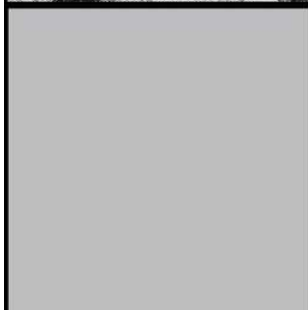
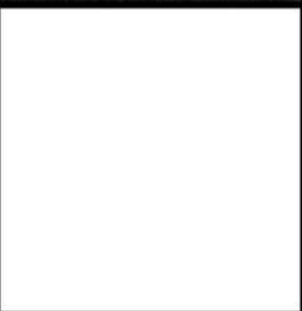
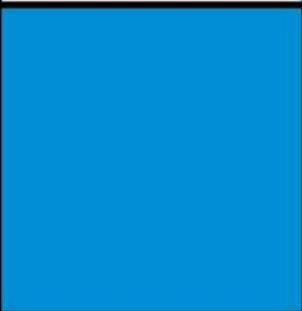
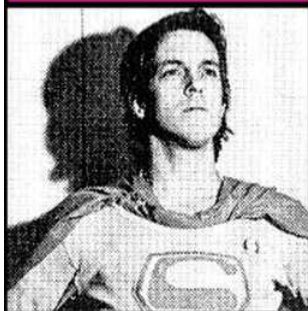
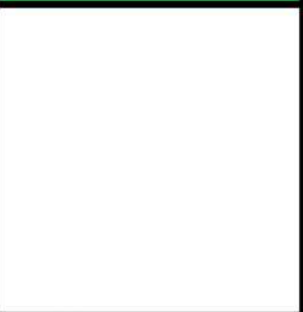
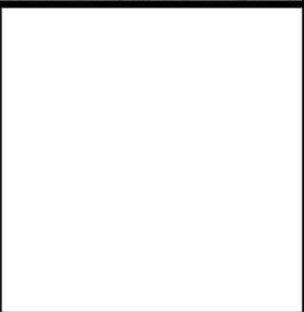
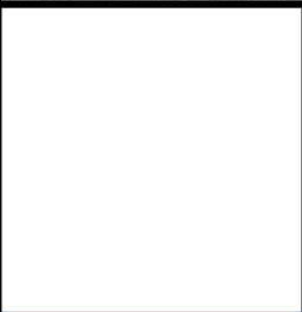
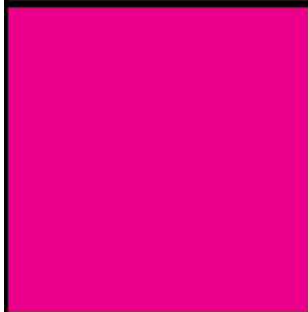
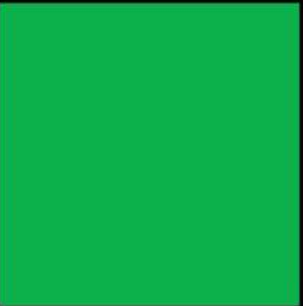
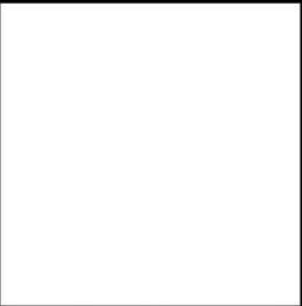
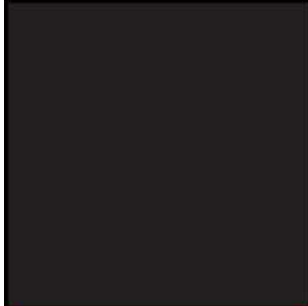
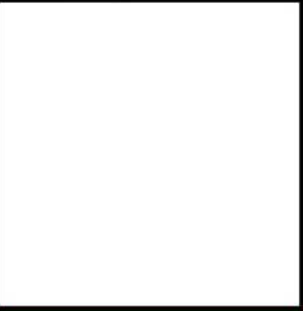
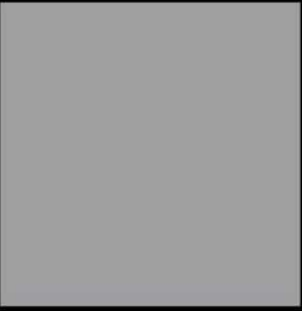
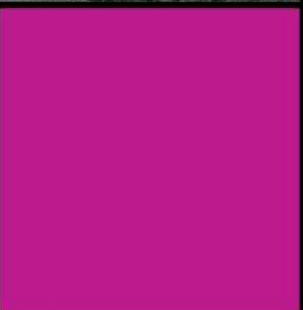


INTERACTION

PERFORMANCE ART AND INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS IN THE NETHERLANDS IN THE 1970S



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INTERACTION

PERFORMANCE ART AND INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS IN THE NETHERLANDS IN THE 1970s

Research Master Thesis
Art History of the Low Countries in its European Context
Utrecht University

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Preface

Performance art in the Netherlands. That had to be the subject of this master thesis, which crowns seven years of study at the faculty of Art History, and is the final piece of the research master 'Art History of the Low Countries' at the Research Institute for History and Culture at the Utrecht University. During my studies the focus has always been on modern and contemporary art. Via Barnett Newman, the CoBrA movement, Marc Bijl and Fiona Tan, the art after 1950 ultimately got my preference. Very soon I knew that I wanted to write my thesis about art around 1970; to be able to examine 'contemporary' forms of art, but to have enough distance to look at it from a historical perspective.

During a study period at the Freie Universität and the Humboldt Universität in Berlin (winter semester 2008/2009) I got fascinated by the performance art of the 1960s and 1970s. I was taking a course in *Performance and Architecture* at the Freie Universität, where we discussed several important representatives of 'live art'. With my fellow students I visited the exhibition *Re.Act Feminism. Performancekunst der 1960er und 70er Jahre heute* (Akademie der Künste, Berlin), where we could experience three live performances of Collete (United States), Carolee Schneemann (United States) and Cornelia Sollfrank (Germany). Interested in the direct forms of expression and the moving and revolutionary qualities of performance art, I started to wonder what had taken place in the Netherlands in this field. A few days in the library, quickly gave me the insight that some interesting things had happened there with respect to performance art. However, not so much had been written about it. That settled the matter. I wanted to get occupied with this subject that had my interest from the very beginning and that had not been squeezed dry by art historians in the past.

It has been a great pleasure *and* a real challenge to research a topic that had not been described extensively before and was consequently relatively 'new'. On the one hand, it enables one to write new analyses, new conclusions and to contribute to the discipline of art history. On the other hand, with a relatively 'new' subject, one has to start with a survey research to map out the important fundamentals of the research topic, through which detailed and profound descriptions sometimes (unfortunately) have to be left out. Furthermore, it has been a challenge to research an ephemeral form of art. Although the art works themselves have disappeared, luckily a lot of descriptions and video registrations of performances have been preserved. This documentation material has been of great importance for this research, to get an impression of, and analyze the performance art of the 1970s. Eventually, all the investigation, analyzing and writing has brought about this sizeable thesis. A 'master' piece in which I have put all my time and energy for the last six months; and with pleasure.

The coming about of this thesis is also due to the support and supervision of Prof.dr. Jan van Adrichem, professor of Modern and Contemporary Art at the Utrecht University. Although he was still occupied with the completion of his work at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and had not yet started at the university, I already asked him to be my supervisor. Thank you very much, that you found the time to guide this project in a hectic period, and for the critical, inspiring and stimulating comments in the last few months. At this place, I also want to thank Dr. Hestia Bavelaar, for seven

years of inspiring education in the field of modern art and for reading this thesis. A last word of thanks goes out to Bart de Rijke, who supported me with encouragement and advice during the writing of this thesis.

Finally, I want to wish all the readers of this thesis just as much enjoyment of reading as I experienced during the writing of it.

Annemarie Kok

November 2009

RMA Art History of the Low Countries in its European Context

Utrecht University

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 20th century, artists have been turning to live gestures of the human body as one means among many others to express their ideas. Various forms of 'live art' played an important part in the history of modern art; from Futurism, the Bauhaus and Dada, to Happening, Fluxus and conceptual art. Although the history of performance in its broadest sense – i.e. any form of 'live art' – can be spread over the whole 20th century, performance art became accepted as a medium of artistic expression in its own right in the 1970s. In the early 1970s the term 'performance art' has been used for the first time to indicate an independent form of art that brought to life formal and conceptual ideas. During this period, performance art experienced its time of prosperity on an international level.

In the Netherlands, performance has also flourished as a 'new' and independent artistic medium in the 1970s. The Dutch art world of that time was characterized by a pluralism of art movements. Performance art arose next to concept art, video art, land art, process art and installation art.¹ As an experimental art form, performance had a relative 'marginal' position within the Dutch art scene of the 1970s. Only a select group of artists was fulltime occupied with the new medium and it took a few years before the 'traditional' museums in the country accepted the art form between their walls. Moreover, only a small and specific circle of people visited the appearances of performance artists in that time.² This circle consisted in particular of the performance artists themselves, people related to the podia of performance art and people involved in the art world in general. Most of them were higher educated and well-informed about art and its current developments.³

Despite the 'marginal' position, some important occurrences and developments would take place in the Dutch field of performance art. Several artists contributed to these developments, among them both Dutchmen and foreigners. The latter group had settled in the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s, mainly because of the kind artistic and social climate there. Next to the foreign performance artists who were living permanently in the country, foreigners also visited the country occasionally. Consequently, there was a lot of international intercourse going on in the field of performance art, which brought about several possibilities for the Netherlands-based performance artists to connect with their international colleagues.

When considering the development of performance art in the Netherlands, a two-folded question arises. How can performance art that took place in the Netherlands in the 1970s be characterized, *and* what were the consequences of international contacts of Netherlands-based performance artists for this? In this thesis the focus will firstly be on the characterization of performance art in the Netherlands and the demonstration of covering tendencies in the fields of content, form and attitude. In addition, the international relations of Netherlands-based

¹ De Visser 1998, pp. 192-194.

² In the course of the 1970s the audience of performance art grew gradually; this was also connected to the growing acceptance of performance art in museums in the late 1970s.

³ See Barten 1978, p. 15.

performance artists and the interaction these contacts brought about, will be examined. These two focus points together have to demonstrate the consequences of the international relations for the tendencies and characteristics of performance art in the Netherlands.

In the first chapter of this thesis, the general field of performance art in the Netherlands will be explored. To this end, first the understanding of performance art on an international and a national level will be scrutinized: what is meant by it and when did it arise. In addition to that, it will be revealed which Netherlands-based artists were mainly involved in performance art, and who were the ones only balancing on the borders between performance art and other forms of (visual) arts. Also, the places where performance art could take place and develop will be described here.

The second chapter will describe and analyze the main characteristics and covering tendencies that can be discerned in the performance art in the Netherlands of the 1970s. This analysis will be based on descriptions and characterizations of the works of the various Netherlands-based performance artists.

The performance art in the Netherlands will be examined within an international context in the third chapter. Interfaces between the performance art of the artists there and the performance art that took place in the rest of Europe and America will be demonstrated. Several of these interfaces can be explained on the base of *incidental* contacts and meetings between performance artists from Europe and America.

In the fourth chapter the *structural* relation networks between Dutch and foreign artists in the Netherlands will be described. Moreover, the interaction and stimulation that followed from these structural contacts will be discussed.

Now that the structure of the thesis has been set forth, some further remarks have to be made about the scope of research. First of all, the research will be limited to performance art in the 1970s. In the Netherlands, this decennium seems to have been the starting point of a 'new' form of art that has been termed 'performance'. Several authors have written about this period as a time of prosperity for performance art in the Netherlands, that seemed to decrease again right before 1980.⁴ Therefore, the period of the 1970s has been chosen as the defined research period of this thesis. The forms of 'live art' that took place earlier in the 1950s and 1960s, and later in the 1980s, will be mentioned briefly. Little attention will be paid to these forms, and only to make clear that the performance art of the 1970s was part of a broader tradition in the 20th-century art; it did not arise out of nothing. Also, the previous decades will be mentioned to underline the differences between earlier forms of 'live art' and the so-called 'real' performance art of the 1970s.

Secondly, the focus of this research will be on the situation in the Netherlands. As described above, the interfaces between Dutch and international tendencies, and the interaction between Dutch and foreign artists will also be scrutinized. This will be done from the point of view of the Netherlands. Starting from this 'Netherlandish' perspective, a comparison will be made with the international developments in the field of performance art and parallels will be drawn to foreign artists.

This research also aspires to examine the artists who were deeply engaged in the performance art as it developed in the 1970s, and does not focus on those who only worked (incidentally) on the border between performance and other artistic media. In relation to this, also a distinction has to be made between 'direct performances' and 'deferred performances'.⁵ 'Direct performances' are executed or directed by an artist in front of a real audience. The performance in situ is presented as the work of art. 'Deferred performances', on the other hand, are carried out without an audience. In most cases they are executed in front of recording media, such as video cameras, photo cameras or tape recorders. Not the performance itself, but the recordings or remains are presented as the works of art. These recordings are therefore not a matter of *documentation*, as

⁴ Jappe 1993, p. 38; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 61, 148, 308; Mekking 1995 (f), p. 242; Raemaekers 1993, p. 192; Wijers 1989, p. 10.

⁵ See also Pontbriand 1979, p. 11.

can be the case with 'direct performances'.⁶ In this thesis, the focus will be on 'direct performances', that took place in front of a real audience, in which visual media only were used to *document* the performance or as 'tools' during the performance.

With relation to the international contacts of Netherlands-based performance artists scrutinized in this research, the emphasis will be on the *structural* relations and encounters between Dutch and foreign performance artists who lived and worked in the Netherlands. In particular the relation networks between the Netherlands-based artists will be examined, to draw conclusions about the consequences of international contacts for the performance art in the Netherlands.

Finally, it should be mentioned that in this thesis little attention will be paid to the social and political background against which performance art in the 1970s took place. Although social and political developments – national and international – exerted a certain influence on the development and character of performance in the Netherlands, this will only be introduced briefly, in favour of a focus on artistic developments.

