplane we had to escape, flying from Borneo to Java.”

For a nuanced story, I would have to ask questions, but that would steer the storyteller too much. All these snippets have built a subconscious series of images in my head. There were other things present in my daily life connected to these histories that would have an effect on the establishing of my identity, like the black and white photo family albums. Something that has always fascinated me, was the fact that these stories about a place that was so lush and full of colour were represented by black and white photos.

All family members that had repatriated from the Dutch East Indies decorated their homes as if they were rarity cabinets. Every home would have Indonesian wood carvings of a kantjil, a small Indonesian deer, or an Indonesian fisherman or strange dragon-like and demon-like figures. Wayang dolls for shadowplays were kept as souvenirs. Gemstones collected and polished by an old-uncle were on display.

On the wall would be a painting of an Indonesian landscape, mountains with rice paddies on the slopes and tropical rainforests, or a photo of the palm beaches of Bali. On shelves there would be photo portraits of old family members in front of which there would be burning candles. And shells.

“Nathan had never been there, but was made there. His sisters were born there, as were his father and many of his aunts and uncles. The Dutch East Indies were everywhere in the house. His mother shook the bed clean with a wiry sapoe lidi and called the mattress bulzak. On the batik-covered trunk opposite his bed, he often played with bone birds, a stuffed snake, bamboo photo frames and Balinese women’s busts who always smiled in shiny hardwood. Nathan’s father stood there waving in white shorts and the father of his sisters, who had been shot dead in the war, wore a plus-four with bandages around his calves, which his mother called poeties. The other father looked much browner than his in those photos. On the chimney was a kris, decorated with slices of Djokja silver.”⁸

My sense of identity is strongly connected to this mosaic, or collage, of fragmented stories and mysterious objects. Growing older I had a growing eagerness, or desire, to see and hear more and the place where I could find that was literature. The novels by writers from my grandparents’ generation, my mother’s generation and the classic colonial novels, that are part of the canon of Dutch literature, together formed this imaginary world that didn’t exist in the real world. It was not a place I could physically visit. Dutch novelist Marion Bloem expresses this inability explicitly in her book *Geen Gewoon Indisch Meisje* (No Ordinary Indo Girl) (1983):

The Dutch East Indies of the Dutch, of Daum, of Multatuli, of Oeroeg, of the white gate lived a life of its own in libraries, in schools, in history books. Her parents’ Dutch East Indies has died, or never existed.⁹

The Dutch East Indies of her ancestors may have died where it was born: in their stories.¹⁰

The novels written by women were particularly interesting to me. Contrary to many male-writers the emphasis in these novels was laid on personal, descriptive stories. Embedded in flora and fauna, concentrating on inter-human relations. Together with my family’s stories and exotic objects these books have patched together a wholeness that now forms the fertile ground for my artistic practice.

I have started to build my own narratives. Connecting fiction to my personal non-fiction. Making parallels between recurring incidents and objects. Reading Roland Barthes’ *Mythologies* (1957) has made me aware of what I am doing in regard to

⁸ (van Dis, 1984, 7)

⁹ (Bloem, 1983, 190)

¹⁰ (Bloem, 1983, 196)

creating narrative and made me understand more the arbitrary nature this might have. In my work I bring together fragments, objects constructing my own mythology. These concepts have their origin in language, both spoken, in oral family history, and written, in the form of fiction.

In my case I am the signifier, giving meaning (to be more precise, maybe not exactly me, but the language or fiction that exists to which I am connected) and the things that can be experienced are signified. Every object, how mundane, or meaningless, it might be, can be signified and take a role in this mythology, representing meaning that is forced upon it.

The statement of fact. Myth doesn't explain the reality. Myth asserts a certain picture of the world without explanation just like a proverb does.¹¹

In this context I would also like to refer to Edward W. Said, because I think there is a resemblance to how Said sees Orientalism: a constructed mythology. He explains it like this:

And so, indeed, is the Orientalist attitude in general [profoundly anti-empirical]. It shares with magic and with mythology the self-containing, self-reinforcing character of a closed system, in which objects are what they are because they are what they are, for once, for all time, for ontological reasons that no empirical material can either dislodge or alter.¹²

Even Susan Sontag speaks of construction when she states that collective memory doesn't exist, that it is a chosen memory:

Photographs that everyone recognizes are now a constituent part of what a society chooses to think about, or declares that it has chosen to think about. It calls these ideas "memories," and that is, over the long run, a fiction. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a collective memory - part of the same family of spurious notions as collective guilt. But there is collective instruction. All memory is individual, unreproducible - it dies with each person. What is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that *this* is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds. Ideologies create substantiating archives of images, representative images, which encapsulate common ideas of significance and trigger predictable thoughts, feelings.¹³

I acknowledge that I construct a personal reality. What is important to me is that it still is real in the sense that it can be felt and it can be shared with others.

