

MATTHIJS DE BRUIJNE: *Compromiso Político*

Also featuring works by Jeremy Deller,
Piero Gilardi, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles

10 February–15 April 2018

Opening: 10 February 2018, 17.00 hrs

The exhibition will be opened by Kees Diepeveen,
Deputy Mayor of Utrecht.

Prior to the opening on 10 February 2018, from 13.30–17.00 hrs,
Propositions #3: Art as Commitment, talks and conversations on the role
of art in social movements.

BAK, basis voor actuele kunst

Pauwstraat 13a, Utrecht

bakonline.org

At BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht we are proud to announce *Matthijs de Bruijne: Compromiso Político*, the first exhibition in our new venue. The exhibition features works by De Bruijne as well as Jeremy Deller, Piero Gilardi, and Mierle Laderman Ukeles. It takes place in a makeshift environment amid the renovation of our building, so that we share the experience of transformation with the public.

De Bruijne persistently challenges the borders of the art field with process-based, multi-authored, politico-artistic experiments. For more than fifteen years, he has negotiated his artistic practice in a variety of social contexts, and engaged in long-term collaborations with social movements, groups, and organizations outside of the traditional art institutions. Following his work in Argentina (early 2000s) and China (2007–2008), De Bruijne began a major long-term collaboration with Union of Cleaners of the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV). A large part of *Matthijs de Bruijne: Compromiso Político* is dedicated

to this cooperation (2011–ongoing), analyzing ways of bringing together art and social struggles, and searching for connections between artistic practice and grassroots political organizing in the underlying commonalities of precarity; forms of representation and protest; and desire for new images and imaginaries that work toward social justice.

The title of the exhibition—*Compromiso Político*—proposes to circumvent the English-language idiom “socially engaged art” and the compromises that it often ends up with when such art circulates languages and forms of social struggle almost exclusively in the realm of the artistic canon. *Compromiso*, in Spanish, means a commitment and obligation; a commitment to both politics and art. De Bruijne explains, “a *compromiso político* is a way of acting toward the same political goal and working together as part of both the movement and the institution of art.” It is quite opposed to the *vrijblijvendheid* of socially engaged art, as De Bruijne continues, in which “*vrij* means free and *blijvend* means to stay: to stay free, to stay loose; without obligation.”

The works by Deller, Gilardi, and Laderman Ukeles expand the exhibition in various directions. Gilardi’s works examine the notion of protest and how artists can shape its potentiality. Deller delves into the present-day phenomenon of the zero-hour contract, positioning it as a new barbarization of labor. Laderman Ukeles’s *Touch Sanitation* (1979–1980) reflects on the years she spent as an artist-in-residence at the New York Department of Sanitation. This work in particular is critical in De Bruijne’s genealogy, as it addresses the common space of cleaners, domestic workers, and artists as one of care, where the power relations that dominate life can be imagined and embodied differently.

A screening program of artists’ films complements *Matthijs de Bruijne: Compromiso Político* every Saturday and Sunday during the exhibition (except for 17 March and 1 April), from 14.00–17.00 hrs in BAK’s auditorium. The program features De Bruijne’s film *Het Museum van De Straat* (The Museum of The Street, 2013); historical documentation of Laderman Ukeles’s performances *Touch Sanitation* (1979–1980), New York, and *Vuilniswagendans* (Garbage Truck Dance, 1985), Rotterdam; and Deller’s musical documentary *Promotional Film For All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (2014). Entrance for any screening is free to those who have paid entrance to the exhibition.

Texts by artist Graciela Carnevale, researcher and NGO worker Lin Zhibin, and a conversation between the president and vice president of the Union of Cleaners of the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) Khadija Hyati and Tim Edwards —De Bruijne's collaborators on various projects—are available in the exhibition.

In addition, our Utrecht-based media partner Stranded FM—Unconventional Online Radio is dedicating on-air time to the exhibition. On 16 February from 18.00–20.00 hrs, De Bruijne's audio piece *Radio Den Dolder* (2004) will broadcast with an introduction and curated music selection, *10 Porciones* (10 Servings), by the artist. On 24 January from 15.00–16.00 hrs, the artist and BAK's curator Matteo Lucchetti discuss the exhibition live. To follow these events or listen to the recordings, please visit www.stranded.fm or Stranded FM's Facebook page.