This thesis links up to a tradition of research on performance art that started in the 1970s and will take new steps with regard to the examination of performance art in the Netherlands. Since the rise of the term 'performance art' much has been written about the definition and the scope of this term. Several critics and art historians wrote their own theories and arguments about the definition of performativity and performance, without any general consensus though.⁷ This thesis will not contribute to the theoretical discussion around the term and definition of performance art and performativity. Only an introduction to the term will be given in the first chapter, to enlarge the comprehensibility of the subject matter of this research.

Critical reflection on performance art and the formulation of theory about it, followed in first instance from the discipline of performance studies.⁸ Later the discipline of art history followed. An exception to this was the art critic Lea Vergine, who already published her influential book *Il corpo come linguaggio (The body as language)* in 1973. Vergine collected photographic documentation and text material concerning the then newly emerging field of body art. This collection was prefaced by a short essay in which Vergine touched on several of its characteristics. Vergine's essay was not intended as a final categorization – which according to the author would "be dreadfully premature" – but it formulated a series of ideas to develop a possible reading for the new form of art.⁹ These ideas are presented in an arbitrary way and are not fully elaborated in the essay. However, in this early stage, Vergine introduced terms that are still used in the discourse around performance art, such as narcissism, masochism, melancholia, the unconscious, aggression and travesty.

Since the 1990s a scholarly interest for performance art came up from the discipline of art history. Two decennia after its rise, scholars tried to 'map out' the developments and characteristics of performance art, and analyzed it also in relation to political and social developments. In 1998 Amelia Jones wrote an important study on 'body art' in the 1970s through the 1990s. Her book *Body art/performing the subject* is not a regular history of performance and body art, but focuses in particular on the changing position of 'the subject' in body art. Jones has explored body art as an instantiation of the profound shift in the conception and experience of subjectivity in the last decennia. She has underlined that in body art the subject became *particularized* (with all its sexual, racial and other particularities) and became dramatically *intersubjective* (dialectically articulated in relation to others). In relation to this shift, one of the author's goals has been to point out body art's potential to achieve radically dislocating effects, in particular with relation to the disinterested, masculinist, exclusionist framing apparatuses of modernist art criticism and art history.¹⁰

⁶ Thus, there is a difference between a 'deferred performance' that is executed in front of a camera or microphone, and a 'direct performance' that is only *documented* by a camera or microphone.

⁷ Coutts-Smith 1979, p. 219.

⁸ For instance, Peggy Phelan, one of the founders of Performance Studies, wrote the influential publication *Unmarked. The politics of performance* (London/New York, 1993) in which she reflects on performance art.

⁹ Vergine 1974, p. 39.

¹⁰ Jones 1998, pp. 1-19.

In addition to these kind of profound studies concerning particular aspects of performance art, several art historical surveys on performance art have been written during the last decennia. Most of these publications are about the international developments of performance art, with a focus on artists from the United States, France, Austria, Germany, Italy and England. An example of such a work is *Performance. Live art 1909 to the present*, written by RosaLee Goldberg.¹¹ During the late 1970s, Goldberg started to describe the international tendency of performance art and has continued on this project ever since. Although she has paid attention to the roots of performance art both in Europe and the United States, her books are characterized by a focus on the representatives and developments of American performance art. Its European counterpart *Performance, Ritual, Prozeß*, written by the art historian Elisabeth Jappe, was published in 1993.¹² Just like Goldberg, Jappe has written a general survey of the development of performance art. She has particularly paid attention to its roots, its most important representatives and its different forms and themes. Jappe is one of the few authors who has paid attention to the position of the Netherlands in relation to performance art. She especially allots an important position to Amsterdam and its art centre De Appel (The Apple). Within the international art historical research little attention has been paid to the characteristics and representatives of performance art in the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, the scholarly interest in the phenomenon of performance art in this country, also has been limited. In the 1970s and 1980s rather much has been written about performance art. Dutch art critics and art historians tried to define this new art form and some of its characteristics. The introductory and sometimes critical texts were written by a fixed group of authors, including Antje von Graevenitz, Frank Gribling and Evert van Straaten, often in the framework of exhibition catalogues or periodicals such as *Museumjournaal*. It is remarkable that these texts often display a focus on Amsterdam and De Appel. Several years after the rise of performance art in the Netherlands, a few monographic studies have been written on Dutch and Netherlands-based artists and the performative aspect in their works.¹³ Also, in survey publications on Dutch art in the 20th century, performance art is often briefly mentioned.¹⁴ However, the field of performance art in the Netherlands has hardly been examined in its entirety.

In 1993 the book *Vrij spel. Nederlandse kunst 1970-1990* was published. For the first time a complete chapter – although very general and introductory – was dedicated to performance art in the Netherlands, written by Desiree Raemaekers.¹⁵ In 2006 a comprehensive study on De Appel in Amsterdam was published, written by Marga van Mechelen.¹⁶ In her book Van Mechelen has not only extensively scrutinized De Appel, but has also paid attention to the phenomenon of performance art in the Netherlands in a broader sense. She has discussed several performance artists active in the Netherlands and has mentioned other places where performances could be executed in the 1970s. Furthermore, she has tried to define performance art, also in relation to forms of theatre. However, her central focus was pointed at De Appel and the events there. But although the history and the development of performance art in the Netherlands is closely connected to De Appel, much more was happening outside this important institution, and outside Amsterdam.

It can be concluded that profound research on the phenomenon of performance art in the Netherlands is still lacking. Therefore, this thesis will give an impulse to the examination of this topic in its entirety. It attempts to fill several gaps and will go beyond the usual focus points. An art historical survey will be given of the developments of performance art in the 1970s, just as an

¹¹ Goldberg 1979; revised and enlarged edition published in 1995 with the title *Performance art. From futurism to the present* (London).

¹² Jappe 1993.

¹³ For example on Ben d'Armagnac (Wijers 1995); Bas Jan Ader (P. Andriessse. *Bas Jan Ader. Kunstenaar. Artist.* Amsterdam 1988); Ulay and Abramović (*Ulay/Abramović. Performances. 1976-1988.* [exhib.cat.] Eindhoven (Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum) 1997).

¹⁴ For example in De Visser 1998, pp. 229-249; Blok 1994; Ruhé 1982.

¹⁵ Raemaekers 1993, pp. 167-192.

¹⁶ Van Mechelen 2006.

analysis of performance art itself. Several authors in the past have dealt with issues around the subject – such as the chronological description of performance art, the relation with the spectator, the changing experience of art and the changing art criticism – without venturing upon an analysis or characterization of the works (this is also noticed by Van Mechelen).¹⁷ Therefore, this thesis will proceed from the artists and their performances, and make a start with its analysis and characterization.

Consequently, this research will provide insight into the developments and character of performance art in the Netherlands – also in comparison with international developments. It will increase our understanding of relation networks (national and international) among performance artists and the consequences of these contacts for the performance art in the Netherlands. It is of great importance that, a few decades after date, art historical research will be set up to investigate this phenomenon. Not only was the rise of performance art a logical consequence of the art forms of the 1950s and 1960s in the Netherlands. It also were to become an important point of reference for artists in the 1980s, 1990s and today. The analysis of performance art in the Netherlands is also interesting from an international perspective. It can be valuable to gain insight into the part this country played in the international circuit of performance art. After all, foreign performance artists frequently visited the Netherlands in the 1970s, and several Dutch artists executed their works abroad.

Finally, it should be noticed that the research introduced above, of which this thesis is the concrete result, will mainly be a ‘reconnaissance expedition’. Since performance art in the Netherlands concerns an extensive field of research, many topics in this paper will be mentioned briefly, in order to prevent losing sight of the overall picture and to avoid a monographic study, with too much attention for one artist or one institution. Eventually, this will result in a synthetic research. Because of this structure and for the sake of the dimension of this thesis, the comprehensive description of particular performances will therefore be restricted.

To obtain an answer on the research question introduced above, bureau search was executed. Existing sources were consulted, via literature search, archives and several media, such as periodicals, newspapers and video recordings of performances. Video recordings are available via an on-line, digital database of the Netherlandish Media Art Institute.¹⁸ By means of this database and written descriptions of performances to be found in periodicals, literature and archives, the transitory performances of the 1970s can still be analyzed and characteristics of the performance art in the Netherlands can be found. This bureau search led to a qualifying research, characterized by a considering, analyzing and interpreting approach.

¹⁷ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 372.

¹⁸ On-line *Catalogue Netherlands Media Art Institute* (checked on 14.10.2009): <http://catalogue.nimk.nl/>.

1. Performance art in the Netherlands

1.1. Performance art. An international 'definition'

Since the year 1970 the term 'performance art' has been playing an important part in the world of art, art critique and art history.¹⁹ Firstly, it appeared specifically in titles from works made by Vito Acconci (1940) and was also applied to the work of Bruce Nauman (1941) in the late 1960s.²⁰ In the early 1970s, however, the term stemming from the United States, was originally adopted to define a specific, broader tendency in art.²¹ In the English language 'performance' stands for execution, presentation, play or show, and reminds one of the world of theatre. However, the term 'performance art' was used to distinguish between the new form of art and theatre. Since then, the term has been related to the visual arts.²² Other words that have been used in relation to performance art are 'action', 'living art' and 'live art'. These are overlapping terms, used to define works of art in which the act is emphasized.²³

The art historian Elisabeth Jappe has underlined in her work *Performance, Ritual, Prozeß*, that performance art is not an art movement or school, with a specific style or a specific content. She has defined performance as a certain form of art, a way of acting, a method.²⁴ This art form is in the first place characterized by the use of the human body as material and plastic element, to express an idea. In most cases the artist particularly uses his or her own body as plastic element. Therefore, the artist mostly participates in a performance: as sole performer or as a performer with others. Several authors, such as Lea Vergine and Amelia Jones, related this self-exposure to the term 'narcissism'.²⁵ In some cases the artist only functions as the director of the performance, executed by others.²⁶ Nevertheless, the artist always takes up a central position in the work. The art of performance is also characterized by a direct confrontation with the audience and the physical nearness of the performer to the spectator. In this way, the artist takes the art directly to the public, which causes a suppression of intermediaries between performer and spectator and brings about direct communication. Because of this particular relationship and exchange between the artist and the audience, a performance can

¹⁹ Mekkink 1995 (f), p. 242.

²⁰ Goldberg 1996, p. 403; Jappe 1993, p. 24.

²¹ Goldberg 1996, p. 403. Jappe 1993, p. 9.

²² Jappe 1993, p. 9.

²³ Mekkink 1995 (f), p. 242.

²⁴ Jappe 1993, p. 9.

²⁵ Vergine 1974, pp. 1, 9, 33-34; Jones 1998, pp. 46-52.

²⁶ Pontbriand 1979, p. 20.

be called 'intersubjective'.²⁷ The self-orientation and the 'intersubjective' relationship so characteristic in performance art, often lead to existential themes and questions about the artist's own identity, one's place in the world and one's relation to others.

Although performance art contains certain theatrical aspects, many performance artists, critics and authors have emphasized that it does not concern theater, but a (new) form of visual art.²⁸ In the case of a performance there is, for example, no beforehand-written script and the artist does not play a role, like in theatre.²⁹ Furthermore, performances are not rehearsed in advance and they have an unrepeatable and unique character, in contrast to theatre. In the art historical literature, performance art is also related to the term authenticity.³⁰ The performer is (or seems to be) himself and, moreover, real time and space are integrated in the work of art.³¹ Thus, a performance is the articulation of life itself and no illusion. Since the performance is closely related to real life and the performer does not play a role, the personality and the personal life of the artist are integral elements of the work. Therefore, the performance is particularly related to the author – the artist – and is difficult to repeat by others.

In addition to the personal aspect, the element of process plays an important part in performance art.³² Evidently, every art work is the product of a creation process. In the case of performance art, however, the material final product is no longer important; the process of creation itself becomes the main point. During the 'process' of a performance many different media, props and techniques can be used. Performance art is also characterized by a crossbreeding of the arts and interdisciplinarity. As an open-ended medium with endless variables, performance has therefore adopted many different forms and styles.³³

Because of its intermediary and multifarious character, it is difficult to apply the term 'performance' to a specific form of action or a particular period. Although the characteristics mentioned above come to the fore in different sources concerning performance art, any further definition or specification of the term seems to cause difficulties. This appears from the many different and even contradictory descriptions of performance art in the art historical literature. The difficulties are also strongly underlined by several authors, who have stated that the term 'performance' is unlimited and does not permit to be restricted by a precise or easy definition.³⁴ One can conclude that 'performance art' became an international covering term for all forms of art in which the focus is on the act and on the use of the artist's (own) body as plastic material. The single word does, however, not imply further homogeneity of intent or execution. Moreover, there seems to be no clear consensus as to where and how distinctions can be made with theatre, ritual and other forms of art; nor can one discern any particular agreement as to the limits and scope of the genre.³⁵

The art historian RosaLee Goldberg, for example, has described performance art in its broadest sense as "any form of 'live art' in a public setting closely related to the fine-art modes of the time."³⁶ According to her, the history of 20th-century performance art began with the Futurist group, Dada and the Bauhaus. She has also retroactively used the term 'performance' to refer to live events such as Happenings, Fluxus concerts and German and Austrian 'Aktionen'. Other art historians also have been writing about the roots of performance in the art of Futurism, Dada and the Bauhaus, and

²⁷ See for an extensive analysis of the intersubjectivity of performance art Jones 1998, pp. 1-52.

²⁸ See for an extensive analysis of differences between performance art and theatre Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 74-78, 364-376.

²⁹ See for a discussion on role-playing in performance art Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 74-78.

³⁰ See in particular Jappe 1993, p. 10.

³¹ Art with integration of real time and space is called 'time based art'; Mekkinck 1995 (f), p. 242.

³² See in particular Jappe 1993, p. 10.

³³ The characteristics above are derived from several sources (unless indicated differently); Mekkinck 1995 (f), pp. 242-245; Goldberg 1996, pp. 403-410; Jappe 1993, pp. 9-10, 69-71; Gribling 1989, pp. 8-9; Wijers 1989, pp. 10-15; Pontbriand 1979, pp. 9-24; Coutts-Smith 1979, pp. 217-236.