¹¹ (Barthes, 1957, 153)

¹² (Said, 1978, 70)

¹³ (Sontag, 2004, 85-86)



Installation view *Tempo Dulu* (2021), small objects, prints on wall, projections and screens

A Hundred Things

In no particular order these hundred things were present in the installation *Tempo Dulu*. These hundred things came to my mind first. There might have been other things, you might have experienced something different, but there is definitely an overlap.

20. Dreamlike, 21. The Darkness, 22. Trance and 23. To Escape

In my work you can wander around, physically and metaphorically. There is no singular channel nor a direct communication where you have to stand in front of the work and look at it. There are a multitude of projections and images and there are objects placed around, so you can pass by. The flickering images and light generate a soundscape that pulses quietly in the same tempo as the light.

You can wrap yourself in the work and decide for yourself how deep you want to engage. If you don't focus and turn your head away the sound and light will still reach you. The work is a cloud of triggers that can start threads of associations in one's head. In this way it is almost like a dream, where a thought triggers another thought and where ideas fade into each other seemingly logically. As a viewer you create your own logic. The work envelopes you in a gentle way, leaving room to breath.

There are some similarities in the work of American artist Joan Jonas (b.1935), who approaches her work in a holistic way, working with film and video, performance and installation. Bridging the gap between the two-dimensional world and three-dimensional world. Jonas refers to her own work, re-creates her performances in video's, or creates installations according to her performances. Her work is full of narrative triggers over which she has control. Jonas' video screens are almost like portals, they don't portray a linear narrative, but they create time and presence. They are a referral to the work created by the artist and via video they are given a time and a space.

You walk through the space, gathering perceptions. Eventually, your experiences of aural and visual echoes cohere to form an internal syntax, a meaningful order, in which no external references pertain. Like a dream or a foreign place, the environment is immersive and so impossible, later, to fully recall or describe. What remains with you is an impression, an image that dwells in your mind.¹⁴

¹⁴ (Williams, 2015, 1)

93. *Birds* and 94. *The American Eagle*

(I like birds. My daughter's second name is Bird. As a child I had twelve birds, mostly parakeets, a lovebird, a cockatiel, and a Japanese nightingale. Nowadays I can't have birds anymore, it's horrible to cage them. Instead I go to the forest and spot birds. My wife is an American Eagle.)

1. *Djeruk Perut*, 2. *Kemiri* and 3. *Daun Salam*

A vivid memory I have is coming down the stairs in the morning to the kitchen in my grandparents house. My grandmother would be there preparing the ingredients for her dishes in the morning. Entering the kitchen for breakfast she would be pounding and grinding spices and herbs in her *tjobjek*. The smell was always pungent. Besides garlic, onions and ginger there would be more fragrant things, like *trassi*, a raw shrimp paste, *galang*, lemon grass, *peteh* beans, *kemiri* or kaffir lime leaves. After visiting my grandparents people would always complain about how we smelled.

Djeroek Poeroet-Leaf

is the leaf of the *Citrus Hystrix*, a lemon variety with small warty fruits. Both the fruit and the leaf are used to give scent to certain dishes.¹⁵

Kemiri

is the nut of *Aleurites Moluccana*. They are strong-tasting nuts that are crushed and used in various dishes and can be bought peeled in bags. Before use, they are always roasted in the oven or, on a knitting needle, over the gas flame, on the lowest setting of the electric cooking plate or in the lukewarm oven.¹⁶

Salam

leaf of *Eugenia Polyantha*, the bay leaf. The leaf is slightly darker in colour and slightly different in taste than the bay leaf that we use in European cuisine. However, it can be replaced by it, if necessary.¹⁷

13. *Flicker* and 14. *Stroboscope*

Flicker is a way to deliver images or light, where the focus moves from what is projected to the apparatus, the machine that delivers these images. In a way it is not significant anymore if the original material is a moving image or a still image. What you see is an alternation of on and off. There's light, there's darkness. There's information and there's time to reflect on it or time for your retina to react to it.

¹⁵ (Vuyk, 1973, 24)

¹⁶ (Vuyk, 1973, 27)

¹⁷ (Vuyk, 1973, 29)

Flicker creates a state of mind where you could easily contemplate what you are seeing or what you are not seeing. The narrative gets less important, the act of seeing and experiencing becomes more important.

Flicker as a tool in visual art has its origin in Structural Film, an experimental film movement that started in the 1960's in the United States. Peter Gidal describes in *Structural Film Anthology* (1976) that it was a movement that wanted to move away from the illusion created by cinema and the notion that film represented or documented something. One of the key intentions was to mentally activate the viewer and to establish a real time relation between the viewer and the viewed.¹⁸

The ultimate to date in the nonobjective film is Tony Conrad's *The Flicker*. It has only black and white frames. They are alternated in varying patterns, and the resulting strobe effect can cause the illusion of colour, of a spreading of light, and of lacy patterns. (To the unlucky one in 15,000 *The Flicker* will bring an attack of photogenic epilepsy.¹⁹

74. *Wayang* and 75. *Cut-outs*

And wayang shows - the black shadows of the fine leather coloured and gilded dolls on a white cloth -; before the performance began, against the empty canvas stood a triangle of leather, also so artfully carved and coloured as with thousands of flowers, on either side a snake with a wide open mouth. That represented the world in which the story would play.²⁰

88. *Prisms* and 89. *Crystals*

The glass prisms and crystals diffuse the light. The prisms bend light and if a projection hits either a prism or crystal the image warps, losing its original form. For a child they represent something valuable.

