

# PROPOSITIONS FOR NON-FASCIST LIVING

## PROPOSITIONS #3: Art as Commitment

With

Matthijs de Bruijne,  
Graciela Carnevale,  
Femke Kaulingfreks,  
Sven Lütticken,  
Merijn Oudenampsen  
and Cecilia Vallejos

**10.02.2018**

# Program



Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en  
Wetenschap



Gemeente Utrecht

bak

basis voor actuele kunst

## Propositions #3: Art as Commitment

### Talks and conversations on the role of art in social movements

*Propositions #3: Art as Commitment* takes De Bruijne's exhibition title as its starting point. The Spanish *compromiso político* translates not to a "political compromise" as one might assume, but rather a "political commitment" or even a "political obligation." For De Bruijne, this playful translation gap opens space for inquiring into true political commitment in and through art. Building on his practice of working simultaneously within social movements *and* the context of art, De Bruijne puts the term "socially engaged art" under pressure. This genre is, he believes, structurally flawed by its compromise: it tends to bend to art by circulating the aesthetics of the struggle within the art canon rather than committing to the day-to-day reality of the social and political movement. How can we, instead, think and enact an artistic practice committed to both political movement and art? What are the relations between the positions of artist, audience, and visual language in a political movement? How to avoid appropriation while working with/in social movements? Is it possible to call an artwork within art institutions "political" when it uses a language that is illegible outside these institutions?

*Propositions #3: Art as Commitment* is the third convening platform in BAK's long-term research series *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living* (2017–2020), prompted by the dramatic resurfacing and normalization of historical and

contemporary fascisms in our present. The gathering and exhibition take place in a makeshift environment amid the renovation of BAK's new venue and bring together diverse publics to take on the pressing concerns of our time.

*Propositions #3: Art as Commitment* is developed in a collaboration between BAK and artist Matthijs de Bruijne in the framework of the BAK 2017–2018 Fellowship Program, with contributions by the artist and De Bruijne's co-researcher Cecilia Vallejos.

The activities of BAK have been made possible through financial contributions by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the City Council, Utrecht.

BAK's main partner for critical education and research is HKU University of the Arts Utrecht.

# Program

13.30–13.40

WELCOME

**Maria Hlavajova**

13.40–13.50

**Introduction by Femke Kaulingfreks, moderator of the day**

13.50–14.10

*THE STRATEGY OF A DUAL PERSPECTIVE*

**Merijn Oudenampsen**

Thinking with the practice of artist Matthijs de Bruijne, and specifically De Bruijne's work with the cleaners' chapter of the Union of Cleaners of the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV), sociologist and political theorist Merijn Oudenampsen revisits the conceptual strategy of a dual perspective. This strategy aims to circumvent the dichotomous thinking ingrained in artistic (and) political life—inside vs. outside, reform vs. revolution, consensus vs. conflict, presentation vs. representation, institutions vs. political movements, art vs. social context—and act, rather, tactically through mutual entanglement and interconnection.

14.10–14.30

*THE POLITICAL COMPROMISES IN AND OF ART*

**Sven Lütticken**

Is institutional critique fatally reformist in its loyalty, be it critical, to the institutional frameworks of art? When does immanent critique meet its breaking point, or tipping point? Are institutions to be undermined, undercommoned, or used as platforms for “institutional activism”? Once there was a clear division between an immanent critique of the art world and an activist desertion of art's institutions for direct action in “the real world.” Does current institutional activism show this to have been a false dichotomy?

14.30–15.00

**Conversation between Femke Kaulingfreks, Merijn Oudenampsen, and Sven Lütticken**

15.00–15.30

**BREAK**

15.30–15.50

*SCREENING OF HET MUSEUM VAN DE STRAAT (THE MUSEUM OF THE STREET, 2013) BY MATTHIJS DE BRUIJNE*

**With an introduction by Cecilia Vallejos**

In her talk, artist Cecilia Vallejos introduces the context of the video *Het Museum van de Straat* (The Museum of the Street, 2013), a commission of Chairman of the Dutch Socialist Party Ron Meyer for the long-term project *De Vrijdenkersruimte* (The Freethinkers' Space, 2010–2013) by artist Jonas Staal. Meyer invited artist Matthijs de Bruijne to create a story about De Oude Passart, a former mining area in the politician's hometown of Heerlen in the south of The Netherlands, where the shrinking city phenomenon was palpable. The work, about the conflict between the residents and a local housing corporation that wanted to tear down existing houses, was created through dialogue with the residents. The manifold voices and successful resistance are composed in the piece, showing that tearing down the houses would mean also erasing their community.