³⁴ Jappe 1993, p. 5; Goldberg 1996, p. 404; Gale 1979, p. 7; Pontbriand 1979, pp. 9-11.

³⁵ Coutts-Smith 1979, p. 219.

³⁶ Goldberg 1996, p. 404.

have noticed a clear impulse in the events of Fluxus and Happening. However, they have made – different from Goldberg – a clear distinction between these roots and preliminary stages of performance art in the first decennia of the 20th century on the one hand, and particular new forms of performance in the 1970s.³⁷

Goldberg has also observed new characteristics in the performance art of the 1970s, and has dedicated a chapter to this in her book *Performance. Live art 1909 to the Present*. She has described this period, however, not as a starting point of a new form of art or the beginning of ‘real’ performance. She has interpreted this decade with its own forms of live art as a new chapter in the development of performance art; a new wave in a development which stretches out over the whole 20th century. Jappe, on the contrary, has stated that performance art only has been existing since the early 1970s. She has referred to the earlier work of Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), Vito Acconci, Bruce Nauman, Gilbert & George (1943/1942) and others, as “Vorformen der Performance” (pre-forms of performance), related to the 1960s.³⁸ According to her, the next decade brought about a *new* form of art: performance.³⁹ In the same way, authors such as Jürgen Schilling, Johannes Lothar Schröder and the writers of the catalogue *Beyond Performance* have referred to the *new* performance art of the 1970s.⁴⁰ Several authors even have called the performance art of this period ‘real’ performance art, in order to separate it from earlier and later forms of ‘live art’.⁴¹

The human body was indeed used before as plastic material in art history. It seems, however, fair to conclude that in the 1970s the use of the human body gained independence and new intentions and ways of execution made the activities of the artists to something particularly new. This new, so-called ‘real’ performance art, was chiefly executed by the artist himself, in front of an audience.⁴² It was the artist himself who examined issues from his personal life or from human life in general. The performances were not only a private matter, but also appealed to the empathy of the audience.⁴³ The performance artist wanted to share his/her personal experiences with the audience and tried to test these experiences in relation to the general world.⁴⁴ It was not usual that the audience really participated in the performance, but in some cases their reaction or behaviour was part of the work. Another characteristic of ‘real’ performance art was its effect of reality. The audience was confronted with real time, real space, real bodily presence, real experiences, dangers and risks. As described by the author Marga van Mechelen in her publication about De Appel, ‘real’ performance art was also characterized by an unpredictable and undetermined development.⁴⁵ Despite these characteristics of ‘real’ performance, the artists working in the 1970s had various intentions with their performances and chose for several different forms. As such, ‘real’ performance is a qualification for different sorts of performance. In chapter 2, attention will be paid to these various forms and more specific characteristics of performance art in the Netherlands.

On the one hand ‘performance’ is, thus, used as a covering term indicating a form of art, which one can find in a broader sense in several avant-garde movements of the 20th century. Nevertheless, one can conclude that a more independent form of performance art came into being in the 1970s. To

³⁷ In relation to this, there seems to be a distinction between American authors, such as Goldberg, and European authors, such as Jappe. In particular the European authors consider performance art as a product of the 1970s, with several ‘pre-forms’ in the preceding decennia. American authors seem to conceive the term ‘performance’ in a broader sense.

³⁸ Jappe 1993, pp. 23-27.

³⁹ Jappe, 1993, p. 5: “Seit ihren [performances] Anfängen in den siebziger Jahren [...]”; p. 28: “Performance – Eine neue Kunstform.”

⁴⁰ Schilling 1978, p. 12: “Wesentliche Strömungen der Kunst um 1970 fanden ihre Quellen in der Happening- und der Fluxus-Bewegung: die neue Performance-Kunst [...]”; Schröder 1990, pp. 1-19; Gribling 1989, p. 8: “In de jaren zeventig diende zich een nieuwe vorm van beeldende kunst aan: de performance”.

⁴¹ In particular Dutch authors write about the ‘real’ performance of the 1970s; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 9, 65, 74, 390; Raemaekers 1993, pp. 167, 188; see also notes below.

⁴² Gribling 1982, p. 20; Von Graevenitz 1978 (c), pp. 6-8; Blok 1994, pp. 202-203; De Visser 1998, p. 293.

⁴³ Blok 1994, p. 203; Van Tuyt 1978, pp. 2-3.

⁴⁴ Blok 1994, p. 203; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 77.

⁴⁵ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 74.

underline the development of a new art form, many authors have differentiated between Happening and Fluxus on the one side, and performance art on the other side. The Happening is, in the first place, characterized by a composition of incidents, which can be perceived on different times and places. This art form was executed by artists such as Alan Kaprow (1927-2006), Claes Oldenburg (1926) and Robert Rauschenberg (1925-2008). It has often been emphasized by the authors that a Happening looks like a coincidence, but in reality passes off according to the plan of the artist. Furthermore, this form of art is aimed at the participation of the audience and at the disturbance of the public order in a playful way (fig. 1). While Happenings followed from the visual arts, in particular from the painterly tradition, Fluxus found its base largely in music. A Fluxus-event – as executed by artists such as John Cage, George Brecht and Wim T. Schippers – also often passes off according to the instructions of the artist and is carried out by several persons. These events are not directed at the participation of the audience, but on a shock effect or playful provocation of the existing order (fig. 2).

Performance art, on the contrary, is not always characterized by audience participation, is often executed by the artist himself, and consists of cohesive occurrences. Furthermore, in the case of a performance it is less about the spectacle, and more about the attitudes which the given actions embody. Happening and Fluxus actions are also more focused on society and critical against art and the art world, in contrast to most performances. The agitation and (political) provocation of the collectivistic and populist Happening and Fluxus event has been exchanged for the more individual, narcissistic and therapeutic approach of the performance.⁴⁶ Since the differences with relation to content and form between Happening, Fluxus and performance not always give sufficient hold, it has also been noticed that the three forms of art are related to different time periods. Happening and Fluxus belong to the playful 1960s, and are therefore more light-hearted, while the more serious performances belong to the 1970s.⁴⁷

In addition to the differences made in the art historical literature between Happening, Fluxus and performance, a distinction has often been made between 'real' performance art and certain pre-forms of it. The actions of Joseph Beuys, the actions of the Wiener Aktionisten and the works of several conceptual artists have, amongst others, been counted among these pre-forms. In connection to the pre-forms, the so-called 'Body art' takes up a difficult position. The term 'body art' was in particular used between 1968 and 1975 to denote the bodily appearance of an artist in which the artist's own emotion and body took up a central position.⁴⁸ The appearances usually consisted of a self-analysis of the body or an analysis of the body in space. This bodily research was often accompanied by forms of aggression and violence, and was introspective and physically dangerous (fig. 3). The actions should have led to the self-realization of the individual and his or her identity, the play out of inner conflicts and trauma's, the break with social, political and personal taboos, the breakthrough of physical boundaries or the widening of the consciousness.⁴⁹ Important representatives of the 'Body art' were Vito Acconci, Chris Burden (1946), Daniel Oppenheim (1938) and Gina Pane (1939).

The 'Body art' led directly to the performance art⁵⁰ and was so to say a transitional form of performance art. Therefore, the movement is sometimes defined as a pre-form and sometimes as 'real' performance art.⁵¹ Although 'Body art' can be considered as a form of performance, some differences can be noticed between this and later sorts of 'live art'. For instance, in later performances, the artist made more use of technical media and props. Furthermore, elements of dance, music and theatre became important for later performance artists. In addition, the space, the

⁴⁶ The characteristics above are derived from descriptions of Happening, Fluxus and performance in Schröder 1990, pp. 101-102; Jappe 1993, pp. 17-22; Blotkamp 1971, pp. 53-54, 64-65; Barten 1978, pp. 49-50; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 24-25; De Visser 1998, pp. 193, 229-230; Mignot 1982, pp. 11-12.

⁴⁷ De Visser 1998, p. 230; Schröder 1990, p. 101; Raemaekers 1993, pp. 169-170.

⁴⁸ Mekkink 1995 (b), p. 45.

⁴⁹ Mekkink 1995 (b), p. 45.

⁵⁰ Jappe 1993, p. 25.

⁵¹ Defined as 'pre-form' in Jappe 1993, p. 25; defined as form of performance art in Mekkink 1995 (b), p. 45.

audience and the ambiance became stipulating factors. The 'Body art', on the other hand, used the body as sculptural material, independent of its surroundings. Body artists examined the psychic and physical possibilities of their bodies, while later performance artists also tried to give shape to a concept with their bodies and acts.⁵²

1.2. Rise and scope of performance art in the Netherlands

Performance art took place and developed in particular in the United States, Japan, Argentina, Venezuela, France, Sweden, Germany, Austria, Poland and the Netherlands. This last mentioned country has even been called an important epicentre of the performance art in Europe.⁵³ Both the social and the art climate in the Netherlands provided favourable breeding grounds for the rise and development of performance art there.

After the sparkling 1960s, a new period started round 1968, known as 'the seventies'. In this period, the euphoric illusion of continual progression and capitalism that characterized the preceding 1950s and 1960s came to an end, and a more pessimistic vision of the future arose in the Netherlands.⁵⁴ Furthermore, the protest movements of 'the roaring sixties' had left the stage. On the one side, this resulted in an attitude of resignation and the wish to depoliticize.⁵⁵ On the other side, it brought about an even more serious and grim 'anti-movement' that replaced the playful and alternative actions of the 1960s. In addition to this, a new consciousness turned up among the population, with reflection, contemplation, social and political self-unfolding and individualism as its central elements.⁵⁶ In correspondence to these social developments, artists of the 1970s started to protest against the capitalist society and its commercial art world. One way to escape the commercial art circuit was the choice for the unsellable and volatile performances.⁵⁷ Several artists in the Netherlands started to execute individual and personal performances which, in addition, replaced the playful and undermining (political) events of the 1960s. These artists turned inwards and their works were characterized by a reflecting, individual and therapeutic approach, corresponding to social tendencies. Naturally, some artists also kept showing a social engagement; however, with a more serious and less showy character.

The rise of performance art in the Netherlands also was a logical consequence of several artistic developments within the Dutch art world.⁵⁸ The art of the 1960s there, was just like the art in many other Western countries characterized by a 'new realism'.⁵⁹ This meant that several art movements strived for a synthesis of art and real life, among them Zero (the 'Nulbeweging'), Pop-art, Nouveau-Réalisme and Fluxus. Artists related to these movements integrated all kinds of materials and attributes into their work, which were to be found in daily reality. In the case of the Fluxus-artists, the 'new realism' was also accompanied by liberating humor and jokes, which furnished a typical Dutch, demystifying humor.⁶⁰

The year 1968 was an important turning point in the development of art in the Netherlands. Around this year the movements of 'conceptual art' and 'Arte Povera' undermined the traditional norms and values of the art world.⁶¹ In conceptual art the creation process and the ideas forming the

⁵² Raemaekers 1993, p. 168.

⁵³ Jappe 1993, pp. 28-32; the capital Amsterdam and its art institution De Appel played an important part in relation to this position (see section 1.3.).

⁵⁴ Gribling 1982, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Hofland 1982, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁶ De Visser 1998, p. 192.

⁵⁷ Raemaekers 1993, p. 170.

⁵⁸ The art world of the 1960s was, just like the art world of the 1970s and 1980s, characterized by pluralism. Various art movements succeeded each other in a quick tempo, with the absence of one ruling tendency. Below, several tendencies which were of importance for the rise of the performance art, will be mentioned briefly.

⁵⁹ With this 'realism' is meant the integration of daily reality (daily life) in the works of art; both in an abstract and a figurative way; Van Tuyl 1982, pp. 46-47.

⁶⁰ Gribling 1982, pp. 12-13.

⁶¹ Van Tuyl 1982, p. 47.

basis of every art work, were emphasized at the cost of the form. The conceptual and Arte Povera artists also chose for new non-traditional materials and techniques to formulate their concepts; among them the use of the human body.⁶² In the 1970s this would lead to the emancipation of the use of the body within performance and 'Body art'.⁶³ Parallel to the development of conceptual art, in the early 1970s a desire for subjectivity also emerged in the Dutch art world. This urge came up as a reaction to the objective and scientific tendencies in the art of the 1960s – such as Neo-Constructivism, minimal art and also conceptual art.⁶⁴ A reorientation on the experience of the artist and more personal focus, became central elements in many art works. In particular performance would become a direct expression of the individual and private world of the artist.⁶⁵ Consequently, the synthesis of art and life and the free use of all possible materials present in several art movements of the 1960s, the conceptualization of art and the urge for subjectivity after 1968, all contributed to the rise of performance art in the Netherlands.

In correspondence to what has been described in section 1.1., the rise and development of 'real' performance in the Netherlands is particularly related to the 1970s. Nevertheless, it remains difficult to decide when the first real performances took place there. For instance, in the second half of the 1960s, several actions and events with a certain performance-character were executed by artists such as Schippers, Brouwn and Dibbets. During these actions the body and movements of the artists were used to give form to a concept, in front of an audience. In this respect the works seem to fall under the denominator of 'real' performance art.

However, on the other hand, the actions of Schippers, Brouwn and their direct colleagues were strongly rooted in the range of thought of Fluxus, Happening and conceptual art. Their works were characterized by playfulness, the participation of the audience and the integration of different art disciplines.⁶⁶ Moreover, the events often took place in public space, with the presence of an arbitrary, anonymous audience. The 'real' performance art of the 1970s, on the contrary, took place in art institutions with spectators who especially came to see the performance and did not participate. Whether the actions of the late 1960s can be counted among the denominator of performance art, depends on the criteria that are enforced. But whichever criteria are applied, it cannot be denied that the actions executed in the 1960s, had a different character than those of the 1970s. Not only was the performance art of the 1970s much more serious, also the intentions and the working methods of artists were different.