Felicia had never seen such beads before, neither of glass nor of metal, not of jade either, she thought; of stone or baked clay, rather, opaque, in mysteriously tender and quenched colours: orange ocher, golden brown, some touched with black; so subdued of hue - melancholy almost, as if there was something of autumn in that little box woven from leaves, something of passing and dying.²¹

¹⁸ (Gidal, 1976, 1-9)

¹⁹ (Renan, 1967, 31-32)

²⁰ (Dermoût, 1951, 40-41)

²¹ (Dermoût, 1955, 85)

4. *Tempo Dulu* and 5. *The Colony*

If it is true that for every man there is a landscape of the soul, a certain atmosphere, an environment, which evokes responsive vibrations in the furthest recesses of his being, then my landscape was - and is - the image of mountain slopes in the Preanger: the bitter scent of the tea bushes, the splashing of clear streams over stone blocks, the blue cloud shadows over the lowlands. That my longing for all this could be poignant, I had realised in the series of years in which every contact, every return, was impossible.²²

Tempo Doeloe translates from Bahasa Indonesia as something like “the good old days”. For the title of my work I chose to spell it in the new Indonesian way to transpose it from a historical to a contemporary setting. Tempo Doeloe was used in the post-colonial Netherlands to express a nostalgic longing for the Dutch East Indies. People would reminisce about the colony they lost, the wonderful place they could not visit anymore and all the beautiful memories they had from this paradise.

In literature this nostalgia manifests itself often in relation to loss, they go hand in hand. It is even inherited by the second generation, which has no direct ties to the former colony.

In her book *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (1993) Susan Stewart expresses her particular interest in nostalgia, calling it even a social disease.²³ Stewart specifically looks at the relation of narrative to origin and object.

As in an album of photographs or a collection of antiquarian relics, the past is constructed from a set of presently existing pieces. There is no continuous identity between these objects and their referents. Only the act of memory constitutes their resemblance. And it is in this gap between resemblance and identity that nostalgic desire arises. The nostalgic is enamored of distance, not of the referent itself. Nostalgia cannot be sustained without loss.²⁴

In the end of *Just Yesterday* (1951) Maria Dermoût describes this moment. The moment where the protagonist has to take distance. It is here where the separation begins and loss leads to nostalgia.

²² (Haasse, 1948, 114)

²³ (Stewart, 1993, preface ix)

²⁴ (Stewart, 1993, 145)

If you are not afraid of the sea,” he said after a while, “you will also come safely ashore, do not fear!” And it was as if the journey was over, as if her new friends were waiting on the wharf, and waved to her, as if she would have to step ashore there in a minute. But she couldn’t. She wasn’t there yet, she was still here. How could she see so far ahead, she had to stop and look back. There was so much: besides the people, also the other things she loved - her place on earth until now -, the great house with the white marble floor, and the black star, and the golden birds on the draft doors, the green walled garden, all the trees, all the flowers, - the mountain, the Lawoe behind the garden wall. All the other mountains, and the blue sea around them. In the north the Java Sea, in the south the South Sea, on the left Strait Sunda, on the right Strait Madoera, as it was on the map in the study room. She had to have time to lose it all.²⁵

78. Disco, 79. Kaleidoscope, and 80. Glitter

(After receiving my BA degree in sculpture I moved away from fine arts and found a place in club culture. As a DJ I could also create and share with others at the same time. Instant gratification...)

With my work I aim to create a tempo. No linear narrative, but an ongoing atmosphere, an endless story with no specific start and no end. It resembles what a DJ accomplishes on a dancefloor. There are no separate songs, just these waves of climaxes, larger than any individual story. There is no time, just now. The DJ dictates the tempo, the audience embodies the tempo.