15.50–16.50

*EXODUS AND RUPTURES*

**Graciela Carnevale, with introduction by Matthijs de Bruijne**

In her talk, Graciela Carnevale thinks through ways of overcoming the limits of artistic methods and forms that separate art from society. The artist revisits some of the artistico-political

experiments she has been a part of: Grupo de Arte de Vanguardia de Rosario (1965–1969), which produced the *Ciclo de Arte Experimental* (Experimental Art Cycle); and the now legendary Tucumán Arde (Tucumán is burning), a 1968 artistic and political action denouncing the appalling conditions of life and work in Tucumán under the then military dictatorship in Argentina—a collective who assumed that the repressive context required radically new repertoires of artistic tactics, strategies, and concepts, and soon arrived at the conclusion that a way to resolve this quandary would be to abandon art altogether. She analyzes the conditions that demarcated the position of artists operating outside institutional contexts in a deterritorialized art practice and refers to key concepts that led her to develop an archival practice of the group's activity after its dissolution. From these and other experiences, Carnevale draws a set of propositions for the critically-driven art practices of today as they gain pressing relevance anew with the successive crises in Argentina, Latin America, and beyond in the context of globalized capitalism.

16.50–17.00

*OUTRO*

**Matteo Lucchetti**

17.00–19.00

**OPENING of the exhibition *Matthijs de Bruijne: Compromiso Político*, with introduction by Maria Hlavajova, contribution by Khadija Hyati (the Union of Cleaners of the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation FNV), and opening by Deputy Mayor of Utrecht, Kees Diepeveen**

## Matthijs de Bruijne

Matthijs de Bruijne's practice is a result of political involvement in collaboration with trade unions and labor organizations. Working in Argentina in December 2001 in the middle of social conflict and a bankrupt state, de Bruijne learned that the artist can be more than a reflective outsider and can also work within political struggles. In 2010 he was invited to work as an artist for the Union of Cleaners of the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV), creating their visual identity. De Bruijne lives and works in Amsterdam.

## Graciela Carnevale

Graciela Carnevale is an artist and teacher. During the 1960s, she was actively involved in the Argentinian avant-garde collective Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia, which aimed at upheaval in the local art scene. In 2003, with artist Mauro Machado, she founded El Lavente in Rosário, an independent initiative for young artists.

## Femke Kaulingfreks

Femke Kaulingfreks is a political philosopher and anthropologist. Her research topics include activism related to housing, youth empowerment, social justice, and political exclusion. She has cooperated with partners such as Forum Institute for Multicultural Affairs in Utrecht, Municipality of Amsterdam, and Vrijwilligers Centrale Amsterdam. Currently, she is a lecturer at Utrecht University.

## Sven Lütticken

Sven Lütticken is an art historian, critic, and editor. Lütticken teaches at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and the Dutch Art Institute, Arnhem. He is the author of several publications, including: *Cultural Revolution: Aesthetic Practice after Autonomy* (2017); *History in Motion: Time in the Age of the Moving Image* (2013); and *Idols of the Market* (2009).

## Merijn Oudenampsen

Merijn Oudenampsen is a sociologist and political scientist. He is affiliated with Tilburg University, and recently defended his PhD on the intellectual origins of the Dutch swing to the right in politics. Oudenampsen has contributed to platforms such as *De Groene Amsterdammer*, *Metropolis M*, and *De Gids*.

## Cecilia Vallejos

Cecilia Vallejos is an artist and researcher, and worked for years as a theater director and dramaturge scripting performances based on testimonial narratives (2003–2014). Since 2011, she collaborates with domestic workers of the Union of Cleaners of the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) and visual artist Matthijs de Bruijne to produce videos and publications for the group's ongoing struggle to legalize their labor.