As distinct from the light-hearted actions of the late 1960s, the label of 'real' performance seems to be applicable to a work of the Dutch artist Bas Jan Ader (1942-1975). Ader made many films and photos in which he figured himself and used his own body to give shape to a concept. In 1972 he executed his acts for the first time in front of an audience, instead of a camera. For his work *The boy who fell over Niagara*, Ader read a story from *Readers Digest* two times a day, in an exhibition space in Bremerhaven (Germany).⁶⁷ While reading the story of a boy who fell with his boat over Niagara Falls, Ader drank a sip of water after every paragraph.⁶⁸ This melancholic performance, could be pointed out as one of the first 'real' performances by an artist born in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, it is not Ader, but the artists Ben d'Armagnac (1940-1978) and Gerrit Dekker (1943) who are often mentioned as the first Dutchmen to be engaged in performance.⁶⁹ After all, Ader stayed and worked frequently in the United States and executed his *Niagara* performance in Germany – not in the Netherlands. Because of Ader's early death in 1975, this also remained his only 'real' performance

⁶² Ruhé 1982, p. 38.

⁶³ Although the performance art is closely related to the conceptual art (see also Mekking 1995 (f), p. 242; Goldberg 1996, p. 403), not all performance artists originated from the conceptual tradition.

⁶⁴ Van Tuyl 1982, p. 48.

⁶⁵ Gribling 1982, p. 20.

⁶⁶ Ruhé 1982, p. 38.

⁶⁷ Raemaekers 1993, pp. 187- 188.

⁶⁸ Blok 1994, p. 179.

⁶⁹ Ruhé 1982, p. 40; Raemaekers 1993, p. 174; Van Straaten 1978, p. 21.

and he could not further develop as a performance artist. D'Armagnac and Dekker, on the other hand, lived and worked in the Netherlands. With their performances they became pioneers of a new tendency within the Dutch art world of the 1970s.⁷⁰

Several Dutch art historians and critics have agreed on the point that the performance period in the Netherlands was on its peak between 1975 and 1978.⁷¹ Jappe even states that the year 1977 passes for the height of the performance art in the whole of Europe.⁷² This peak relates to both the activities of the artists and the echo of performance art in public. After these supreme years, the phenomenon of performance seems to have come to its end round 1980, at least in the form characteristic for the 1970s. The performance artists had exhausted all their possibilities. They were on an artistic level beyond their peak and began to search for something new. Some of them could no longer endure the physical exhaustion. Furthermore, the volatility of the medium became inconvenient for many artists, since they wanted to leave something tangible for prosperity. The volatile, and therefore unsellable performances also appeared to bring in too little for the performers. Moreover, the art centre De Appel altered its course and focused on other, newer developments in art. This may have had its influence on the further development of performance art, which had become more accepted.

Many performance artists stopped performing and began working with media such as photography or video, or reverted to traditional media such as painting and sculpture.⁷³ However, the development of performance art could not be reversed. Some artists continued the execution of performances in the 1980s, although with totally different meanings and intentions. The performance art of the next generation was characterized by the use of mixed media and a fading of borders. Entertainment and more attention for design also took up an important part in this. The heyday of performance art in the Netherlands was, nevertheless, over.

1.3. Performance artists in the Netherlands

Dutch performance artists

Since it is difficult to define 'performance art', and this particular form of art is characterized by fading boundaries, it is not easy to point out which artists of the 1970s in the Netherlands can actually be considered performance artists. As performance art was not an art movement or school, but more a medium or a method, many artists only 'used' performance on an incidental base to express artistic ideas. Moreover, several artists were exploring the borderlines between performance art and, for example, theatre, music or photography. Nevertheless, it is possible to define a certain 'core group' among Dutch artists active in the 1970s, that was really engaged in performance art. The artists belonging to this group, were executing performances on a regular base and have determined the character and form of the performance art in the Netherlands. It were mainly these artists who performed frequently during national and international performance festivals, or in art centres, galleries and museums. There they were also presented as 'performance artists', which emphasizes that they were known as real performance artists. The names of the Dutch artists that can be considered performance artists, are also to be found in exhibition catalogues such as *Het verschijnsel performance in Amsterdam* (1978) and *Beyond performance* (1989).⁷⁴ In addition, Marga van Mechelen and Elisabeth Jappe inserted most of these artists in their overview of Dutch performance artists, which underlines their prominent position as such.

Among the 'core group' of Dutch performance artists working in the 1970s, an important position was taken up by Ben d'Armagnac. In literature he even has been defined as the 'only real performance artist'.⁷⁵ D'Armagnac officially started to work with performances in 1973. From that

⁷⁰ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 74.

⁷¹ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 61, 148, 308; Mekink 1995 (f), p. 242; Raemaekers 1993, p. 192; Wijers 1989, p. 10.

⁷² Jappe 1993, p. 39.

⁷³ Ruhé 1982, p. 48; Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, pp. 38-45; Raemaekers 1993, p. 173; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 308.

⁷⁴ *Het verschijnsel performance 1978; Beyond performance* [exhib.cat.]. Amsterdam (Arti et Amicitiae) 1989.

⁷⁵ Van Ginneken 1981: "Nederland's enige echte performance-kunstenaar".

moment, the artist was exclusively occupied with the execution of twenty performances until his death by drowning in 1978. An artist who was personally and artistically closely related to Ben d'Armagnac is Gerrit Dekker. In the 1960s, the two artists collaborated on several projects of timberwork and installations. This cooperation ended in 1970, but the intensive contact remained.⁷⁶ Dekker also started to carry out performances in 1973, often in combination with his environments. After the death of his friend in 1978, Dekker stopped doing performances.⁷⁷

Harrie de Kroon (1948), originating from Breda, also belonged to the earliest generation of Dutch performance artists. In 1973 he experimented with performance for the first time, but got really engaged with the medium in 1976.⁷⁸ De Kroon continued to work with performance until the early 1980s. Also trained in the south of the Netherlands was the performance artist Servie Janssen (1949). Since his time at the academy in Maastricht he used a wide range of plastic means of expression, among them the performance in the 1970s. Until the year 1981 the artist carried out circa 24 performances.⁷⁹ Two of the performance artists belonging to the 'core group' were trained at the academy of arts in Arnhem: Albert van der Weide (1949) and Hans Eijkelboom (1949). Van der Weide started to carry out performances to refer to social friction in the world. The artist Hans Eijkelboom, who later became predominantly known as a photographer, did several performances during the 1970s with the help of photography.

Lydia Schouten (1948) was the only woman belonging to the group of Dutch 'hard core' performance artists. This is striking, since in other countries the performance was frequently – and sometimes mainly – used as a medium by female artists. Many female and feminist artists chose the medium of performance art, because it was a new form of art, without a tradition determined by men.⁸⁰ This reason did, however, not hold true in the case of Schouten. After some experiments at the academy in Rotterdam, she started in 1978 as a pure performance artist, since she felt in need of a direct reaction of people.⁸¹

The artists D'Armagnac, Dekker, De Kroon, Janssen, Van der Weide, Eijkelboom and Schouten belonged to the first generation of Dutch performance artists, who were in particular active in the 1970s – both nationally and internationally. In a certain way they can be called pioneers of performance art in the Netherlands. Next to this 'core group', however, a handful of other artists was engaged in the field of performance art. These artists were doing performances on a less regular base, but they were nevertheless nationally known as performance artists in the 1970s and also maintained ties with the 'core group'. Therefore Wally Stevens (1942), Hannes van Es (1950-2002), Marten Hendriks (1941), Marjo Schumans (1955) and Marja Samsom⁸² can also be named Dutch performance artists. Except for Samsom, these artists only performed on a national scale. Although their position as performance artist was less prominent, they contributed to the development of the new form of art. Therefore the work of these five artists will also be mentioned in the next chapter, to characterize the performance art in the Netherlands.

Foreign performance artists living in the Netherlands

In the 1960s, the Netherlands – and in particular Amsterdam – became an attractive place for nomadic artists from abroad. Because of an open minded and liberal mentality, foreign artists looking for freedom and a broadening of spirit, felt easily at home in the small country. The period of Fluxus and Provo actions had proved that anything was possible there. Another inviting attraction for foreign artists were the favorable facilities for artists. Artists could make use of artistic education at

⁷⁶ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 78.

⁷⁷ Raemaekers 1993, p. 176.

⁷⁸ Egbers 1987.

⁷⁹ Wijers 1986; Jan Nieland even writes about forty performances between 1976 and 1981 in Nieland 1987.

⁸⁰ Jappe 1993, p. 32.

⁸¹ Van den Hooff 1989.

⁸² Date of birth unknown; in several sources her name is written as Marja Samson; see for example Van Mechelen 2006, p. 169.

several Dutch academies or get temporary residence in art institutes. Therefore, several foreign artists settled in the Netherlands in the 1960s and 1970s. The Dutch artistic and social climate had a stimulating effect on these foreigners. On the other hand, the presence of the foreign artists also had a major influence on the 'couleur locale' of the Dutch art world. For example, they started artist collectives, founded art institutions and meeting points, and stimulated different art tendencies.⁸³

The settled foreigners also played an important part in the development of the performance art in the Netherlands.⁸⁴ Therefore, several foreigners can be counted to the 'core group' of performance artists in the country. In the first place these artists contributed to the definition of performance art. They also frequently performed in prominent Dutch art institutes and during national and international performance festivals in which the Netherlands were involved. Some of them even played an advising or stimulating part with regard to the Dutch platforms where performances took place. In the first place, the foreign artists Uwe Laysiepen (known as Ulay, 1943), Marina Abramović (1946), Nikolaus Urban (1942) and the artist duo Reindeer Werk can be counted to the 'core group'. The German artist Ulay and the Yugoslav artist Abramović came apart from each other to the Netherlands, in respectively 1968 and 1975. Ulay had been a photographer but started to carry out performances around 1975, in which he focused on the issues of travesty and identity. Abramović had acted out controversial performances in Yugoslavia, Austria and Italy since the early 1970s. The two artists met in the art centre De Appel in Amsterdam, after which they started an artistic and private cooperation in 1976. Together they carried out many performances in the Netherlands and abroad.⁸⁵

Nikolaus Urban originally was a writer from Pécs, in Hungary. In 1969 he had moved to Vienna to settle next in the Netherlands in 1974, where he was attached to the art academy in Maastricht.⁸⁶ In the 1970s he was chiefly doing twenty performances in the Netherlands, England, Germany, Belgium and Austria. In 1977 the artist duo Reindeer Werk, consisting of Thom Puckey (England, 1948) and Dirk Larsen (Denmark, 1951), established themselves in Amsterdam. They experienced the artistic climate in the Netherlands as much more free than in England, where they both had lived before.⁸⁷ Until 1981 the duo executed performances and workshops in the Netherlands and abroad.

The foreign artists Nan Hoover (1931-2008), Michel Cardena (1934) and Raúl Marroquin (1948) were also living in the Netherlands and occupied with performance art in the 1970s. Their performance work had a different character than the work of the first mentioned foreign artists, also because of their occupation with video. Nevertheless, they gave an important impulse to performance art – although from a different direction – and certainly belonged to the 'core group' of performance artists there in the Netherlands. The artist Nan Hoover came from the United States and settled in Amsterdam around 1968. In 1973 she decided to start working with the new media of video and performances, which she often combined.⁸⁸

The artist Michel Cardena arrived in the Netherlands in 1963 to live and work in The Hague and later in Amsterdam.⁸⁹ The liberal mentality and atmosphere in the country attracted the artist, also because he was a homosexual, which was not accepted in his home country Colombia.⁹⁰ In the late 1960s he applied himself to the media of video and photography and in relation to that also started to work with performances.⁹¹ With regard to his early live actions, Cardena seems to have been active on the borderland between Fluxus-actions and performance art. His early actions often

⁸³ Gribling 2004; Boers 1982, pp. 94-109.

⁸⁴ Ruhé 1982, p. 41.

⁸⁵ See also Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 51, 63-65, 81, 304.

⁸⁶ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 42.

⁸⁷ Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, p. 44.

⁸⁸ Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, pp. 40-41; Oele 1983.

⁸⁹ Cardena about his decision to settle in Amsterdam, in Vogel 1976: "Omdat de hele wereld hier langskomt."

⁹⁰ Boers 1982, p. 102.

⁹¹ Perrée 1983, p. 61.

took place at public locations and not, like the 'real' performance, between the walls of an art institution. Moreover, the audience of his works was very restricted (twelve friends or one family) or arbitrary (passers-by on the street). In addition to this, it was not so much the body and the acts of the performer that took up a central role in Cardena's work; it was much more about the realization of a concept, such as bringing people together. In retrospect, Cardena called these early actions 'performances'. In the art historical literature, his works are also often described as performances.⁹² Notwithstanding these definitions, there is a great difference between the actions which Cardena carried out between 1968 and 1975, and what is understood as performance art of the 1970s. Although Cardena started with Fluxus-like actions, since the year 1975 his appearances shifted gradually to 'real' performance art. He started to perform in front of an audience and acted more often as the central performer or the central director. The artist acquired an important position in the Dutch art world as both a video and a performance artist.⁹³ Therefore, he surely belongs to the 'core group' of performance artists in the Netherlands, in particular with regard to his work after 1975.

The artist Raúl Marroquin also comes from Colombia and has been living in the Netherlands since 1971. He did postgraduate studies at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht from 1971 to 1973 and moved to Amsterdam in 1974.⁹⁴ During his period at the academy, Marroquin got in touch with performance art.⁹⁵ He himself started to make independent video pieces where the performance was visualized only through the video production. Later, he also carried out 'direct' performances (only documented with video). Just like Cardena, Marroquin was known as a video artist *and* a performance artist. Although he was active on the borderland between video and performance, and his work clearly showed influences of Fluxus art, Marroquin certainly belonged to the 'core group' of performance artists in the Netherlands.

Sideways related to the 'core group' was Barbara Bloom (1951). The artist was born in the United States and came to the Netherlands in 1972.⁹⁶ Bloom was not – like the other performance artists mentioned above – mainly engaged in performance art, but also made trailers, films, photo's, posters, texts and installations.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, she carried out several important performances in the United States and the Netherlands. She was also closely involved in two Dutch important podia for performance art: De Appel and Corps de Garde (see section 1.4.).⁹⁸ Bloom contributed thus to the development of performance art and is therefore considered here as a foreign performance artist living in the Netherlands.