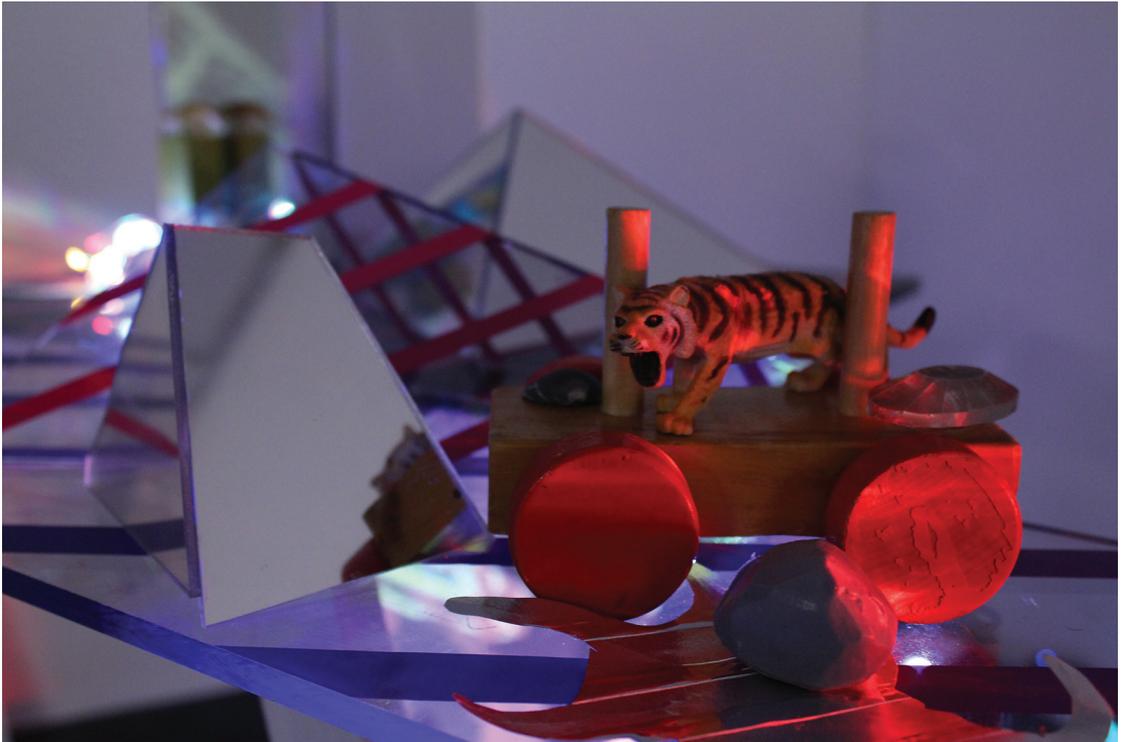
50. A Palm Tree, 51. A Cactus, 52. A Monstera Deliciosa

(According to my uncle, my grandmother could climb up into a palm tree without any effort. Even at a respectable age. Is that true? Or is it just a myth?)

I wandered through the tea plantation, the only thing that hadn’t changed and had kept all its charm. The bitter scent of the greenery, the flowers of the flamboyant trees against the sky, the voices of the pickers, which could be heard far in the silence - all that had remained the same, here the passing of the years seemed unimportant, and as volatile as a dream. I sat in the grass at the edge of a ravine and gazed out over the plain, which was covered in a bluish heat mist. I heard the wind rustle in the bamboo groves near the desa houses, and the babbling of streams among the greenery. A cloud of butterflies fluttered as ever above the tambleang bushes. It seemed absurd to me that Oeroeg was not there. It seemed to me that the sensory perception of this mountain world was not possible for me without the presence of Oeroeg. The landscape was not complete without him.²⁶

²⁵ (Dermoût, 1951, 158-159)

²⁶ (Haasse, 1948, 99)



Installation close-up *Tempo Dulu* (2021), toys, mirrors, perspex, lights. 40cm x 30cm



Installation close-up *Tempo Dulu* (2021), projections, screens, light and toys. 40cm x 30cm

33. Surveillance and 34. Live Sound

There are exactly four surveillance cameras in the installation and they add several things to the work. They are a manifestation of the fact that this work happens in the moment you are present. The cameras record and stream at the same time, a change of light will somewhere result in a change of image. The presence of a visitor is registered and can be seen as a resulting videostream. The visitor might feel part of the installation, or might just feel being watched. As soon as the visitor notices the live video streams, they might approach all other visible material in a different way, pondering about the origin of these images and the hierarchy of meaning. Is what I see an original, or is it a reflection, a translation or a projection?

The live sound works in a similar way. It is generated live by the pulses of light that fall on light sensors that translate light to sound.

Every change will change the soundscape.

81. Light, 82. Pulse, 83. Flash and 84. Radiate

What she told turned into a chaos of events. No clear beginning or end. They were flashes. More background than content. It was somewhat like a film in which only the highlights are shown in a preview, so that mainly the atmosphere, the tempo, the rhythm of the accompanying music come through. It makes you attentive, possibly even curious, but afterwards you have no idea what it is all about.²⁷

24. A Soldier, 25. A Tank, 26. Indonesia, 27 The Netherlands and 28. Trauma

(No history without war, also in this work. Detention camps, the atom bomb on Nagasaki, loss... Maybe I shouldn't say that much about it, but trauma plays a role.)

6. Frames, 7. Screens and 8. Context

In the work *Tempo Dulu* there are many images and these images are contained by frames. These frames come in different forms. You can see video screens, showing the live video feed from the surveillance cameras they are connected to. The light of the image you see here is produced by the video screen. There are projections that cast images on the wall or handmade screens. Here the light you see is a reflection. And then there are mirrors, showing reflected bits of the installation, framing certain scenes.

²⁷ (Zikken, 1994, 6)

Everything you see in this installation happens inside a frame or outside a frame. The frames form outlines of separate narratives and because there are so many frames together here, they start to cross-contaminate each other.

