

SEVERAL FRACTIONS TO A COMMON

MARTIJN IN 'T VELD IN CONVERSATION WITH VOEBE DE GRUYTER

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 Voebe de Gruyter *Several Fractions to a Common*, February 4 2013 till February 26 2013 in 1646.

This artist
Voebe de Gruyter

This correspondent
Martijn in 't Veld

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29 DECEMBER: Martijn in't Veld [Mi/tV] to Voebe de Gruyter [VdG]

Dear Voebe, to jump right in:

The drops in those wineglasses. The same drops before and after the party. There is no party present though, only the leftovers from freshly washed glasses after one party; ready for another party. The party is itself disseminated in those drops. Again, which party? The party which just finished, or the party which is about to come?:

Expectation and Remembrance, Hope and Melancholy broken up in many fractions are being brought together to the same transparent and fragile in-between space which they both share.

I thought perhaps for the purpose of this (public) conversation to start with telling briefly about a particular end result one of your works (*Leftovers*, 2000) created in my particular head and from that point make a jump to the point where this whole train of thought is first being set into motion:

Namely the point where something becomes something else, where an observation turns into an artwork, because at this moment a choice is involved (consciously or unconsciously): Your work seems to set out from an everyday encounter, whether this is an object, anecdote or situation (in this case the drops of water on freshly washed wineglasses), which then seem to form the starting point for a work.

And, I am wondering, why do you pick the one thing and not the other, and what is influencing this choice, is it even possible to describe this a priori?

VdG - Mi/tV

Dear Martijn,

About the before the party and leftovers after the party-work. This work consist of two big pictures, one is about the before the party and the other one deals with the after the party and since there is the word leftovers in the second title I suggest that it is not only the pieces of wine you see in the bottom but also somewhere else like the spaces (bubbles of air) on the surface of the glass .

As a child I was many times in the south of France and there is a place called Boit where I saw glasblowing as a live act.

The glasses on the pictures are from that specific place. I was intrigued by the air pushed into the material by the mouth of a thinking human - what was he thinking about when he was blowing the air into it ? - and later I got very interested in fundamental matter in physics and red about particles travelling through matter.

I don't know if you can see it well on the pictures on the web, but

in certain bubbles I wrote minuscule texts. The glasses on the photo are really big so some bubbles are about 2 cm large.

In fact it all has to do with invisible information floating around us, and where we can find proof of that.

Mi/tV - VdG

I indeed saw the work on your website and thought the bubbles were drops of water, but apparently they are bubbles of air 'trapped' in the glass when it was created?

And the writing is indeed a bit too small on the picture to make out, but perhaps you can give me an example of what you wrote in those bubbles?

VdG - Mi/tV

It's just phrases caught in a crowd like 'you are not really going to do that?' or 'the dealer told me to sit down' in fact I am making them up right now because in reality I can't reread them myself anymore since the writing is too small.

I like your expression being 'trapped in', in fact I feel being trapped in this life That's why I am trying to find extra spaces to reside, a kind of physical ideas.

Mi/tV - VdG

These words in the bubbles are texts which I understand just popped up in your head, like small thought bubbles (trapped in your head).

To be trapped in life seems to suggest the existence of a non-trapped life. You suggest that these physical ideas are a way of breaking out of this state of being trapped. How would you describe a physical idea? Like an immaterial idea turned into a physical (art)work? And you use the word 'reside', what do you do when you reside in a physical idea?

VdG - Mi/tV

For me when this ideas become physical, meaning when the works start to react, then I know it is getting interesting. I know it could be me focusing on certain aspects and because of this I see things which I would not have seen before if I had not been in this tunnel of thinking.

But on the other hand I try to follow the logic of the work and when I discover a glimpse of this logic I get a feeling of getting close to a kind of truth. And to me this truth is aesthetic.

The problem is that these evolving ideas are never finished and that when I have to show them I can show just parts of it. They can be described as parallel characters developing themselves by giving me signs of their existence.

To me the road towards the existence of a work is much more interesting than the making and the showing of this work. That's why I am not really interested in the artworld of the moment with all its fixed ideas about what art should be.