In order to characterize the performance art in the Netherlands and to point out international contacts among Netherlands-based performance artists in the following chapters the focus will be on the twelve Dutch artists and the nine foreign artists mentioned above. It were these artists who were actually known as (prominent) performance artists in the 1970s.

Border cases

Next to the group of performance artists mentioned above, there were several artists living in the Netherlands who only occasionally executed a performance. In particular in De Appel artists could find a platform to experiment once or twice with the new medium. Among them there may have been artists who adjusted themselves to the tendencies in De Appel just once, and carried out a performance only for the sake of some space and attention there. From the archives of the institutes who offered a platform for performance and the art periodicals published in the 1970s – such as *Artzien*, *Museumjournaal* and *Fandangos* – one can gather which artists took up with performance

⁹² Lamoree 2004; Beeren 1979, p. 9: "Tot de eerste performers in Nederland behoort Michel Cardena."

⁹³ Lamoree 2004.

⁹⁴ See on-line database *Catalogue Netherlands Media Art Institute (NMAI)*, List of Artists, Raul Marroquin, Biography (checked on 8.10.2009): http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/artist_biography.php?id=49.

⁹⁵ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 87.

⁹⁶ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 89.

⁹⁷ Bos 1987, p. 7.

⁹⁸ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 89.

on an incidental base. These artists never became known as performance artists and information on a certain 'career' in performance art is missing.

Frank Gribling (1933), for example, was a Dutch artist who incidentally did an immaterial project in which visual language played an important part. Although he called his non-verbal lectures 'perfo-demonstrations', Gribling was not a real performance artist himself.⁹⁹ The same holds true for the Israeli-born artist Michael Druks (1940) who lived and worked temporarily in the Netherlands in the 1970s. As an artist he focused on human behaviour and social restrictions, and used a variety of techniques and media. Druks incidentally made use of performance, but was not mainly concerned with the art form *an sich*.¹⁰⁰ Robert Malasch (1947) was an artist who also experimented with performance and carried out one in De Appel, in 1976.¹⁰¹ He became, however, widely known in the 1980s as a maker of theatre and later as a gallery-owner; and not as a performer.¹⁰² Other artists who can be found in the files of De Appel and carried out a performance once or twice there in the 1970s, are for instance André Swagers (1950), Pieter Laurens Mol (1946), Ronnie Klinkhamer, Vivian Lisle, Mattijn Seip, Martien Groeneveld and Harry Hoogstraten (1941).¹⁰³ Since all these artists were engaged in performance art just occasionally, they cannot be considered as 'real' performance artists. Therefore, they will be left out of consideration with relation to the characterization of the performance art in the Netherlands in chapter 2.

Likewise left out of consideration within the framework of the following chapters, are the performance artists of the so-called 'second generation'.¹⁰⁴ After the year 1978 a certain turn took place in the Dutch world of performance art and several 'hard core' performance artists chose for another approach or stopped performing.¹⁰⁵ The peak of the first generation of performance artists – the pioneers – was over. But although performance art would never experience the heydays of the mid-1970s again, a second generation arose in the late 1970s and took new roads with the particular art form. Important representatives of this generation were Peter Baren, Toine Horvers, Peter Zegveld, Kees Mol, Franklin Aalders, Marcelle van Bommel, Yvon Koopman and the collectives 'H.H.Coala!' and 'Cres'.¹⁰⁶ Some of these artists started with performance in the late 1970s and thus, strictly speaking, 'belonged' to the decennium of the 1970s (which forms the scope of this research). However, their performances displayed a clearly different approach and character than those of the first generation. Interdisciplinarity, entertainment and the artist as director became more important elements in the new approach. These performance artists, thus, clearly belonged to a new generation and a new decennium. They did not determine and stipulate the character of the performance art of the 1970s, but that of the 1980s.

As described in the first section, performance art tended towards the world of theatre, but also showed some essential differences to it. However, since the performance art was characterized by the fading of borders, some artists explored the borderline between performance art and pure theatre. These artists directed or produced 'performances' which tended more towards *shows*, such as one sees in theatre, than to *art works* (such as 'real' performances). The collective 'Beeldend Theater', formed by Justa Masbeck and Wouter Klomp since 1973, can be counted among this category. As their name already suggested, their work showed more elements of theatre – dance, sounds and scenery – than of performance art. Their pieces were even announced as 'theater shows' and not as 'performances'. Although their works showed some interesting resemblances to

⁹⁹ See also Meijerink and Ris 1986, pp. 10-12; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 53.

¹⁰⁰ See text on invitation De Appel, 1975, Netherlands Institute for Art History (RKD) The Hague, Collectie Pers Documentatie (PDO), Buitenlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Michael Druks'.

¹⁰¹ *Het verschijnsel performances 1978*, p. 4.

¹⁰² See RKD, PDO, Nederlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Robert Malasch'.

¹⁰³ Swagers and Mol during the 'Hollandse Week' in 1976 and the others during open evenings in 1979.

¹⁰⁴ Raemaekers is the first to make this distinction between a first and second generation; Raemaekers 1993, pp. 183-187.

¹⁰⁵ Two possible reasons for this turn were the death of D'Armagnac in 1978 and another course in De Appel; see also Wijers 1995, p. 14.

¹⁰⁶ See for artists of the second generation also Raemaekers 1993, pp. 183-187; artists lexicon in Jappe 1993, pp. 160-214; RKD, PDO, Nederlandse Kunstenaars, folders 'Kees Mol' and 'Franklin Aalders'; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 320.

performance art and they even performed their work on podia for performance art,¹⁰⁷ 'Beeldend Theater' should be considered among the category of 'visual theatre' and not of 'real' performance art.

The artist Moniek Toebosch (1948) also took up an ambiguous position within the world of performance art in the 1970s. Toebosch can be described as a many-sided and interdisciplinary artist, who was engaged in all areas of art, such as music, theatre, visual arts, literature, video and film. In the 1970s, Toebosch executed performance shows in theatre, but also carried out a number of solo performances in museums and art institutions. These latter performances had an interdisciplinary character, since singing, dance, mimic art, electronics and painterly elements were incorporated.¹⁰⁸ In her performances Toebosch consciously set out for the border between visual arts, theatre and music and tended more towards entertaining *shows* than to *art pieces*. She continued the line that was set in with Fluxus and therefore developed a different approach than that of the 'real' performance art of the 1970s. Although Toebosch appropriated elements of performance art and also performed on podia for performance art, it may be clear that she was not particularly involved in performance art, but had a much broader scope. Moreover, it can be concluded that her work strongly deviated from the 'real' performance art as it developed in the Netherlands in the 1970s. Therefore, Toebosch cannot be counted among the 'core group' of performance artists, that gave the Dutch performance art its own face. With her interdisciplinary and entertaining approach, she rather seems to belong to the 'second generation' of the 1980s.¹⁰⁹

The artist Floor van Keulen (1951) was active on the borderland between performance and painting. In the 1970s, the artist made large wall paintings in front of an audience, which were therefore called 'painting performances'.¹¹⁰ Van Keulen started these painting actions, rather out of despair than out of desire. In the 1970s the painting was declared 'dead'. To continue his painterly activities, Van Keulen combined his painting work with elements of performance art, which was popular at that time.¹¹¹ The approach, intentions and actual works of the artist differed strongly from that of the actual performance artists in the Netherlands, and he even felt like an outsider to them.¹¹²

It is important to realize that artists such as Toebosch, Beeldend Theater and Van Keulen also made use of performance, and combined it with other disciplines. This demonstrates that originating from performance art, all sorts of new interdisciplinary forms of art could arise. Because of the limited scope of this research and the focus on the 'real' performance art of the 1970s, these border cases of performance art will, however, not be further examined here.

Another border case related to the performance art of the 1970s, concerns the field of photography and film. In the 1960s and 1970s, photography and film were used by many artists – among them performance artists – as a registration device.¹¹³ On the one hand, this resulted in documentary photos and films, that served merely as records of temporary projects. On the other hand, however, several artists started to use registration media in their often conceptual work to create independent photo or film works.¹¹⁴ In the Netherlands, the Dutch artists Ger van Elk, Pieter Laurens Mol, Bas Jan Ader, Sef Peeters (1947) and the Icelander Hrein Fridfinson (1943) and Sigurdur Gudmundsson (1942) particularly belonged to this latter group.¹¹⁵ These artists executed a series of acts or created a

¹⁰⁷ *Het verschijnsel performances* 1978, p.2.

¹⁰⁸ See also Mekink 1995 (g), p. 301; Raemaekers 1993, p. 186; Van Droffelaar 1979 (b), pp. 111-112; invitation De Appel, 1978, RKD, PDO, Nederlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Moniek Toebosch'.

¹⁰⁹ This is also suggested in Raemaekers 1993, p. 186; Mekink 1995 (g), p. 301.

¹¹⁰ Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, p. 41; Van Burkom 1979.

¹¹¹ Van Delft 1988, p. 17.

¹¹² Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, p. 41.

¹¹³ Herst 1995, p. 106.

¹¹⁴ The distinction between documentary photos and independent photos is also made by Cor Blok; Blok 1994, p. 202.

¹¹⁵ Also the artists Jan Dibbets and Ger Dekkers were working with the medium photography, but photographed mainly empty spaces and landscapes. Therefore they are left out of consideration with regard to the characterization of the photographic work that has interfaces with the performance art.

situation in front of a photo or film camera and did not present the acts or situations, but the photo or film as the particular work of art. The central concern of most of these works was the (tensed) relation between the personal inside world (mostly visualized by the artist himself) and the impersonal outside world, full of strict rules and natural laws.¹¹⁶ The artists often used their own experiences and feelings as a base for their works. In particular the photographs of Gudmundsson, in which the artist himself is always the only human figure, are an expression of his feelings, desires and attitude to life.¹¹⁷ The photo works created in the 1970s were also interlarded with melancholic humor and irony, and had a poetic dimension.

In general, a number of interfaces are perceptible between the photo and film works of the artists described above and the performance art of the 1970s. In both cases the human body and its acts were used as visual material. Moreover, the artists themselves figured in the photographs, the films and the performances. The parallels with regard to the content are also remarkable. In the photo and film works on the one hand, and the performances on the other hand, the emotional life of the artists was given a central place (see also section 2.1.). Artists from both fields used their personal feelings, thoughts and experiences as a starting point, and tested and confronted these with relation to the general world.¹¹⁸ A few artists were even engaged in both artistic fields, among them Harrie de Kroon and Nikolaus Urban. An important difference was, however, that the acts of the artists intended for the photos or films, were not taking place in front of an audience. In addition to that, the effect of reality that one experiences in a performance, was undermined by the intervention of the camera in the photo and film works. Furthermore, improvisation – an important element in the case of performances – was hardly playing a part in the scenes of these artists, that were made up in advance and carefully constructed. Also, in the case of performance art it was all about the performance itself and not about the registration of that, as opposed to the photo and film works.

Although there are a number of resemblances between both groups of artists, it may be concluded that the photo and film works described above, clearly fall out of the scope of 'direct' performance art. Therefore, artists such as Mol, Gudmundsson and Van Elk are in this respect not considered 'real' performance artists. This also passes for the artist Sef Peeters. In addition to the photo works in which he acted as the main figure, he also created so-called 'perfo-installations'. These installations were the result of an act that Peeters had executed, without an audience. In 1978 the artist said in an interview: "I never really did a performance, although I was close. I am afraid of audience."¹¹⁹

A final border case of performance art that should be mentioned here, and will not be taken into account in the further research, is related to visual language and poetry. In the 1970s, there was a group of artists in the Netherlands who tried to relate the world of poetry, writing and language to the world of visual artists. This combination of different disciplines resulted in the creation of artist books, mail art, stamp art, visual poetry, lectures and even the execution of performances. For instance, the artist and writer Ulisses Carrión (1941-1989), who came from Mexico and settled in Amsterdam in 1972, carried out a few performances with a focus on language and poetry.¹²⁰ In his *Four language performances*, for example, he translated a Spanish text into a non-existing

¹¹⁶ See Von Graevenitz 1978 (c), pp. 6-8. The photo works recall strongly the performance-pictures of the artist Valie Export. She also created situations in which her own body was placed in a natural or architectural surroundings, to express her personal relation to the outside world.

¹¹⁷ Gudmundsson also carried out several 'performances' in the late 1960s and 1970s. Because of their strong conceptual and Fluxus character they will not be discussed in the context of this research; see also W. Barten, 'Sigurdur Gudmundsson. Om een molecuul nieuwe werkelijkheid', RKD, PDO, Buitenlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Sigurdur Gudmundsson'; Ellensbroek 1992.

¹¹⁸ See for interfaces also Von Graevenitz 1978 (a); Blok 1994, pp. 202-206.

¹¹⁹ Von Graevenitz 1978 (a), p. 42: "Ik [Peeters] heb nooit echt een performance gedaan, hoewel ik er vlak bij zat. Ik ben bang voor publiek."

¹²⁰ D. Conwell. 'Personal worlds or cultural strategies.' 2002. *E-flux.com*, projects, Do It, notes, essay e003 (checked on 8.10.2009): http://www.e-flux.com/projects/do_it/notes/essay/e003_text.html.

language.¹²¹ The artist and poet Pier van Dijk (1944) used stamps during a performance, to visualize the element of language.¹²² The English artist Michael Gibbs, who also lived in the Netherlands, tested the limits of language by uttering a single sentence from the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in one of his performances.¹²³

This specific form of performance art, executed by Carrión, Van Dijk and Gibbs, was also referred to as 'language performance'.¹²⁴ These performances had a focus on research regarding language, with the help of the body, the voice, texts and letters. The artists used the ephemeral and alienating performance art to shape their linguistic and poetic concepts, in line with the concrete and visual poetry. This particular form of performance art was clearly situated on the borderland between poetry, sound art, texts and visual arts. Moreover, these 'language' artists only used the performance on an incidental base; it was just one of the many means to do their research. Therefore this group of artists cannot be considered 'real' performance artists.