Susan Sontag has an interesting remark about the act of framing:

Ordinary language fixes the difference between handmade images like Goya's and photographs by the convention that artists "make" drawings and paintings while photographers "take" photographs. But the photographic image, even to the extent that it is a trace (not a construction made out of disparate photographic traces), cannot be simply a transparency of something that happened. It is always the image that some one chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude.²⁸

62. To Superimpose, 63. To Blow Up or 64. To Enlarge, 65. Scale and 66. Perspective

All the material that is visible in the installation, exists in different forms and formats. In a material form, in a printed form, in a project form, as a reflection or as a silhouette. Sometimes it is framed by the borders of a screen, sometimes it is blown-up and put in the limelight. Sometimes it is enlarged in such a way that what is depicted disintegrates and only the pixel is visible.

76. Focus, 77. Installation

(You don't have to focus, you can move around in this installation. Just look at the things you want to look at. Everything is placed in a way that it is easy to approach, almost like a historical museum. Something here and something there, turn around and there's more.)

9. Live Video, 10. Feedback, 11. Loops and 12. Projections

Image and sound feed into each other, elevating your senses. You can see real palpable objects, the immaterial projections of them and the shadows of them. You can hear sound generating abstract images and vice versa. Loops are starting to form and you notice a repetition of images, but still every repetition is experienced differently. It's a process that tries to mimic how our mind works sometimes when it makes associations. Small objects or events can create a narrative when they are put in a certain context. Very small events can trigger bigger narratives.

Gilles Deleuze calls this result a flickering brain:

²⁸ (Sontag, 2004, 46)

when the black or white screen stands for the outside of all the images, when the flickerings multiply the interstices like irrational cuts... The film does not record the filmic process in this way without projecting a cerebral process. A flickering brain, which relinks or creates loops—this is cinema.²⁹

15. The Rarity Cabinet, 16. Diorama, 17. Shrines, 18. Objects and 19. To Worship

A diorama puts you outside of a scene, you are a giant observer looking down. A rarity cabinet organises all the things that have nostalgic value neatly in one place, easy to access. Instant joy, sadness, excitement, love, longing and memory, side by side, orchestrated to deliver whenever you would want to.

29. Reflections, 30. Silhouettes, 31. Shadows and 32. Mirrors

They walked slowly, sometimes meeting other Javanese in small groups, and one carried a torch or a bottle of oil and a burning wick. They were flickering unsteady lights, and they were even swinging with them. Monstrous shadows fell on the road, against the roadsides and the straight tree trunks and from below against the dense canopy above their heads. Everything seemed twisted and warped. The faces were no longer distinguishable, strange dark faces with holes for eyes, which looked at them.³⁰

90. Association, 91. The Echo Chamber and 92. A Narrative

Engaging with Arvid's work was like stepping into a chaos of events. There was no clear start nor end, like being hit with flashes of information. Instead of being presented context, it felt like being exposed to a huge amount of background information. The things that come across strongly are the atmosphere, the tempo, the rhythm. It makes you aware, maybe even curious, but when you disengage you are left with unanswered questions.

(Imaginary visitor 1, 2021)

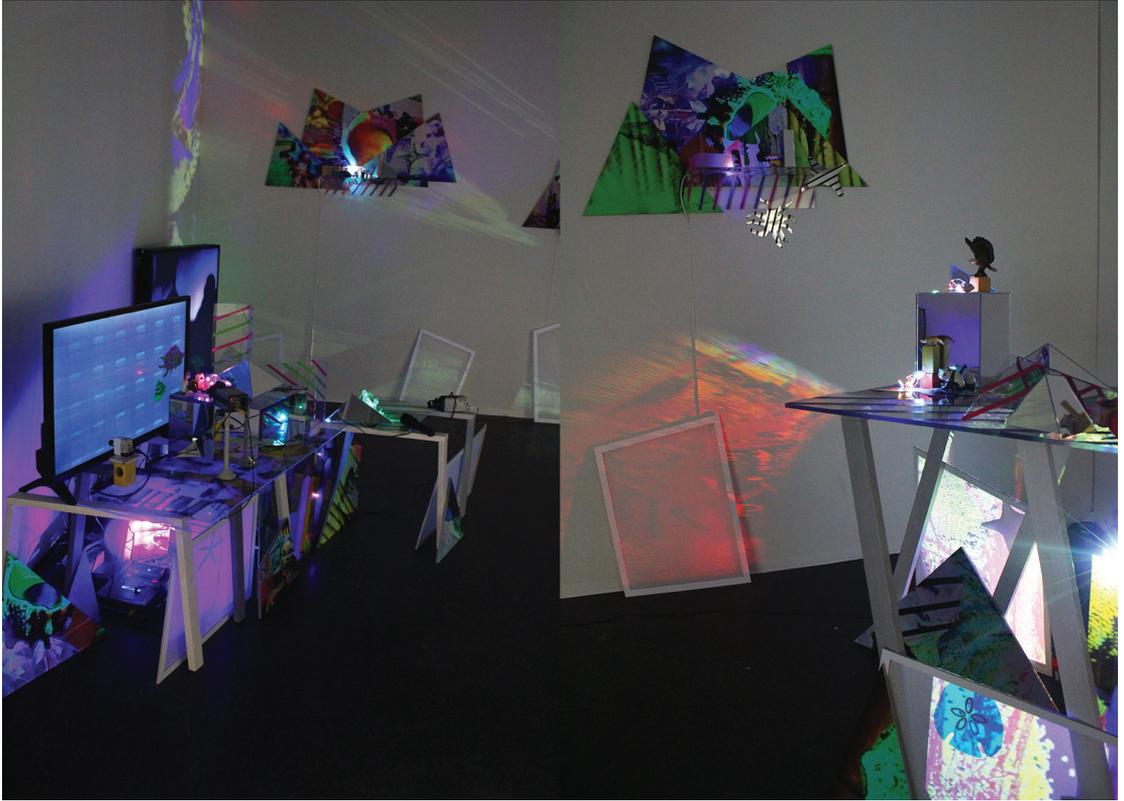
58. Blacklight, 59. Neon Light, 60. Saturation and 61. Lush