2 JAN: Mi/tV - VdG

Dear Voebe sorry for the small delay on my site, new-years got in the way a bit ...

So, first, happy new year to you and then to get back

to our conversation: there's a couple things you mention, I understand the evolving ideas part, and I think indeed your work has a unfinished character, like a thought process which is still in motion. And I understand from your answer that this is something you find often lacking in the artworld at the moment (with its fixed ideas).

We can talk about this perhaps a bit later, but I first wanted to ask you a bit more about the concepts like truth and logic you mention. I think these are quite abstract and in this case also subjective, I think, so I was wondering if you could give me an example of one of these aesthetic truths the logic of a work reveals to you? Perhaps you can use one of your works as an example, so we can make it a bit more concrete?

4 JAN: VdG - Mi/tV

Hi Martijn,

Same best wishes to you! and to answer your question with an example of work, I send you a text of a work. Because I get to know the group more and more; a chain of visual elements is appearing like for this work from big to small: Baldheads - plastic footballs - big snookerball - eggs - blueberries and during ceremonies or meetings they are all drained in an alcoholic drink made from this blueberries.

For me the attraction in this work is that it caused itself, that it is autonomous and that it has some folkloristic aspects. Because it is so independent, it is for me close to a kind of truth and a glimpse of truth is for me beauty.

I hope you understand what I mean :)

Baldhead Brotherhood of Brussels

During the yearly initiation ceremony of the Baldhead Brotherhood of Brussels, the president says:

'Would you all lay your hands on top this glorious sphere and pledge to never change this coiffure that mother nature has bestowed on you?'

Subsequently, a large white billiard ball placed on a red pillow is offered, on which the baldhead places his hands and says:

'Yes, I promise!'

'Will you repeat, loud and clear: Baldhead yes ! Chauvinist no! (chauve oui! chauvin non!) With the powers vested in me, I declare you initiated as member of our brotherhood.'

After this ceremony the new member kisses the billiard ball, while simultaneously, the president kisses the new bold. The president of the baldheads then takes a small glass of blueberry liqueur and empties this over the bald head of the new member.

Once a year, the Belgian Baldheads attend a fair where they have a stand with which to present themselves. After a payment of fifty cents, passers-by may use three coloured balls to try and break the eggs that are placed in a hollowed-out tree trunk. Whether consciously or not, this game recreates that which continuously overcomes to them. They convey the (painful) gaze of peeking onlookers. Hanging nets filled with toy footballs dangle at the edge of the Baldheads stand.

When there is no one passing by, boredom drives them to bump their bald heads against the balls.

Every year the Baldheads can be seen parading, dressed in long robes in the colours of the Belgian flag. Around their necks hang wooden combs that serve as amulets. With this they hope to provoke being laughed at. They have a word for this, autodérision which literally means: (re)laughing at one's self. It is hard to discern the Baldheads; they are spheres (globes) that, without being asked, focus attention on them. In order to ward off this interest, they have developed mannerisms, such as self-deprecation. They laugh at themselves before anyone else can think of doing so. Their laughter is their shield.

They can be divided into three groups:

1. Full Baldheads (bald from birth - very rare)
2. Crowned Baldheads (they only have a bald cap on their head around is still hair - this is a more common form)
3. Emerging Baldheads (those who lose parts of their hair and show it without complexes - also common)

6 JAN: Mi/tV - VdG

Thanks for the answer, yes I understand what you mean with truth: It seems to me like an almost autonomously created aesthetic reality, which you just seem to pick up or stumble into.

Or how would you describe this process? It seems coincidence plays a big role and what the artist initially seems to do is just pay attention, looking for these truths and then use them for a work, what do you think about this? And can you dictate this process where coincidence plays such a pivotal part?

19 JAN: VdG - Mi/tV

Martijn,

I would describe this process not only as stumbling into certain situations by accident but more as following the artwork in the way it is revealing itself to me.

