

# ZONSOPONDERGANG

## SELMAN TRTOVAC IN CONVERSATION WITH HERMAN VAN INGELGEM

Anybody invited to realize a project in 1646 is asked to engage in conversation with a previously unknown correspondent.

This conversation takes place via e-mail and stretches through the whole period during which the artists develop their initial idea into final results. 1646 invites the correspondent at the other end of this contact to figure his/her way through this actual process.

In trying to picture what result the artists' work is going to, such exchange can become a reflection on the amount of otherwise untraceable choices of the moment which make up to the artists' practice.

This issue is part of the exhibition by Herman van Ingelgem *Zonsopondergang*, December 9 2012 till January 21 2012 in 1646.

This artist  
Herman van Ingelgem

This correspondent  
Selman Trtovac

Concept and design  
Nico Feragnoli

# 1646.

Boekhorststraat 125, 2512 cn, The Hague  
The Netherlands

<http://1646.nl> - [info@1646.nl](mailto:info@1646.nl)

2 NOVEMBER: Selman Trtovac [ST] to Herman van Ingelgem [HvI]

Dear Herman,  
I looked little bit at your website, and on your art work. I'm interested in process of thinking you are going through. What kind of works are you going to show in the gallery 1646? Why? What is title of the exhibition?

I'm glad that we are going to think together and looking forward our dialogue! :-)

Yours sincerely  
Selman Trtovac

8 NOV: HvI - ST

Dear Selman,  
Thanks for the mail. Sorry, didn't answer quickly but I was in London, building up a solo show. It was quite busy.  
I'm looking forward to do the conversation and hope it will take us to an interesting introspection, not only in what I will do in 1646 but also in how you think as interviewer-prespectator-artist-curator-outsider.

English is not my native language and I'm making a lot of mistakes but I hope the people of 1646 will help us with the final editing. If there is something not clear for you, let me know.

I already have some plans and ideas for my show in 1646. In our lives we have several different kind of rhythms. There is the rhythm of the economy that is almost worldwide, dealing with working hours, working weeks, the market-movements, etc. ... There is also the rhythm of the mass media, this is a very fast, burning rhythm. Art world often admires this energetic pulse because it generates a lot of spectacle and intense close attention.

In 1646 I want to work with daily rhythm. For me it is the most important rhythm and of course, it includes somehow all the other movements (less or more). In that daily rhythm, not only people, animals and nature are participating. Also objects do! Sometimes it is organised by people but others it is running automatically or by force of something else (like gravity for instance). It can be intentional or by accident... It's my plan to do something with the relation between human rhythm and the rhythm of the objects.

The title of the show will be:  
ZONSOPONDERGANG.

It's a contraction of two Dutch words: Zonsopgang (Sunrise) and Zonsondergang (Sunset). It's a kind of very quick day. I hope we can talk about it more in this dialogue. Give you more

details later.

10 NOV: ST - HvI

Thanks for the Email. My English is also not so well, so I will always need some time to articulate my thoughts. I suggest that my role in our dialogue should be deliberately provocative, I could try to attack your position from all sides. In this way we could turn our dialogue into some kind of mental exercise, which could eventually put to the test our prejudices and in same time, I hope, it will not be boring.

What do you think about this concept?  
Greeting

10 NOV: HvI - ST

Ok, the concept of provocation sounds good.  
Let's try it, I think it will lead to straight conversations and indeed an interesting mental exercise.  
So... give me the first kick please.  
Best.

11 NOV: ST - HvI

Dear Herman,  
At the very beginning I'd like to point out that I feel close to your work. I find your work aesthetically very clear and strait to the point. In particular I like the work titled Drop Drop from 2008.

Despite my opinion, I'd like to start our 'dispute' with your first email where you talk about few terms or thoughts you want to face related to your future exhibition in the gallery 1646.  
You talk about several different kind of rhythms, first rhythm you mention is rhythm of the economy, then the rhythm of the mass media and then as the most important daily rhythm. You add also that 'daily rhythm, not only people, animals and nature are participating. Also objects do!'

The order of the rhythms that you named attracted my attention, so I wonder: why this exact order? Is it coincidence or it is a list made in terms of your priorities?

Secondly, you say you are going to do 'something' with the relation between human rhythm and the rhythm of the objects.

What do you mean by that exactly? What does it mean rhythm of the objects? What kind of rhythm of objects is it? What kind of objects you consider and why?

Where is the origin of your claim, is it some experience or knowledge of other kind you derive your assertion about rhythms of objects?

Who are you talking to with your work? In what way someone can project her/himself into this confrontation with the concept of rhythm? What do you think?

That is all for the beginning.  
Regards

P.S.

Sorry for my bad English. I hope you can understand what I'm talking about.

11 NOV: HvI - ST

Thanks for the questions. They open my mind, I hope to give you some answers before Monday, I'm working on it.  
Best.

14 NOV: HvI - ST

Hello Selman,  
Here, you find already some answers on your questions. I copied parts of your text and made it bold. So it's more easy to know where we talk about.