The dimming of the lights makes everything smoother, it conceals imperfections, dust, greasy fingerprints. Light phenomena become more pronounced. The neon lights and saturated video images create a pleasant distance. They emphasise the unnatural quality of the image as if they just want to communicate something superficial, hiding their true meaning.

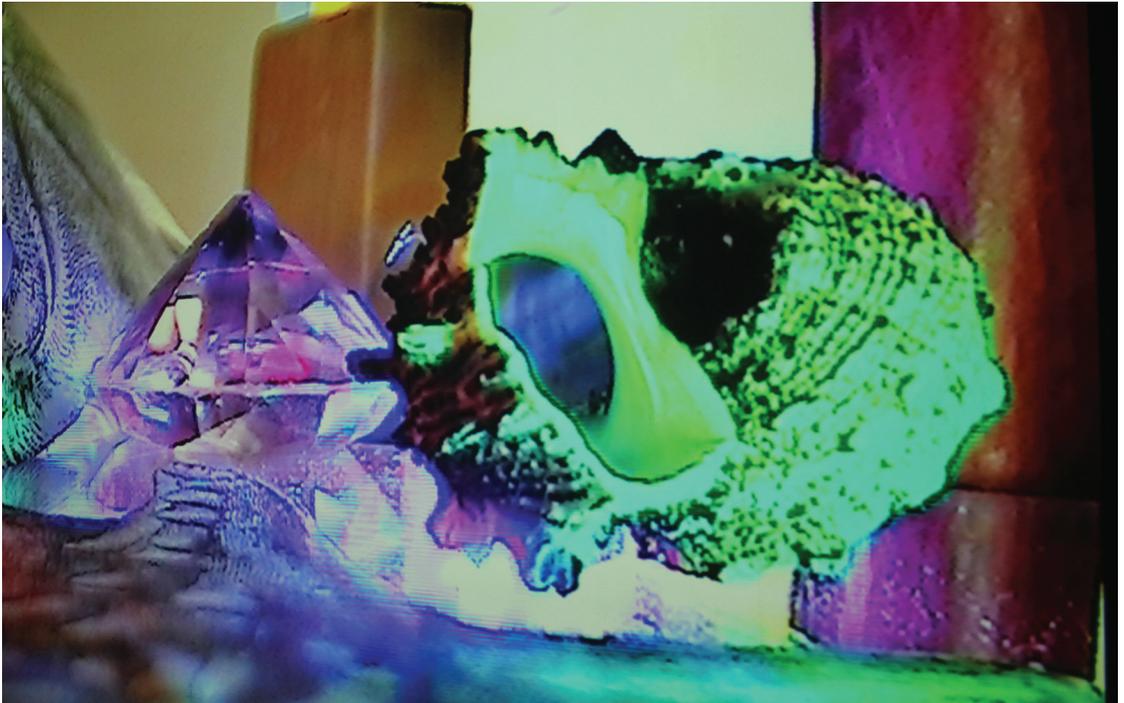
(Imaginary visitor 2, 2021)

²⁹ (Deleuze, 1985, 215)

³⁰ (Dermoût, 1951, 84)



Installation view *Tempo Dulu* (2021), projections, screens, prints and objects 6m x 6m



Close-up print *Tempo Dulu* (2021), printed paper on board 30cm x 20cm

45. *Experiences*

Most things happen outside of the picture. There are so many things that compete for your attention, that focus doesn't matter anymore. There is something completely different going on if you compare it with classic photography and cinema, where you always have the contrast of in-focus versus out-of-focus which in itself is an unnatural phenomenon. In real life you can't focus on something that is out of focus. In this work the focus continuously shifts. It moves around. It is everywhere and nowhere. The things that are happening around you slowly transgress in something that is solely happening in your head.