For example, during the time a certain exhibition runs I see parts of the artwork (linked to its form or content) appearing in the surrounding spaces. Also through events that happen during the exhibition time. And then I am wondering whether it would be possible that the artwork exists in different places at the same time like according to quantum mechanics where one individual particle exists in two different places? IN the paper I read the words of Prof.dr. Leo Kouwenhoven. He's at the head of the Quantumtransport research group at the de T.U. in Delft.

'Quantum mechanics processes can transport informations. We are already capable to change the properties of one specific particle a hundred kilometers away by doing something with a particle right here. That means we're talking about particles which have been somehow connected at some point and have assumed reciprocal properties. Let's say one used to be red and the other white and after that connection they're both equally red as white. We can loosen them from each other by making them come out into the open looking at them. At that point both would change, even if it were at opposite sides of the universe. Informations are, moreover, just like a piece of wood or the such and I dare to claim that general laws of nature apply to informations too.'

Mi/tV - VdG

Hi Voebe,

Information is just like a piece of wood. I like the causality of that...

But yes it is nice to think about an artwork which exists dispersed through time and space, but isn't the artist the centre here, the one who stitches this various forms and appearances together, the one who creates the connection?

Related to this I like how the scientist says he can change the color of an entity by looking at it, I mean also an artwork changes, because we look at it, no?

In the same way the form of a cloud in the sky changes from an abstract shape to a dog for example?

30 JAN: VdG - Mi/tV

Yes of course you can say it is the artist remarking this or that. But I like to look at it from the other side, that the space around you has a certain meaning in the way it is showing itself to you.

My consciousness and the consciousness of the space around me are the same and influence each other. In this way I like to investigate the surroundings and make works.

Mi/tV - VdG

Hi Voebe,

I thought perhaps we can talk a bit about the way you visualize your thoughts.

You often seem to use various techniques, drawing, photography, collages, ready-mades etc. mixed together. Could you tell a bit about this process? How do you make your choice for a specific medium?

VdG - Mi/tV

Yes, lets say I take pictures with a certain concept in my mind; but when they are printed I always start to draw on them, because I like to make them my own.

I use other materials (three dimensional) more as folded out pictures or drawing thus concepts.

I often start with a text, but only text I find not sufficient; text in combination with image can be more evocative

Mi/tV - VdG

What makes a picture not automatically your own when you take it? I am not sure if I would agree with the fact that a picture is less personal than a drawing (generally speaking) for that matter ... And why draw? instead of paint, print, collage for example?

VdG - Mi/tV

It is just my way, it is more that I feel more at ease when I draw, if I take a picture it is hard for me to get into a certain atmosphere to start creating a work. Drawing is for me close to writing and that's maybe why I like it.

Mi/tV - VdG

As a final question I still like to ask if you can explain in short your plans for the show in 1646.

31 JAN: VdG - Mi/tV

I hope that the different works, old and new, will make

crossovers in form and content. I just describe them shortly and formal along a walk through the exhibition space.

The first work when you enter the space is the latest work I made and is called the Baldhead Brotherhood of Brussels in which you see baldheads, eggs and bleuberries, then you can walk towards the other side of the stairs where you find the work Insekticide sprayed apple and another apple on the ground with the title Found continuum. Then you pass Silvester's kitchen work where you see at the bottom of the picture the baldhead of Silvester.

At the other end of the big space you find the work about the Averbode Abbey and Mocha and Vanilla, the Genuine Abbey Ice-cream they sell next to the abbey. At the backspace I show the film Secret export of stories in which words are rolled into cigars.

Walking back you will find a video positioned under the stairs called Enjoliveurs which is the french word for hubcaps. And the last work you can find up the stairs [to the office] and it is a baton coming out of the wall: The falling baton. A printed copy of the story about this baton you can take home.

So in fact if you look at the visual elements you start with balls (bald heads, eggs, blueberries, balls, apples, ice-cream scones, then hubcaps as flatballs, then they turn into cigars and finally the cigars change in a thin baton.

