

LOST LICKS

SUSANNE BRUYNZEEL IN CONVERSATION WITH NAVID NUUR

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 Navid Nuur *Lost Licks*, September 5 till 27 2008 in 1646.

This artist
Navid Nuur

This correspondent
Susanne Bruynzeel

Concept and design
Nico Feragnoli

1646.

Boekhorststraat 125, 2512 cn, The Hague
The Netherlands

<http://1646.nl> - info@1646.nl

18 AUG: Susanne Bruynzeel (SB) to Navid Nuur (NN)

Navid, you have already started to work in 1646. I know that you have been taking a look at the space a few times in advance. Are you planning for this exhibition - just as you have done for your solo in Quartair [exhibition space in The Hague] - to combine a number of different, smaller works? Or did you develop a plan for a new site-specific work?

It seems to me that you have been very busy exposing outside The Netherlands in the last period. Does the chance to make a work in 1646 offer you the possibility to try something new and take some risk or do you feel the 'pressure' of an audience that is familiar with your work?

NN – SB

That's right, it has been a very intense year. For the first time I have had really a lot to do. But this way one realizes that [artists'] initiatives like 1646 - in The Netherlands and abroad - are really important for an artist's practice.

Such places have a different 'load' than a museum's, art fair, gallery and the such. My works, in turn, have a 'load' of their own which is partly directed by the space wherein they find themselves. As a result of that relationship and of the way you think perceive an organization, works come to life. Organizations like 1646 are indeed places where you can test, shape and (at least in my case) expose your work.

It does not actually exist any hierarchy between a small artist-run space, a museum, someone's living-room or a gallery. That order is made up by people, not by the art piece. Working in relation to a space is, for me, just as working at a sneak preview for the audience and for myself.

What I mean to say is that the pieces will perhaps need some fine-tuning in the future but that they are already important enough to be displayed in such a premature stage so that you can learn from that. It strengthens the work. Making new things or taking risks is a standard breeding ground for every work.

22 AUG: SB – NN

A small organization as 1646 offers you the 'mental room', or the freedom, to show work that is maybe still 'premature'. It is in that respect, then, that you allow yourself to take risks. Next to that there is of course the matter of the physical, material space, within which the work acquires a form.

The space with its walls, windows, and so on is the stage or, rather, the pedestal for the final form in which your work shows itself at that moment. Am I right if I say that any successive (exhibition-) space gives your idea the chance to further develop that form and therefore, as you say, make your work stronger?

Then I wonder whether you're not offering the spectator, always and everywhere, a sneak preview of the work. Is there a moment or a specific space in which you would be able to say that the work no longer needs 'fine-tuning'?

What do you think of the term 'site-specific'?

NN – SB

Site-specific? That does not mean much to me. All the work that I make is site specific. 'Site' is for me: my space, my world in me as a person. Each work that comes from me is site-specific for that space. The outside world, locations, et cetera, offer any possibility of making these works stronger. If you see the site-specific as the outside, as the location where you will work, then you are dependent on that space and adjust your work to that space, and I don't do that. Within myself are works which can be made stronger/sharper by a specific location, by a place outside of me. 1646, for instance; I'm not making any specific work for the space in 1646, but 1646 gives me the space and access (literally and figuratively) to certain works which are in me as a person, so that I am able to realize them.

I had written, among others things, 'LOST LICKS' on the wall of my atelier as a reminder of all that I had been licking and could no longer remember.

When I walked inside 1646, I saw/felt that a certain amount of the 'load' in those words could find an expression in 1646's space in the right way. 1646 has allowed me to begin here my research on (for) 'lost licks'.

25 AUG: SB – NN

I already thought that it was something like that. Could you maybe say that the space becomes part of the work as one of the materials in which an idea reaches a form at a specific moment?

About 'Lost licks', this work comes now to its first form in 1646. The text is a starting point, since you work with text more often: I have read somewhere that you are fascinated by texts that you can almost touch, text of which you look for the materialization of.

In your title I experience the alliteration of [the words] 'Lost Licks'; to pronounce it, I literally have to lick the roof of my mouth and therefore the title becomes immediately physical. At the same time it's not possible to pinpoint the act of 'licking' as something objective, it's but a sensation.

You just mentioned the possibility to bring your own lost licks to expression inside 1646. Does that mean you'll try to materialize or reconstruct the lost lick making use of the space? Will I take part, as viewer, to such an attempt to reconstruction? Maybe you could tell me a little about your intention and the steps you took so far.

NN – SB

All of what you say is absolutely true.

Because this is a solo exhibition, the invitation has also become part of it: it is extra material which can become part of the exhibition. It surpasses its function of simple notification, something that is supposed to be part to every solo show, it seems to me. Somewhere in the past it must have gone wrong, designers took over. I claim back my material and my ground.

The steps: it is not about reconstruction, it is, rather, becoming aware of the depth of what 'lost lick' means. Some works are very literal, others are 'activated' by the space in 1646. As I said, I am interested in the depth of the word. To be able to make these works and understand the concept I have to go a bit 'back to the future'. As

a starting point I made a list of things that I, as a human being, lick without paying any attention to or that I found were not worth licking at all. From that list I took a couple of elements that can be expressed in a right way in 1646.

29 AUG: SB – NN

To the this exhibition's invitation you have added a poster with the following text: DISTANT RELATIONS BETWEEN LOVERS COULD FAIL BY THE LACK OF YOUR TRUE FOCUS. How does this text/image relate to the exhibition that we will eventually see?

You write about becoming aware of the depth of the concept of 'lost licks'. Do you mean your own awareness or the audience's? Plainly put: will the viewer get to lick anything? When is it that licking is 'worth the trouble'? What can the intention(ality) of a lick be? If I lick my fingers just to page through a magazine do the licks lose their intention(ality)?

NN – SB

An exhibition, art, et cetera answers that kind of questions on its own way. I'm not going further into that with words and examples about it. The work in 1646 will have to answer those questions. Since this text will eventually be available on the exhibition, people will, hopefully, see, smell and taste the connection.

The text on the poster is about the relationship between artist, art magazines and readers. During the exhibition viewers will be allowed to shoot at the poster with three darts they can make with pages of the art magazines laying there. DISTANT RELATIONS BETWEEN LOVERS refers to the relation between artists and art magazines. COULD FAIL BY THE LACK OF YOUR TRUE FOCUS is about the need of the public to stay actively focused. Something that will eventually literally happen in this work, the viewer will have to focus to shoot with the blowgun and the paper darts that he has been making and licking. This work solely exist through an active participation of the viewer.

2 SEPT: SB - NN

What are your plans after this exhibition? Has the work in 1646 brought to new developments?

NN – SB

Yes, it has. For instance, being able to understand if some of these works will have a place in my practice. Or not at all, but realizing that they have helped you to go further in your work.

Often this only happens while you are breaking down the show, when everything has left the space, then I am able to recognize the transformation from something with a temporary value into something with a fixed one. Sometimes it looks like the spirit of a work is not willing to leave, even after having lost its body when the show is dismantled. When that is the case, I am happy to bring it back to life in the future.

Now it is just about waiting till we break down the show. Who knows...