(Imaginary visitor 3, 2021)

35. *Noise*, 36. *Glitch*, 37. *To Disintegrate*, 38. *To Distort and* 39. *The Pixel*

There is something comforting in noise, glitch, disintegration and distortion. Although they are forms of destruction, they can also be seen as support tools. In audio and image production they are often regarded as unwanted, but they are welcome in my installation. They move the attention away from what is depicted or told and show the viewer the materiality and physicality of sound and image. Video is moving clouds of pixels, film a bunch of shaking grains and sound a soft veil surrounding you.

40. *Superficial*, 41. *Flat*, 42. *Ubiquitous*, 43. *Mundane and* 44. *The Surface*

Even daily life rituals can be experienced as magical:

Oerip had brought her mat and pillow, her sirih box and her spittoon to Riek's bed room. She had lit the night lamp, chased mosquitoes, and tucked the tulle curtains back in. "Come and sleep right away!" she always said, but Riek stood leaning against her bed and watched her sit on the mat and make her chewing tobacco: a few shiny sirih leaves, which she bruised briefly in her hand - they smelled so pungent tart that it hurt in the back of someone's jaw - , a piece of betel nut, a swipe of chalk, some tobacco. First she wiped it along her still intact black shiny teeth, then she shoved it into her cheek and began to chew. Her spit turned red as blood.³¹

95. *Moving Image* 96. *Still Image* and 97. *Memories*

³¹ (Dermoût, 1951, 17)

My installation contains still images and moving images. What I find interesting is motion or change and that both moving image and still image can alter narratives, depending in which context they are used. Word, image and film can all represent time. The American artist Hollis Frampton (1936-1984) shows this brilliantly in his film (*nostalgia*) from 1971:

...(nostalgia) lays old memories to rest with a new twist. The film is structured around a sequence of 13 photographs from Frampton's days documenting the art scene. Each photo is presented and burned to ash as the narrator describes a different image. As the film unfolds, we realize that the narration anticipates what will appear in the next photo. The distance between word and image is jarring, as is the camera's painstaking, almost loving, documentation of the immolation of the photographer's work. One by one, still images of Stella, Larry Poons, James Rosenquist, and Frampton himself meet the moving flame.³²

Also Susan Stewart explains how still images and objects can communicate time:

The photograph as souvenir is a logical extension of the pressed flower, the preservation of an instant in time through a reduction of physical dimensions and a corresponding increase in significance supplied by means of narrative. For the narration of the photographs will itself become an object of nostalgia. Temporally, the souvenir moves history into private time.³³

46. The Elephant, 47. The Rhinoceros, 48. A Monkey and 49. A Tiger

That morning I had just heard that we were leaving our village in Gelderland and Lena gave me a first vision of the country I had to go to. It was called Java. It was horrific, that was clear from her reaction. Hissing venomous snakes glided down a bleak forest path. That path led to a wooden house on poles where a tiger lay on the pavement and clouds of mosquitoes hung in front of the windows instead of the familiar net curtains in Holland.³⁴

53. Tiger's Eye, 54. Budai, 55. Toys, 56. Nailpolish, 57. Self Portrait

On the small shrines in the installation there are many objects. These objects are mine. Budai is a small statue I had in my bedroom in my youth. Visitors would always confuse him with Buddha. Budai was just a laughing overweight monk, the statue was for good luck and prosperity. The tiger's eye is a gemstone my uncle gave to me, it's to ward off evil influences.

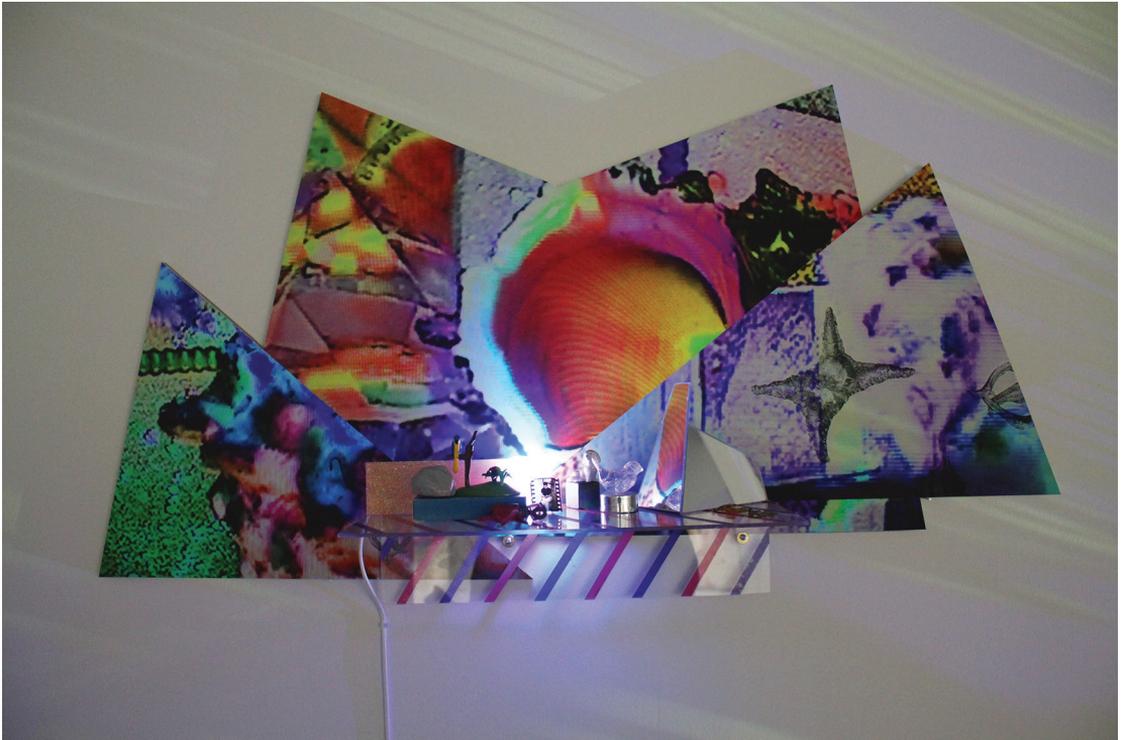
³² (Moore, 2006)