Mi/tV - VdG

Thanks for the description: looking forward to see it, and interweave your eggs and blueberries with some of my thoughts. Thanks a lot for the interview and see you on friday,

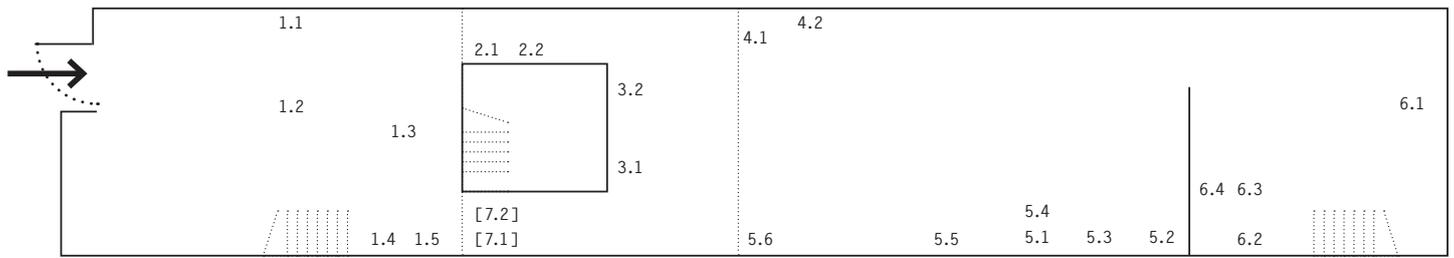
Martijn

In spring-summer 2011 Roma Publications will publish a monograph on Voebe de Gruyter, image edited by Roel Arkesteijn, with an extensive interview by Maria Barnas, design by Felix Weigand.

In order to reserve one of the limited copies of the book, send an e-mail to:

info@romapublications.org

or subscribe to the mailing list on the web site www.romapublications.org to receive an announcement as soon as the book will be available.



[UK]

1. **Baldhead brotherhood of Brussels, 2010**
 - 1.1 slideshow
 - 1.2 take away text
 - 1.3 *The game of the baldheads*, 2011 - wood, eggs, blueberries
 - 1.4 *Les chauves*, 2010 - coloured pencil on paper
 - 1.5 *Baldheads, eggs, snooker balls, blueberries in blueberry liqueur*, coloured pencil on paper, 2010
2. **Enjolveurs, 2008**
 - 2.1 video 3", tv-fragment derived from regional RTV OOST
 - 2.2 *Enjolveurs*, 2011 - photo
3. **Drawing + object**
 - 3.1 *Insecticide sprayed apple*, 2001 - coloured pencil on paper
 - 3.2 *Found continuum*, 2011 - oase
4. **Silvester in his kitchen and the work he made next to this kitchen**
 - 4.1 *Silvester in His Kitchen*, 2011 - drawing on photo
 - 4.2 *Selection of drawings made by Silvester Brobbel*. The drawings are part of a larger series made between 1998-2000, in which he tried to capture time by drawing lines day by day. Happenings that occurred during this period and that influenced his stripings are marked by the artist on the back of each drawing.
5. **Mocha and Vanilla, the Genuine Averbode Abbey ice-cream, 1989-2011**
 - 5.1 slideshow
 - 5.2 three drawings
 - 5.3 *Ice-cream Vendor next to a White Canon Monk*, 1989 - photo
 - 5.4 *Jos van de Put next to Jos van de Put*, 2002 - photo and sound work (voice-over of the two Josses intended for the video *Consuming Averbode Abbey*, 2008)

When I was in search of my childhood friend Jos van de Put, with the intention to ask him to do

the voice-over for my videowork *Consuming Averbode Abbey* in 2008, I came into contact with another Jos van de Put by accident. I asked both Josses to do the voice-over together because I was struck by the similarities between the two Josses and the ice-cream vendor and the abbey monk. The educated monk looks down upon the vendor; he didn't like to be photographed with him, and my childhood friend studied at university while the other Jos gave training to labor people.

5.5 *Truck named Jos van de Put*, 2008 - photo

On the way back from an exhibition in Alkmaar where I showed the video *Consuming Averbode Abbey* I drove behind a truck with the name Jos van de Put. The doors divide the name in two.