**The order of the rhythms that you named attracted my attention, so I wonder why this exact order. Is it coincidence or it is a list made in terms of your priorities?**

Indeed, it is not just an accidental order. It looks like the economy today is the most important rhythm. A giant wave that determines everything. Food, tools, clothes, mobility, communication ... even leisure time is determined by the economy and the financial value in which it is represented.

At this moment, with the worldwide financial crises, we only gonna feel it more and more.

It looks like in our over-mediated environment, the discourse of the mass media (TV, internet, magazines, newspapers... ) is the most important place where representation happens.

In this space, stories are told, images are shown, theories are made. For us, it is the most important place to make an orientation of our thinking and our behaviour. As I have already told, the rhythm of this place is very fast, like a stroboscope. Everything is completely burnt in a few days. Not only celebrities, sports people and fashion stuff, also music, images, artists, concepts and ideas. For one little moment, there is a lot of attention and everyone is talking about it. But a few seconds later, it's disappeared.

When I make art, not only for this show, but in general, I want to talk about the rhythm that exist, rather, on a human, corporal scale. Of course, this can also be very nervous and hasty but this is not what I mean with 'daily life rhythm'.

I work with things that are very usual and habitual. Things that exist so close to our body and life that it seems they can escape from the influence of economics and mass media. Of course it is not like that, it only looks like that. They are even more related to the economic and media power than we can think. But about those usual things, we have the feeling we can manage them, we have some kind of free relation with it.

When I am working with 'daily life' I try to work with situations everyone knows very well. It is the kind of situations and moments that survive in time of crises. For me it is important that my work is not a 'new reality'. Not a screen in front of the existing reality. I think you are just making new ideologies if you try to do that.

It is my goal to transform the existing reality a little bit. So that there is an occasion of new (or other) purpose with a new (or other) value on a poetical level. It is important for me that my work is staying very close to the existing reality.

Secondly, you say you are going to do 'something' with the relation between human rhythm and the rhythm of the objects. What do you mean by that exactly? What does it mean rhythm of the objects? What kind of rhythm of objects it is? What kind of objects you consider and why?

It is clear that there is a lot of variation into the rhythm of daily, usual situations. For me the objects also have participation in that. For instance: tools have a lifetime. After a while, they are defective and you have to replace them. Curtains are moving with the rhythm of day and night, they open and close again in relation with the turning of the earth and the sun. Gravitation is working on objects. It makes things bend so you can see literally how time is working on materials and how those materials resist.

In the show, I don't have the intention to give an expression of those rhythms, neither to give examples or illustrate them. No, I want to work with it on another level. I want to use a methodology that I already practise for a while. A time ago I saw the same articulation in a text by Jeroen Mettes, a Dutch poet.

He was talking on his blog about his friend-poet-musician Samuel Vriezen who developed the concept: rhythm of meaning or rhythm of purpose. In my own words it's about a rhythm, next to or parallel to the physical rhythm. This rhythm, only exists during the reading. Some words have a lot of meaning, or they open a large series of associations and connections with other concepts. Some words are more explicit, outstanding or prominent, because of the position in the sentence. Another feature is that words transform the purpose of other words in a sentence, words from the past and the future in that sentence or text. All that activity of transforming the content of a sign, you also can edit during the conception and production of a show. It was for me an exciting moment when I recognized it in the working method of the poet.

The way I build up an image and the presentation of a show is quite similar.

Where is the origin of your claim, is it some experience or knowledge of other kind you derive your assertion about rhythms of objects?

The way I will develop this show (and also I developed former shows) is based on very usual situations and happenings. Moments I noticed at home, in my studio, on the street... very simple moments.

Nothing special happens. But somehow some specific moments stay attached in my mind and asked for an investigation. They are moments where time is making a jump, or get stuck, or condenses ... where the rhythm I talked about is, suddenly, on the surface.

The work I make is an effort to answer those rhythms. This is the relation between the rhythm of the objects and the human rhythm. It's also the rhythm of mental activity in connection with the objects (the shape, colour, material,

the way how we perceive them).

Your last question, I will answer later.

23 NOV: HvI - ST (in reply to previous email)

Hello Selman,

Sorry I'm a bit late with my answer, but it's hectic here. I did the same as I did before: your text is bold, my answers regular:

I think that your way of thinking about the rhythms can be linked to the well-known idea of an expanded concept of art. This means a reflection on society and phenomena in society today.

To reflect on society today, the crisis and rhythms that you mentioned in the first section of your text, it is necessary to observe the mechanisms of functioning of society in late capitalistic society and sharing of power.

Building on the thesis of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, philosophers Hart and Negri put forward the assumption that within contemporary capitalism it does not exist a fixed place of power - the power, and therefore the exploitation is capillary spread.

The Marxist dialectics of use and exchange value is no longer current ... exploitation occupies the entire social field. In this sense, the philosopher Herbert Marcuse has revised the traditional definition of totalitarianism: for him, totalitarianism is not only forced coordination and management of the society but also an economic and technological coordination which operates through the process of managing and handling of needs. These are therefore false needs! I dare to add: false rhythms.