1.4. Places to perform

In the first half of the 1970s, the possibilities to show performance art in the Netherlands were limited. There were scarcely art institutions, galleries and museums that were willing to provide space for this new form of art.¹²⁵ For example, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam neglected its duty to bring this type of current art. According to Johannes Gachnang (1939-2005), the museum mainly concentrated on retrospective exhibitions of definite and canonized work, often at the expense of contemporary developments.¹²⁶ Also, the attention of the Dutch galleries to performance art was limited. Gallery owners were not willing to show an art form that was difficult to sell. Out of dissatisfaction with the existing situation in the art world – which was an international phenomenon – many international artists felt the need to show their not accepted and unsellable art works in alternative spaces.¹²⁷ Therefore, these spaces arose in many countries as a counterweight to the existing art institutions and traditional relations in the art world. These places were often set up by artists, or by other people interested in current art. In the Netherlands some alternative art spaces and galleries were also established since the early 1970s. These were the places where the performance art initially found a platform.

Amsterdam

The city of Amsterdam was a receptive ground for alternative art spaces. In 1972 a few artists decided to establish the In-Out Center there, that functioned as non-commercial exhibition space and a meeting point for artists. The initiators were the Latin Americans Michel Cardena, Ulises Carrión, Raúl Marroquin and the Icelander Sigurdur Gudmundsson, Kristján Gudmundsson and Hreinn Fridfinnson. Nikolaus Urban, Michael Gibbs and Michael Druks also belonged to the hard core of the centre. In the In-Out Center artists had the possibilities to execute their works in and around the building at the Reguliersgracht. Through the agency of the institute, early forms of performance art, originating from the traditions of Happening, Fluxus and conceptual art, took place in Amsterdam. Because of the early end of the In-Out Center in 1974, the performance art could not further develop there.¹²⁸

¹²¹ Description of the performance by the artist, RKD, PDO, Buitenlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Ulises Carrión'.

¹²² Gibbs 1980; see also on-line *Pier van Dijk page*, CV (checked on 9.10.2009): <http://www.piervandijk.nl/>.

¹²³ See on-line Curriculum Vitae Michael Gibbs (checked on 8.10.2009): <http://www.xs4all.nl/~nondes/CV.HTM>; Gibbs 1977, p. 52.

¹²⁴ Gibbs 1977, pp. 52, 56, 73.

¹²⁵ Raemaekers 1993, p. 117.

¹²⁶ Van Daal and Gachnang 1973, p. 268: "Het Stedelijk Museum concentreert zich bijna uitsluitend op retrospectieve tentoonstellingen van voltooid of gecanoniseerd werk, dikwijls ten nadele van het tonen van de laatste ontwikkelingen."

¹²⁷ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 37.

¹²⁸ See also Van Mechelen 2006, p. 39 ; Van Straaten 1974, p. 84; Kelk 1972; information sheets about the program and works carried out in the In-Out Center are – for as far as known – absent.

After the disappearance of the In-Out Center, the artist Ulises Carrión started – with the help of others¹²⁹ – the bookstore annex gallery Other Books and So in 1975. This initiative became an important centre for the creation, distribution and exhibition of artist books, mail art and other experimental forms of art. Furthermore, some performances were organized by the bookstore annex gallery, yet on an incidental base.¹³⁰ Although specific information about these performance projects is lacking, one may assume that they should be seen in the tradition of artist books, language performances and Fluxus activities.¹³¹ The artists related to Other Books and So were after all engaged in these forms of art, and books and language were the main interests of the centre.¹³²

Between 1971 and 1973, artists could also realize revealing projects in the Galerie im Goethe Institut/Provisorium. In these years the new Amsterdam Goethe Institut was not in function yet and therefore the Swizz Johannes Gachnang was given the opportunity to organize exhibitions there.¹³³ Here D'Armagnac and Dekker could execute their first performances in 1972 and 1973.¹³⁴ Because of the project base of the Goethe Institut/Provisorium, these would also remain the only two performances carried out in the gallery.

One of the reasons for Gachnang to create room for new art forms such as the performance, was the closing of the Mickery Art House.¹³⁵ This art house was founded by Ritsaert ten Cate (1938-2008) in 1960 and was located in a farm in Loenersloot, together with Mickery Theatre, Mickerey Books and Mickerey Design. In the Mickery Art House, D'Armagnac and Dekker were given the opportunity to create environments. This form of installation art would be an important step into the direction of the performance art the artists executed in the 1970s.¹³⁶ However, real performances were never carried out in the Mickery Art House, that closed down in 1971. After this year Ten Cate focused definitely on experimental theatre in Mickerey Theatre and not in particular on performance as a form of visual art.¹³⁷

The early initiatives mentioned above, provided a first small-scale platform for the rise of performance art. First in 1975 an art institute opened its doors, where performances could take place on a regular base and could develop to great heights: De Appel. The art historian and former gallery-owner Wies Smals (1939-1983) founded this institute to provide space for new forms of art such as performance, body art and environment.¹³⁸ Soon, the emphasis of De Appel – named after the building it was located in at the Brouwersgracht in Amsterdam – shifted to performances.¹³⁹ The program of the new institution consisted in the 1970s of live performances, video and film presentations, lectures and exhibitions. In addition, De Appel started to build up archives with publications and video tapes with relation to new art forms. To form the program of the centre, Wies Smals was advised by various artists and other people working in the art world.¹⁴⁰ Since 1975, Smals was also assisted by Aggy Smeets, who helped her in particular with the practical execution of the program (and, at first, not so much with the policy of De Appel). In 1978, Josine van Droffelaar was appointed as a co-worker in the institute. Van Droffelaar gave its program more (thematic) cohesion and stimulated in particular the experiments with sound, installation and dance.¹⁴¹

¹²⁹ Other Books and So ended in 1979 as bookstore annex gallery and continued as archives under the control of Carrión.

¹³⁰ See also Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 39-40.

¹³¹ See also Ruhé 1982, p. 48.

¹³² Artists such as Michel Cardena and Aart van Barneveld. Moreover, Other Books and So had contacts with the artists related to the Agora Studio in Maastricht (see below).

¹³³ Van Daal and Gachnang 1973, p. 268.

¹³⁴ Ruhé 1982, p. 40; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 41.

¹³⁵ Van Daal and Gachnang 1973, p. 268.

¹³⁶ Wijers 1995, p. 70.

¹³⁷ Belder 1982, p. 88.

¹³⁸ However, the aspect of environment remained underexposed in De Appel for years. By the end of the 1970s it would get more attention in the particular form of installations.

¹³⁹ Raemaekers 1993, p. 171.

¹⁴⁰ See for a list of advisors Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 52-54, 136-137.

¹⁴¹ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 53, 150, 168.

In the beginning, De Appel mainly emphasized the performances of European artists in its program. On the one hand, authentic performances were carried out by artists such as Gina Pane and Ben d'Armagnac. On the other hand, the program of the first year was filled with drag performances by so-called 'Transformer' artists such as Urs Lüthi, Jürgen Klauke and Luigi Ontani.¹⁴² Furthermore, an exhibition was organized around the actions of the former Wiener Aktionisten. The program of 1975/1976 was mainly determined on the basis of a journey Smals made through Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy and Austria in 1975. During this Europe-journey, Smals met various artists who she could invite to De Appel, and gallery owners and curators who she could ask for further advice.¹⁴³

Between 1976 and 1978, more and more performers from the United States were invited in De Appel to carry out a work. After a journey to New York, Smals introduced American performance artists with different backgrounds and with attention for particular forms of entertainment in her institute.¹⁴⁴ Stimulated by the American performance artists, much more room was also provided for multi-media performances in which different communication media were brought together. Between 1978 and 1980 the focus of De Appel shifted to performances with social or political engagement. In later years, a connection was sought with the tradition of Fluxus, although in a less playful way.¹⁴⁵ In De Appel, both foreign and Dutch performance artists got the chance to show their work to an audience. In a short time De Appel developed into a leading centre in the field of performance and other renewing art forms of the 1970s.¹⁴⁶

North and south

Next to Amsterdam, two other cities in the north and the south of the Netherlands provided an important breeding ground for experimental art in the 1970s. In the first place, Maastricht in the south, where the Jan van Eyck Academy and the Bonnefantenmuseum (under direction of Istvan Szénassy) resided. Both institutions displayed a great openness towards experimental forms of art. In the same city, the artist Ger van Dijck and the technician Theo van der Aa also founded the Agora Studio in 1971; named after the 'agora', a Greek marketplace where merchandise and ideas were exchanged.¹⁴⁷ Operating from a Fluxus-mentality, Agora Studio organized artistic activities integrated in live, in and around the studio.¹⁴⁸ Next to Van Dijck and Van der Aa, the artists Raúl Marroquin and Marjo Schumans were closely involved in the centre and its activities. Together they also published the artist magazine *Fandangos* between 1973 and 1980.¹⁴⁹ This magazine contained contributions of artists in the form of photos, drawings, poems, small texts or interviews, and advertisements and information of art centres.

Agora Studio stimulated and exhibited contemporary art, with a special attention to media art.¹⁵⁰ In addition, many performances were carried out in the studio.¹⁵¹ On the one hand, Agora provided a podium for border cases of performance art, such as language performance and video works. But, on the other hand, artists related to the 'core group' of Netherlands-based performance artists executed actions there.¹⁵² Moreover, several foreign artists performed in the studio, who

¹⁴² These are performances with elements of travesty, gender blending, androgyny and a focus on identity issues.

¹⁴³ For an description of this journey see Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 56-60.

¹⁴⁴ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 142-144.

¹⁴⁵ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 60-61.

¹⁴⁶ Raemaekers 1993, p. 171; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 304.

¹⁴⁷ There have to be extensive archives with relation to Agora, but it is unclear where. The archives are mentioned in Kusters 1991.

¹⁴⁸ Van Straaten 1975, p. 129.

¹⁴⁹ 'Fandangos' is a Spanish rhythm that was 'exported' to Latin America after the conquest of the Spaniards. Latin American immigrants of the 20th century returned the word to the world; *Fandangos* 1973-1980, vol. 3 (1974), p. 1.

¹⁵⁰ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 41; Raemaekers 1993, p. 140.

¹⁵¹ *Agora* 1975.

¹⁵² Among them Nan Hoover, Nikolaus Urban, Hannes van Es, Michel Cardena, Schumans and Marroquin

generally speaking displayed clear influences of Fluxus and Happening.¹⁵³ Agora developed contacts with like-minded artists and centres in Paris, Buenos Aires, San Francisco, Poland, Hungary, Italy, Germany and Great-Britain, and was therefore visited by many foreign artists.¹⁵⁴ The studio in Maastricht, thus, functioned as an important platform for domestic and foreign performance artists until the mid-1980s.¹⁵⁵

In the north of the Netherlands, in Groningen, Leendert van Lagestein started the art centre Corps de Garde in 1976, named after the building it was located in.¹⁵⁶ Corps de Garde consisted of a gallery on the ground floor and a studio room on the first floor, which was established at the Oude Boteringestraat in Groningen until 1984.¹⁵⁷ In the studio room artists from home and abroad could live and work for a longer period and finish a project or work of art.¹⁵⁸ Corps de Garde did not have a fixed program and was not focused on a specific direction or medium. Van Lagestein was choosing particular, contemporary artists, with whom he started a collaboration. The personal contact with the artist was of primary importance for the owner of the centre. Several performance artists based in the Netherlands got in touch with Van Lagestein and were able to execute a performance in Groningen. Striking is also the large number of American performance artists Van Lagestein brought to Groningen, among them Vito Acconci, Barbara Bloom, Alison Knowles, Charlemagne Palestine, Tony Morgan and James Lee Byars.¹⁵⁹ Van Lagestein clearly was well-informed about the situation in the United States and had important contacts there, which resulted in an exchange of artists.¹⁶⁰

Other platforms: galleries, cultural centres and museums

De Appel, Agora Studio and Corps de Garde were the three most important centres where performance art could take place and develop in the 1970s. Next to this trio, several other institutes offered a platform for performance art, although on a more modest scale and very selective. These platforms arose in particular in the bigger cities of the Netherlands, often in imitation of the three main centres. For instance, in 1976 Galerie A opened its doors, as a vivid documentation centre for all kinds of contemporary art forms, in which a certain preference for the 1960s was obvious.¹⁶¹ The gallery owner Harry Ruhé felt most allied to Wies Smals, although he did not particularly focus on 'real' performance art.¹⁶² The events, actions and lectures that took place in Galerie A were mainly in line with Fluxus, Happening and Visual poetry. On an incidental base, the gallery also offered a platform for the 'real' performance art of the 1970s, carried out by De Kroon, Urban, Van Keulen and Reindeer Werk.

Since 1979, several performances were also carried out in gallery Bedaux in Amsterdam. In particular the more theatrical and entertaining forms of performance were shown there, such as

¹⁵³ Data on the artists who performed in Agora are to be found in program surveys, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder 'Agora'.

¹⁵⁴ Van Straaten 1975, p. 129; Kusters 1991; *Agora* 1975.

¹⁵⁵ Agora probably closed in 1985, since the last exhibition schedule appeared in 1985; see RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder 'Agora'.

¹⁵⁶ Corps de Garde followed from the concept of Galerie De Mangelgang in Groningen, a gallery which was headed by Van Lagestein and his wife Annemarie de Kruiff until 1975. After their divorce De Kruiff continued some of the gallery activities under the name 'De Mangelgang' and Van Lagestein proceeded with a few activities in Corps de Garde; infosheets Corps de Garde, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Groningen B-E, folder 'Corps de Garde'.

¹⁵⁷ Corps de Garde moved to Amsterdam in 1984 and was probably closed in 1985, since the last article about the gallery and its difficulties with subsidy appeared in 1985; Van Ginneken 1976 (a); see also RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Groningen B-E, folder 'Corps de Garde'.

¹⁵⁸ This was called the 'Art-in-residence program'; infosheet 'Artist-in-residence', RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Groningen B-E, folder 'Corps de Garde'; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 42.

¹⁵⁹ Wynia 1981; infosheets Corps de Garde, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Groningen B-E, folder 'Corps de Garde'.

¹⁶⁰ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 42.

¹⁶¹ See info sheets and programs Galerie A, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Amsterdam A-Amn, folder 'Galerie A'.