³³ (Stewart, 1993, 138)

³⁴ (Zikken, 1985, 9)

And the toys are also mine.

The toy is the physical embodiment of the fiction: it is a device for fantasy, a point of beginning for narrative. The toy opens an interior world, lending itself to fantasy and privacy in a way that the abstract space, the playground, of social play does not.³⁵



Installation detail *Tempo Dulu* (2021), printed paper, objects, light 100cm x 65cm

67. Rumphius, 68. Biology, 69. Sea Life and 70. Shells

Everywhere you look, you can see images of exotic sea life. Conch shells, starfishes, clams. They can be experienced in printed form, as projections and as silhouettes. All these images are originally drawn by Georg Eberhard Rumphius (1627-1702), a German botanist working for the Dutch East India Company, mainly on the island of the Moluccas. He dedicated his life describing and drawing about the plants, flowers and sea creatures from the colony. Reading and looking through his material, you can almost recognise an obsessive attitude towards his surroundings. As if he is trying to grasp this alien world around.

³⁵(Stewart, 1993, 56)

His material had a similar attraction to me as the fiction I mentioned before. In the same way as a novelist, Rumphius creates material. It is made, not taken. The intention might have been to represent the truth, it still is a personal recollection. Rumphius acts as a filter, as if his material went through a layer of processing. This becomes even more evident at the end of his life, where he turned blind. He kept on working dictating his son how to draw the images, steered by his own memories. It's created material, it's made not taken. It's like the descriptions in fiction. They went through a layer of processing.

85. Alchemy, 86. Unity and 87. To Mix

(Sometimes I feel like an alchemist mixing all these ingredients together to a magical unity. Creating some kind of spectacle... but it is not a spectacle, it is more a place to hide, to allow something different.)

98. To Layer, 99. To Fade and 100. Transparent.

Here everything gets so layered and dense that it turns transparent. Here you fade out and disengage and move on.

“What happened to her, did she die, were these her ‘hundred things’? She sat quietly in her chair, there were not a hundred things either, much more than a hundred things, and not just hers, a hundred times “a hundred things”, side by side, separate from each other, touching, here and there merging, without any bond anywhere, and at the same time forever connected... A connection she didn't quite understand; that was not necessary, it was incomprehensible, given her for a moment to behold above the moonlit water.”

Conclusion

Now that all the dots have been connected and we have reached the end of this text, it is time to turn on the lights and reflect on this master thesis itself. If we simplify the answer to the question “Why did you make this work?” it would be that in my artistic practice I answer the urge I have to be noticed, to be heard and to be seen. Through my work I find a place where I belong. I have described the places from where my practice stems, lost places and no-existing places. It is in fiction where I find my reality.

The use of the first person is prominent in this thesis, that is something I am aware of, and it is something I dislike in general, but in an artwork there always is a first person. This person has to be acknowledged to fully understand the artwork itself.

In search of acknowledgement I want to wow, I want to flicker, glitter and shine. But at the same time I want to respect others, I want to be gentle and share. My work should, if successful, evoke interest. And what is a better place to start than at the surface. From there you can explore, move in to discover more. Things are never black or white.

On my social media profile I describe myself as a post-ambitious artist. With that I mean that my work is not trying to establish a place. The content doesn't try to cover ground or convince the other. The work is the dialogue of the audience with the work. I have motives and strategies and I have a position and intentions, but my work is not its content, my work happens. It is striving after common grounds.

Lastly, I want to reflect on education. Often a MA thesis is written from the perspective of a practising artist. I want to acknowledge my studentship, because doing an MA at an older age was a conscious decision. My practice had been very formal, inspired by structural film and expanded cinema. Form was a good place to hide. I want to express my gratitude to have had the opportunity to study, to turn inward, through discussions with professors, supervisors and other tutors, and find out that form is a product of content. It feels like a door has opened and that this Master's thesis is just a first step.

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