I think you make the correct connection with the philosophical line you talk about. But for me, the problem of needs: 'are they fake or real?' is not the question.

It is always very difficult to say what is real and what is false. This is always an historical question and always leads you to the discussion of authenticity. For me is important: 'what to do with it'? How to give a definition of your position?

The questions arising from this thesis are the role of art today and what is the perspective of art in this context. Is it enough to identify the problem, symbolically and formally to articulate something in the space of some gallery. What sense does it make? Is this just another bit in the stroboscope that was maliciously imposed upon us that make us satisfied and confused?

The question about the role of art is the good one. What is the role of art in this context. I think the role is on a certain level much more important than we presume and on the other hand the place of art in this context is completely insignificant. Let me explain this.

If you see art, not only as an activity in galleries, museum and the discursive space of art critics, but you consider art as a permanent daily activity from an individual who is trying to interpret and transform reality, then art is not only another bit in the stroboscope. Then, art

is the articulation of things that really matter: the opposition to the so-called 'false rhythms' where you are talking about.

What I try to do is not only identify the problem to make a symbolic, formal presentation somewhere in a gallery, but to give a testimony about how I experience the rhythms and structures. The big thing is: how can I do this honest, fair, open, and exact?

Maybe it looks very trivial and unimportant and it looks like I put the standard very low, but I think it very urgent and enormously difficult.

This testimony is not about figures and facts, and it is not about solutions, but it is important because of the new meaning that is generated on the poetical level and the potential of this new meaning.

Next important issue in our discussion which attract my attention is your thesis of rhythm of meaning or rhythm of purpose. What would it specifically in art practice mean? This is a wonderful thesis, for all of us necessary and desirable, but how to accomplish it, what to do in art for example? I like very much your position when you say 'it is my goal to transform the existing reality a little bit. So that there is an occasion of new (or other) purpose with a new (or other) value on a poetical level. It is important for me that my work is staying very close to the existing reality'.

What kind of visual language is possible in such a context of hyper rhythm?

The thesis of the rhythm on the level of the meaning or content is for me a very natural way to build an image or to make a show. As I already told, I want to stay very close to reality and I want to talk about daily life. Often, artist consider a work of art as a screen in front of reality or as a window to another alternative world. I would define my work as a small spin of reality.

The materials I use are very familiar and common: a table, a shoe, sausages, wall-paper ... with this materials, I try to build up images that condense the sense of a moment or a situation. Images that swing from the formal level to the level of language. That swing is having a certain rhythm and that's effectively my testimony.

During the building up of a solo show, there is also another level that's important. There is the relation between the different works and the relation between the works and the space. These relations create a new swing. Sense, purpose, content, statements, attitudes are jumping from one image to another and transforming each other.

It is like a background noise or like a murmur, sometimes calm and serene, sometimes loud and accumulating like a Larsen-effect. Actually: the show is this sound and it is only there when there is someone to read it.

Do you think the artist can be outside of these rhythms as some kind of intellectual and poetical observer who identify the problem, or is he/she himself a victim, aware of the situation, of a subversive and very sophisticated system that exploits all?

In the question about the position of the artist, you talk about the position of the observer and the victim. But

the artist is also perpetrator, collaborator, impassive, refugee, transformer...

As everyone, an artist has to take a position in all those rhythms and consider what to do with it. Every activity, every situation, every happening is political (and) full of consequences. The thing is to produce your own a feedback noise.

30 NOV: HvI - ST (in reply to previous email)

Dear Selman,

Guy Debord in a part of his the text about Society of the Spectacle says: 'Modern industrial society is essentially, not accidentally or superficially spectacular. In the spectacle - the visible reflection of a dominant economic order - there are not the aims, development is everything. The spectacle aims at nothing other than itself'.

If we agree that the thesis of Guy Debord is accurate and that the representation of reality but not the true reality is that what surrounds us, and if everything around us tends to spectacle, what implications would have your definition of a small spin of reality? What could it possibly result in?

Yes, I totally agree, 'the spectacle aims at nothing other than itself'.

There are no goals, only development. And I think it is one of the functions of an artist to escape from this. Or, at least to attempt. That's what I try to do. In my work I try to develop a dialogue, cleared from the spectacle. That's why I use very common, ordinary materials and objects. Sometimes even trivial.

By putting the objects into a choreography with the surrounding architecture and context, I try to construct a dialogue that generates values outside the spectacle and ideology. The objects, tools, and materials I work with are of course produced by a dominant economic system, first of all they are signs and instruments from what Debord defines as true reality.

Again, I think the discussion about true or fake reality is not the point. That's a question of historic authenticity and ethics or morality.

Instead of true reality I would talk about close reality.

By working on the rhythm of daily life, with familiar objects, I try to extract alternative values out of the relation between ourselves and the surrounding world of goods, needs, materials, production, use, expectations...

Of course it is problematic. If you are an artist, you are dealing with the spectacle. Not only if you are successful. Even when you just give a show.

I think 'the talking' is always a kind of spectacle. At least when you have listeners. That's why visual art is so interesting: the conversation is a one to one operation with in between an object.

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