¹⁶² Interview with Harry Ruhé, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Amsterdam A-Amn, folder 'Galerie A': "Ik voel me meest verwant met Wies Smals. Zij is wel voornamelijk bezig met performances, maar ze is ruim geïnteresseerd in alles wat actueel is."

piano and dance performances. Since 1977, in Rotterdam various performances were carried out by foreign and Dutch artists in 't Venster; among them Ulay and Abramović, Marjo Samsom and the American Duo Anna Banana and Gill Gaglione.¹⁶³

In the course of the 1970s, more galleries and other cultural centres opened their doors for performance art. The 'hard core' performance artists, but also upcoming performers, could occasionally execute their work there, for example during a festival or at the opening of an exhibition. This development also reached the smaller cities in the Netherlands. Performances were, among others, carried out in Galerie Gamma in Utrecht, in Galerie Loá in Haarlem, Galerie Felison in Velsen, Galerie Alto in Rotterdam and Galerie 't Langhuis in Zwolle.¹⁶⁴ Furthermore, cultural and political centres in Tilburg, Breda and Nijmegen were visited by performance artists. Evidently, these galleries and cultural institutes were no important epicentres of performance art, since this form of art was only 'exhibited' there on an incidental base. However, the possibilities for performance artist were expanding gradually, which also underlined a growing acceptance and appreciation of the new art form in the Netherlands.

In imitation of alternative art institutes and progressive galleries, the Dutch museums also started to show interest in performance art, in the course of the late 1970s. A small number of important museums of modern art, including the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, started to integrate the 'new' art form in their program. An exception to this late development was the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht. In a relatively early stage this museum already offered a platform for the new phenomenon of performance art. In 1974 the artist Ben d'Armagnac carried out his second real performance there and Dekker and Urban would follow in the years afterwards.¹⁶⁵ In 1976 – which is relatively late – the Stedelijk Museum made a start with the display of performances by visual artists, with the introduction of Ben d'Armagnac and Michel Cardena in their program.¹⁶⁶ In the years after that, performances of Marroquin, Dekker, Ulay and Abramović, De Kroon, Hoover, Urban, Charlemagne Palestine and Buky Grinberg followed.¹⁶⁷

In the late 1970s, the 'hard core' performance artists based in the Netherlands, also performed incidentally in the Stedelijk Museum in Gouda, the Gemeentemuseum in The Hague, the Gemeentemuseum in Arnhem, Museum Fodor in Amsterdam and the Groninger Museum.¹⁶⁸ It is remarkable that the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and the Centraal Museum in Utrecht are absent on this list – two important museums in the field of modern and contemporary art. Rudi Fuchs, who was director of the Van Abbemuseum since 1975, focused strongly on current art. However, he concentrated more on conceptual art, English sculpture, minimal art, German painters and Arte Povera.¹⁶⁹ In the Centraal Museum of the 1970s, hardly any attention was paid to new forms of art such as video, performance and conceptual art.¹⁷⁰ There was a strong emphasis on contemporary painting and sculpture, limited to the Netherlands and Utrecht.

In Utrecht, on the whole, the development of performance art stagnated. Both Wouter Kotte with his 'Hedendaagse Kunst-Utrecht' (Contemporary Art-Utrecht) and the art historians Frans Haks and Carel Blotkamp – related to the University of Utrecht –, were introducing contemporary art in Utrecht in the 1970s. However, Kotte focused mainly on figurative painting.¹⁷¹ Haks and Blotkamp, on the other hand, in particular introduced art movements such as computer art, conceptual art, environmental art, Fluxus, kinetic art and artists such as Peter Struycken and Carel Visser. Although Haks and Blotkamp gave an important impulse to new forms of art and displayed a certain interest in

¹⁶³ See info sheets, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Rotterdam 't Venster, folder "'t Venster'.

¹⁶⁴ All these data are present in the folders of individual artists and art institutions in the Press Documentation (Collectie Pers Documentatie) of the RKD.

¹⁶⁵ Dekker in 1977; Urban in 1975 and three times in 1977.

¹⁶⁶ The living sculpture of Gilbert and George (1969) and the dance performance of Eiko & Koma (1973) are left out of consideration; Van Ginneken 1976 (b); *Video-kunst van Michel Cardena* 1976; Gribling 1982, p. 20.

¹⁶⁷ Some under the auspices of De Appel; see Petersen 1982 (a), pp. 26-43.

¹⁶⁸ In the latter, also the American performance artists Laurie Anderson and Julia Heyward did a performance in 1979.

¹⁶⁹ Pinggen 2002, pp. 21-25.

¹⁷⁰ Sponselee 2001, p. 297.

¹⁷¹ See also Hosman 2001, pp. 199-268.

performance art (Haks was even an advisor of De Appel),¹⁷² Utrecht would not become an important centre of performance art in the 1970s.

Performance festivals

Another important platform for performance art was provided by temporal art festivals. In the Netherlands several festivals and events took place, where artists could carry out their performances. For instance, in Groningen a summer festival was organized every year since 1974. This was done by cultural institutes in Groningen, such as Corps de Garde, the Groninger Museum, the Kruithuis, the Spiegeltheater and Galerie Waalkens in Finsterwolde. The activities varied from theatre, music and visual arts to prose and poetry. Since 1976 performances took up a central position in the program of this festival, most of them organized through the agency of Corps de Garde. Artists such as D'Armagnac, Dekker, Hoover, Samsom, Schouten and Bloom performed during one of the summer festivals in the 1970s. But also artists from abroad – most of them Americans – carried out a performance in Groningen during the summer.¹⁷³

In the same year Groningen started the summer festival, in Arnhem the foundation 'Festival Arnhem' was established. This art manifestation returned in 1977, 1978 and 1980 under different themes and with different organizers. The festival combined theatre and visual arts. Since 1977 performance art was integrated in the festival's sector of visual arts. For instance, in 1978 the festival invited performance artists living in the Netherlands *and* from abroad to give an overview of the developments of this new art form over the last years.¹⁷⁴ Nine of the 'hard core' Netherlands-based performance artists living were present at this festival titled 'Theater en wij' (Theatre and we).¹⁷⁵ The edition of 1980, titled 'Morgen' (Tomorrow), again focused on performance art; this time executed by local artists including Servie Janssen, Marten Hendriks and Nikolaus Urban.¹⁷⁶ In 1979 the city Hengelo also followed with its own festival titled 'Beelden, installaties, performances' (Sculptures, installations, performances), presenting performances of Hans Eijkelboom, Servie Janssen, Marten Hendriks and Albert van der Weide.¹⁷⁷

De Appel also organized a few manifestations with special attention for performance art, in addition to its individual performance evenings. For instance, in 1976 the event of the 'Hollandse Week' (Dutch Week) took place. During this week twelve young artists, living in the Netherlands, got the chance to present their performances.¹⁷⁸ Two big, international manifestations took place in 1978 and 1979. Firstly, the 'Feministische Kunst Internationaal' (Feminist Art International) with a focus on female artists from the United States and Europe. The event was directed at a confrontation between the American and European vision on feminist art and presented performances, video works and a panel discussion. The performance program was filled with American, German and one Dutch artist (Lydia Schouten).¹⁷⁹ For the second manifestation, titled 'Works and Words', performance artists from East-Germany, Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia and the Netherlands were invited.¹⁸⁰ The program consisted of lectures, discussions, performances, installations, video's, films and a photo exhibition.¹⁸¹ The organizers wanted to call attention to the common characteristics

¹⁷² See also Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 32, 60.

¹⁷³ See information sheets, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Groningen B-E, folder 'Corps de Garde' and Groningen, algemeen/diversen t/m 1994, folder 'Diversen t/m 1979'.

¹⁷⁴ Brand 1978, p. 285.

¹⁷⁵ Gerrit Dekker, Ulay, Marina Abramović, Reindeer Werk, Harrie de Kroon, Servie Janssen, Hans Eijkelboom, Albert van der Weide. Ben d'Armagnac should also perform at the festival, but died on the day the festival started.

¹⁷⁶ See information sheets, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Arnhem diversen/algemeen t/m 1994, folder 'Diversen 1974-1984'.

¹⁷⁷ See information sheets, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Hengelo, folder 'Diversen Hengelo'.

¹⁷⁸ See for participants and work descriptions Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 87-88; invitation 'Hollandse Week', RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Amsterdam De Appel t/m 1981, folder 'Invitations'.

¹⁷⁹ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 234-242; although Schouten herself did not consider her work as particularly feministic, she was often related to this form of art because of her female topics.

¹⁸⁰ See for participants Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 253, 264-265.

¹⁸¹ Which took place at several locations in Amsterdam.

between artists from Eastern Europe and their Dutch colleagues. An important aim was also to stimulate the contact between the two groups of artists, for example, by organizing daily dinners in De Appel.¹⁸²

Most of the 'hard core' performance artists living in the Netherlands, also got the chance to perform at festivals abroad.¹⁸³ For instance, they took part in the program of two art festivals in Warsaw and New York. This was possible, because Dutch art institutes and curators contributed to the organization of these festivals. In 1978, an international meeting of performance artists, video artists, theorists and musicians took place in Warsaw. The manifestation 'I AM' (International Artists Meeting) was initiated by Henryk Gajewski, artist and the director of the Remont Gallery in Warsaw. 'I AM' was one of the biggest festivals in the history of performance art, with mainly artists from the United States, Eastern Europe and the Netherlands.¹⁸⁴ The freelance curator Jan Brand took up the initiative to take care of the Dutch participation in the festival with the help of De Appel and Agora Studio.¹⁸⁵

Jan Brand was an important curator in the field of performance art since 1975. He also contributed to the organization of 'Festival Arnhem' in 1977 and 1978, and to the European Performance Series in New York.¹⁸⁶ In 1978 the Brooklyn Museum in New York asked Sharon Avery – a gallery owner in New York – and Jan Brand to organize a project with European performance artists. The aim was to acquaint American audiences with the European performance, which was hardly known there.¹⁸⁷ Eight performance artists living in the Netherlands and one living in Germany came to New York to perform in and around the Brooklyn Museum.¹⁸⁸

From the previous paragraphs it can be concluded that performance art took up a specific, but prominent part in the art world of the Netherlands in the 1970s. A relatively large group of native and foreign artists living in the country was intensively occupied with performance art and contributed to the development of this art form. Moreover, a few important Dutch art centres and podia existed, where the performance art was executed and could further develop. In the next chapter particular characteristics and forms of the performance art, as it developed in the Netherlands, will be described.

¹⁸² Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 243-255; text of J. van Droffelaar and P. Olszanski in exhib.cat. *Works and Words*, Amsterdam, 1980, pp. 1-2, cited in on-line survey of activities in De Appel on *Kunstbus.com*, Lexicon, "De Appel", 1979 (checked on 8.10.2009): <http://www.kunstbus.nl/agenda/1979/1248634.html>.

¹⁸³ For example at the art fair 'K45' and the Performance Festival in Vienna, the Documenta in Kassel, the Biennale in Venice and at performance festivals and symposia in Stuttgart, Brussels, Lyon, Almada, Birmingham, Bologna and Antwerp.

¹⁸⁴ Dutch participants who carried out a performance were Hans Eijkelboom, Marten Hendriks, Servie Janssen, Harrie de Kroon, Albert van der Weide; Van Mechelen 1978, pp. 178-179.

¹⁸⁵ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 178, 244.

¹⁸⁶ See also Brand 1978, p. 285; Otten 1978.

¹⁸⁷ Thompson 2004, p. 48.

¹⁸⁸ Participants were Ben d'Armagnac, Gerrit Dekker, Ulay, Marina Abramović, Hans Eijkelboom, Marten Hendriks, Reindeer Werk and Barbara Heinisch from Germany. All had performed at the Documenta 6 in Kassel as well; Thompson 2004, p. 48.

2. A characterization of performance art in the Netherlands in the 1970s

The open character of performance art – anything can happen, any number of materials can be used, and any length of time is possible – resulted in an exceptional diverse spectrum of performance productions. Also in the Netherlands, very different and personal approaches to the medium were taken by performance artists in the 1970s. Despite this diversity, however, some remarkable similarities could be discerned in the works of the Netherlands-based performance artists. Several specific characteristics in the fields of content, form and attitude returned repeatedly in their works.¹⁸⁹ These covering characteristics seem to have given the performance art in the Netherlands its particular face and determined the tradition of performance art in the country. Below, a description of the covering tendencies that can be distilled from the work of the most important performance artists in the Netherlands will be provided.

2.1. Covering tendencies with relation to content

In the 1970s, performance primarily became a medium to scrutinize or to comment upon the human existence. Since performance art is characterized by realistic elements – real acts, real time and real risks – it is capable of simulating or examining elements from real human life. This can concern both the individual and the collective human life. Therefore, performances move between individual, subjective experiences on the one side, and generally recognizable situations on the other. In the Netherlands this spectrum of content was also visible. Within this variety, however, some specific main themes with regard to the content came to the front.

Autobiographical or personal performance

One of the first 'real' performances in the Netherlands was carried out by Ben d'Armagnac in 1974 in Maastricht. During this performance, the artist was lying in a hospital bed with bandages around his head and organs of a cow on his stomach. In both hands he held the heart of a cow, which laid on two tables, at two sides of the bed. On each table respectively, the garments of two different girls laid under plastic (fig. 4).¹⁹⁰ With this performance D'Armagnac referred to the problems he had with two girls in his life and the choice he had to make for one of them.¹⁹¹ Like this specific work, most of D'Armagnac's performances were related to his complex associations with people, and were a direct

¹⁸⁹ No separate paragraph will be dedicated to the meaning or purpose of performances, since these are closely related to the content and the form of the works and the attitude of the artists, and therefore will be briefly mentioned in the following paragraphs. Moreover, the meaning and purpose of performances are often very personal or to general, through which particular characteristics are difficult to deduce.

¹⁹⁰ At the Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht; *Ben d'Armagnac* 1981, p. 52.