5.6 *Temperature Averbode*, 2004 - coloured pencil on paper

6. **Secret Export of Stories, 2011**
 - 6.1 video, 9"
 - 6.2 *Stored Sentences*, 2010 - colour pencil / pencil on photo
 - 6.3 *Cuba's Secret Export*, 2009 - coloured pencil, watercolour on paper
 - 6.4 *Story transmissions*, 2009 - coloured pencil on paper
7. **The falling baton, 2011**
 - 7.1 wooden baton
 - 7.2 take away text

[NL]

1. **Broederschap der kaalhoofdigen uit Brussel, 2010**
 - 1.1 dia's
 - 1.2 meeneemtekst
 - 1.3 *Het spel van de kaalhoofdigen*, 2011 - hout, eieren, bosbessen
 - 1.4 *Les chauves*, 2010 - kleurpotlood op papier
 - 1.5 *Kaalkoppen, eieren, biljartbal, bosbessen in bosbessenlikeur*, 2010 - kleurpotlood op papier
2. **Enjolveurs, 2008**
 - 2.1 video 3", tv-fragment van RTV OOST
 - 2.2 *Enjolveurs*, 2011 - foto
3. **Tekening + objekt**
 - 3.1 *Bespoten appel*, 2001 - kleurpotlood op papier
 - 3.2 *Gevonden continuum*, 2011 - oase
4. **Silvester in zijn keuken en het werk dat hij maakte naast deze keuken, 2011**
 - 4.1 *Silvester in zijn keuken*, 2011 - betekende foto
 - 4.2 *Selektie van tekeningen gemaakt door Silvester Brobbel*, waarin hij probeerde de tijd te vangen door dag na dag streepjes te trekken. Deze xx tekeningen maken deel uit van een grotere serie gemaakt tussen 1998-2000. Dingen die gebeurden gedurende zijn werk beïnvloedden zijn manier van streepjes zetten. Op de achterkant van iedere tekening staat wat er die dag gebeurde en zijn streepjes veranderde.
5. **Mokka en vanille, het echte Averbode abdij-ijs, 1989-2011**
 - 5.1 dia's
 - 5.2 drie tekeningen
 - 5.3 *Ijsverkoper naast witheer van de abdij*, 1989 - photo
 - 5.4 *Jos van de Put naast Jos van de Put*, 2002 - foto, geluidswerk (voice-over van de twee Josses bedoelt voor de video *Het consumeren van de abdij van Averbode uit 2008*)

Toen ik weer in contact was gekomen met mijn jeugdvriend Jos van de Put, omdat ik hem gevraagd had als voice-over voor mijn video *Het consumeren van de Abdij van Averbode*, 2008, kwam ik per ongeluk

door een verkeerd emailadres in te tikken bij een andere Jos van de Put uit die ook toevallig in Leuven woonde. Ik heb toen beide Josses gevraagd voor de voice-over omdat ik prachtige overeenkomsten zag tussen de 2 Josses en de ijsverkoper en witheer. Zo hadden de witheer en mijn jeugdvriend Jos bijvoorbeeld latijn gevolgd op de middelbare school en gaf de andere Jos cursussen aan de beroepsbevolking zoals bakkers en slagers

5.5 *Vrachtwagen met de naam Jos van de Put*, 2008 - foto

Op de terugweg van mijn tentoonstelling in Alkmaar waar ik de video *Het consumeren van de abdij van Averbode* toonde, reed ik achter een vrachtwagen met de naam Jos van de Put. De deuren van de vrachtwagen verdelen de naam in tweeën.

5.6 *Temperatuur Averbode*, 2004 - kleurpotlood op papier

6. **Secret Export of Stories, 2011**
 - 6.1 video, 9"
 - 6.2 *Stored Sentences*, 2010 - kleurpotlood, potlood op foto
 - 6.3 *Cuba's Secret Export*, 2009 - kleurpotlood, gouache op papier
 - 6.4 *Story transmissions*, 2009 - kleurpotlood op papier

7. **Het vallende dirigeerstokje, 2011 [stairs to 1646's office]**
 - 7.1 houten dirigeerstokje
 - 7.2 meeneemtekst