Propositions #3: Art as Commitment **10 February 2018, 13.30–17.00 hrs**

On the occasion of the opening of the exhibition, a series of talks and conversations on the role of art in social movements takes place under the title *Propositions #3: Art as Commitment*, as part of BAK's long-term research trajectory *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living* (2017–2020). It includes contributions by Matthijs de Bruijne, Graciela Carnevale, Femke Kaulingfreks, Sven Lütticken, Merijn Oudenampsen, and Cecilia Vallejos, as well as a screening of De Bruijne's work *Het Museum van De Straat* (The Museum of The Street, 2013).

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, the Union of Cleaners of the Netherlands Trade Union Confederation (FNV) uses the site for gatherings.

This exhibition is curated by BAK's curator Matteo Lucchetti.

We are grateful to Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, Inc., New York and Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht for their help with this exhibition. Thanks also to The Modern Institute, Glasgow, and Fondazione Centro Studi Piero Gilardi, Turin.

The realization of this project has been made possible through financial contributions by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the City Council, Utrecht.

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

Matthijs de Bruijne

Matthijs de Bruijne's practice is often a result of political involvement, and arise in the last years in collaboration with trade unions and other labor organizations. December 2001 and his first working period in Argentina can be seen as a major and radical turning point in his working method. Working in the middle of the social reality of a bankrupt state and social conflicts, he saw that the position of the artist can be more than being just a reflecting outsider, that it could well be a dynamic form to actively work within political struggles. In 2005 also because of the fact that working abroad is characterized by come and go, above all to be able to come and go, de Bruijne shifted his focus working on several projects about the rise of the right wing populism in the Netherlands. During these projects the issue of labour related with migration got more and more to the fore. As a logical step he got in 2010 invited by the Dutch Union of Cleaners to work as an artist helping this worker's organization visualizing their messages in a clear manner and creating an identity of this part of the working class in the Netherlands.

Jeremy Deller

Jeremy Deller is an artist and art historian whose work deepens our understanding of issues such as the impact of history and heritage on the British capitalist, multicultural, and post-industrial society. The artist creates participatory and collaborative experiences through his video art and installations, which lead the audience to reflect upon the nature of their system of beliefs: projects such as *The Battle of Orgreave* (2001), a restaging of the confrontation that took place against the backdrop of the UK miner's strike in 1984, or *Sacrilege* (2012), in which Stonehenge was turned into a bouncy castle, can serve as an example. By turning our society's emblems and symbols into playgrounds, Deller generates a space to question and challenge the quotidian. Winner of the Turner Prize in 2004 and decorated with the Albert Medal of the Royal Society of Arts in 2010, Deller has held numerous solo exhibitions in locations such as Paris, Glasgow, New York, and Mexico. The artist currently lives and works in London.

Piero Gilardi

Piero Gilardi is a visual artist and political activist based in Turin. As contributor to movements such as the *Arte Povera*, both his writings and installations have fueled debates on the role of art as an agent of social change and the position of the artist outside of the traditional institutions. His participative installations and sculptures invite to reflect upon issues such as our precarious relationship with nature and our disconnection from social and political contexts. He is also a pioneer on the use of technology in the artfield: new materials and mediums, such as virtual reality, are a common resource in his pieces. In the last four decades, Gilardi has held numerous international solo exhibitions and taken part in group exhibitions such as the 45th Biennale of Venice. He has also produced art for workers' movements in Italy and worked as a cultural operator in mental health institutions. His last project, the *Living Art Park* in Turin, aims to create a collaborative space for art and nature to come together in the form of site-specific installations, and also makes room for educational and environmental projects.

Mierle Laderman Ukeles

Mierle Laderman Ukeles is an artist whose work, taking the form of performance, writing, and installation, focuses on the culture of labor from a feminist perspective and the role of maintenance in contemporary society. Issues such as ecology, sustainability, and the relation between the individual and its surroundings are repeatedly reflected on in her wide range of projects, from the *Manifesto for Maintenance Art 1969!* (1969), to the *Work Ballets* that took place between 1983 and 2012. Through her long-term collaboration with the New York City Department of Sanitation as an unsalaried Artist in Residence—which has been ongoing since 1977—Laderman Ukeles explores the unrecognized and unseen service work that our cities feed upon to subsist. In 1983, the project became international in the form of a series of collaborative performances with the participation of both personnel and machines from the Sanitation Departments of the cities of New York, Pittsburg, Givors, Tokamachi, and Rotterdam. Laderman Ukeles lives and works in New York