¹⁹¹ Wijers 1995, p. 106.

expression of his own feelings, problems and life.¹⁹² In relation to this, D'Armagnac's personal performances also functioned as a form of self-therapy, in which the artist could come to terms with his personal problems, could destroy his fears and could find his 'real self' again.¹⁹³

In general, performance art is characterized by the presentation of the individual artist, his own body and his personal acts.¹⁹⁴ However, several Netherlands-based artists also took their personal life as a source of inspiration for the content of their performances. They transferred their autobiographical experiences, views, problems and fears to the audience. Just like D'Armagnac, the artist Gerrit Dekker searched for inspiration in himself, reported on his own life and explored in particular his personal problematic position with regard to the world.¹⁹⁵ Dekker could not mix with the world and its people very well, and his performances were, consequently, an expression of this personal problem.¹⁹⁶ For example, during a performance in The Hague in 1978, Dekker was sitting on a chair, while every ten minutes one person from the audience could sit next to him in silence (fig. 5).¹⁹⁷ Not only the silence and the distance, but also the empty space in which the performance took place, underlined the fear, isolation, loneliness and imprisonment that Dekker experienced in his life.¹⁹⁸ In contrast to the expressive and narrative performances of D'Armagnac, Dekker's performances were sober, silent and minimalistic. His actions consisted of nothing more than the presence of the artist, everyday gestures and sensorial perceptible elements, such as space, scent or sound.¹⁹⁹

The artists Servie Janssen, Hannes Van Es, Lydia Schouten, Ulay and Abramović and Nan Hoover also integrated elements of their personal life and autobiographical experiences in their performances. For instance, Schouten referred to personal stories and subject matters in her works, related to erotica, femininity and fears.²⁰⁰ With her fantastic and expressive actions she reacted (often violently) on her personal experiences – in particular as a woman in a men's world – and tried to overcome her inner fears.²⁰¹

The individual and personal content, discernable in the works of artists such as D'Armagnac, Dekker and Schouten, did not lead to 'private performances'; i.e. only executed for private purposes or performed in private settings. After all, the self-orientated performances were exhibited in front of an audience. The individual artists were opening up to 'the other' (i.e. the spectator) and the individual problems were submitted to 'the outside world'.²⁰² Furthermore, it must be noticed that the works were not strictly private, because the stories, problems and feelings had clear interfaces with universal themes and problems. Consequently, a performance could on the one hand be very personal, but was on the other hand also 'intersubjective' and recognizable for others. Because of this 'individual' and 'intersubjective' character, the performance was a perfect medium to express and explore one's individual problems with relation to the other and the world.

Engagement with the other and the world

Next to the focus on individual and personal experiences, many performance artists particularly focused on 'the other' and 'the world at large', and touched upon political, social and anthropological themes with that. They were concerned with isolated, suppressed and discriminated groups of

¹⁹² Bos 1981.

¹⁹³ Von Graevenitz 1978 (b), p. 265.

¹⁹⁴ Vergine 1974, p. 15.

¹⁹⁵ Raemaekers 1993, p. 176; Heyting 1975.

¹⁹⁶ Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, p. 142: "Ik [Dekker] heb een tegenwicht in de kunst gezocht toen ik merkte dat ik met de wereld niet goed kon omgaan." ('I was looking for a counterpoise in art when I noticed that I could not mix with the world very well.').

¹⁹⁷ At the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1978; Von Graevenitz 1978 (a), p. 59.

¹⁹⁸ See also Beenker 1976 (a); Raemaekers 1993, p. 176.

¹⁹⁹ See also Brand and Dekker 1988; Beenker 1976 (a).

²⁰⁰ Van den Hooff 1989: "Het ging dus heel erg over mezelf." (It was consequently very much about myself.).

²⁰¹ See Schouten's own comment on her work on on-line *Lydia Schouten page*, performances (checked on 9.10.2009): http://www.lydiaschouten.com/5_PERFORMANCES.html.

²⁰² See also Jones 1988, pp. 46-52; Vergine 1974, p. 35.

people, or with lost and threatened civilizations or animal species. In particular Albert van der Weide and Servie Janssen displayed this form of social engagement with man and world.

Albert van der Weide used the direct medium of performance to realize awareness and to change certain social situations.²⁰³ By means of a direct (psychological) confrontation with the audience, Van der Weide tried to involve the spectators in the performance and engage them to the problem he brought up.²⁰⁴ During one of his performances in Amsterdam in 1977, the artist shook hands with his audience, while he had painted his hand with black paint and therefore left a print on the hand of the other (fig. 6).²⁰⁵ With this, he reflected upon the problematic racial segregation in Africa.²⁰⁶ Also, the artist made use of a mirror in several of his works, with which the spectator could *reflect* upon himself and the world. Furthermore, he or she could think about the ambivalent dialogue between harsh reality and 'beautiful' illusions.²⁰⁷

Servie Janssen reported with his performances on his (metaphorical) journey through life *and* on the actual journeys he made through Canada, Alaska and the United States.²⁰⁸ In addition to these personal reports, the artist also wanted to pass on messages to his audience. These messages were in particular related to the presence and inventions of the human being in the world and its often problematic consequences, such as the disappearance of true creativity (as Janssen perceived this), mysticism, old cultures, rituals and animal species.²⁰⁹ In his metaphorical performance *All values of things glitter on me* (1978) Janssen reflected upon the existential journey through life. By taping red lights on the most vital and vulnerable nerves of his body, playing sounds of whales, blowing into small piles of dust (flour) and showing small plastic pre-historical animals, he referred to the vulnerability of all creatures (see video 1).²¹⁰ Since Janssen was engaged with the world and its living creatures, most of his early works contained elements of geography, anthropology, paleontology and biology.

In a totally different way Cardena was concerned with society. In 1968 he founded the *Warming Up etc.etc.etc. Company* and started to warm up all kinds of people and objects during his live actions. On the one hand, the element of warmth was a reference to sexual and autobiographical themes.²¹¹ On the other hand, Cardena also tried to melt down the cold detachment he experienced in Dutch society and the art world.²¹² The artist used warmth as a kind of catalyst by which he tried to change the values of society and to teach people about the warmth of the heart – giving love to the other.²¹³ In many of his works, Cardena also tried to make visible certain dualities and contradictions in society.²¹⁴ He displayed his engagement mostly with a playful, light-footed and entertaining touch.²¹⁵

Identity

Since the performance artist – with his own body and personality – was often part of his art work, and self-orientation took up a prominent position in performance art, identity and identity politics logically became important themes within performance art. In addition to that, the human body – the central base of performance art – was an important ground for the construction and

²⁰³ Gijsberts 1979, p. 128.

²⁰⁴ Nieland 1981.

²⁰⁵ At De Appel, Amsterdam, 1977.

²⁰⁶ This also referred to Steve Biko's statement: 'The government never shook hands with us.' ('De regering heeft ons nooit een hand gegeven.');

²⁰⁷ Nieland 1988.

²⁰⁸ *Servie Janssen exposeert*, 1988.

²⁰⁹ See also Szénássy 1978, pp. 6-8.

²¹⁰ At Remont Gallery, Warsaw, 1978; see on-line database *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Servie Janssen, Works, All values of things glitter on me (checked on 9.10.2009): <http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/art.php?id=2620>.

²¹¹ The artist reflected upon his own libido and homosexuality in many of his works; Donia 1968, p. 149.

²¹² Lamoree 2004.

²¹³ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 282; Meijer 1981, p. 20; Perrée 1983, p. 62.

²¹⁴ Vogel 1976.

²¹⁵ Vogel 1976; Perrée 1983, p. 62; Lamoree 2004.

reconstruction of one's identity;²¹⁶ another explanation for the obvious relation between performance art and the issue of identity. Furthermore, the way in which identity comes to meaning is particularly 'intersubjective'; i.e. one's identity is partly defined in relation to others. The 'intersubjective' performance art is therefore a perfect medium to explore or affirm identity.²¹⁷ Several Netherlands-based performance artists were occupied with the issue of identity and the personal problems and social processes related to that. In particular they focused on the social constitution of identity and the (difficult) relation between the social and psychical identity: who do people say I am and who do I feel I am.

As noticed before, artists such as D'Armagnac and Dekker particularly scrutinized their own personal identity and its problematic relation to society. They tried to find their 'real' identity, free from restrictions and determinations of the outside world (i.e. society).²¹⁸ On the other hand, an artist such as Hans Eijkelboom, was more engaged with the issue of identity in general, and not so much with his personal identity. Eijkelboom investigated the interaction between the individual and society, related to the construction of identity.²¹⁹ He was also interested in the relation between outward appearance and identity. In the 1970s he examined the concept of identity chiefly by means of self-research.²²⁰ Eijkelboom dressed up differently for each performance and in this way chose for various appearances and identities (fig. 7). By adopting a particular look, he tested the reaction of the audience and used that in order to express something about the working of social identity.²²¹ Also, photos of people (showing the outer appearance) played an important role in Eijkelboom's research.

The issue of gendered identity also played a particular part in performance art. For instance, Lydia Schouten and Marja Samsom scrutinized the identity of women and the problems and social constructions related to that. Other artists even tried to bring down the fixed boundaries of gendered and sexual identities. Amelia Jones has argued that with the movement of 'Body art' the subject became particularized (i.e. the body was enacted with all its sexual particularities) and became 'intersubjective' (i.e. the subject comes to meaning in exchange with others and is not 'fixed'). Therefore body and performance art became ideal instruments to open up normative identity and undermine the 'fixed' parameters of identity.²²² The performance artist Wally Stevens was also occupied with research on identity, corporality and outer appearance.²²³ During his performances the artist identified himself with other personalities again and again; he showed up as a naïve, naughty girl or as an aggressive personage with a leather jacket and a whip (fig. 8).²²⁴ To adopt another identity, Stevens made use of external means, such as bows, heels, a wig, cosmetics, boa's, fans and panty hoses. His performances were clearly drenched with aspects of travesty and with that the artist raised the matter of sexual ambiguity and the ideal of androgyny. By means of role reversal, dressing up and showing sexual duality, Stevens played with socially determined limits of male and female identity and the sexual identities related to that.²²⁵

²¹⁶ See also Schröder 1990, p. 206.

²¹⁷ See also Vergine 1974, p. 35; Jones 1998, pp. 14, 103-105, 118.

²¹⁸ Gachnang 1974 (a), pp. 46, 50; I. Haan, 'De Vleeshal Middelburg. Ben d'Armagnac/Tentoonstelling.' Middelburg 1982 and [anonymous] 'Negen dagen uit het leven van d'Armagnac + Dekker.'; both in Library Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam (SMA), *Ben d'Armagnac* [Knipselmap], Knmap 00694.

²¹⁹ G. Willems. 'Documenten van het dagelijks leven.' 1999, on-line *Hans Eijkelboom page*, Texts, Gerrit Willems (checked on 9.10.2009): <http://www.photonotebooks.com/PDF/Gert-Willems-NL.pdf>.

²²⁰ Singelenberg 1977; G. Willems. 'Documenten van het dagelijks leven.' 1999, on-line *Hans Eijkelboom page*, Texts, Gerrit Willems (checked on 9.10.2009): <http://www.photonotebooks.com/PDF/Gert-Willems-NL.pdf>.

²²¹ Singelenberg 1977.

²²² See in particular Jones 1998, chapter 1, 3 and 4.

²²³ See text from exhibition catalogue *Klei*. Amsterdam 1980, RKD, PDO, Nederlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Wally Stevens'.

²²⁴ At De Appel, Amsterdam, 1977; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 64.

²²⁵ See also Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 61-66.

Behaviour

The artist Nikolaus Urban grinded several kitchen knives during his *Knife Grinder Performance* (1977) in Museum Fodor in Amsterdam.²²⁶ He wrapped the sharp knives in brown paper and gave them to the members of the audience. Some of them accepted the present, with which they in fact could attack somebody else. Others refused to take the package, aware of the present being a weapon and afraid to become a suspect. This fear was strengthened because the artist pronounced out loud the name of the receiver of the knife, which made the gift very personal. With this confronting situation, Urban tested the behaviour of the audience.²²⁷ He made the spectators think about their responsibilities concerning weapons and wrong behaviour. In addition, the artist made his audience experience the liberties of art, by giving them something that is dangerous and forbidden outside the walls of a museum. Urban was particularly interested in human behaviour and the way it can be determined, influenced or restricted by a certain situation or a particular context. In most of his performances he therefore examined individual freedom versus social restrictions, within different frameworks and even by means of manipulation and bribery.²²⁸

With his *Knife Grinder Performance*, Urban linked up to Marina Abramović' performance *Rhythm 0* (1974), in which she exposed herself to an audience and 72 objects, including a knife and a gun. For six hours the artist allowed the audience members to manipulate her body and actions with the objects, which resulted in very aggressive behaviour among the spectators.²²⁹ During her corporation with Ulay a few years later, Abramović remained interested in human behaviour. The artist duo tested their own behaviour and that of their audience during their sometimes extreme and challenging performances.

Furthermore, the artists Thomas Puckey and Dirk Larson (Reindeer Werk) took the behaviour of themselves and of their audience as starting point, subject and goal of their performances. They examined human behaviour in its simplicity as well as its complexity, and their work was therefore called 'Behaviour Art'.²³⁰ The artists applied a psychological approach onto behavioural forms – such as fear and aggression – which they acted out in their performances. Many of their works were in particular based on the behaviour of social outcasts such as schizophrenics, tramps and punks (fig. 9). These groups of people used other communication systems, other behavioural systems and were nonetheless capable to communicate their presence. According to Reindeer Werk, all people should discover this expressive side in themselves and conquer their instinctive boundaries.²³¹ Therefore, the artists gave an example of impulsive behaviour in their performances, which led to strange spastic and psychotic movements. This should lead to the awakening and widening of the mental consciousness of themselves and of their audience.²³² Just because behaviour was such an important element in their work, the duo also organized public sessions next to their performances. These activities were at first called 'Behaviour Workshops' and later 'Predictions'.²³³

World of media, stars and advertisement

In the 1960s and 1970s, mass media such as television, film and video – and with that the world of famous stars and advertisement – had obtained a permanent position in western society. Many artists in Europe and the United States had taken this world of media, stars and advertisement as a source of inspiration for their art works.²³⁴ In the 1970s, performance artists would also take issues related to the world of media as a subject for their works.

²²⁶ At Museum Fodor, Amsterdam (via De Appel), 1977; Von Graevenitz 1979 (b), p. 71.

²²⁷ See also Urban's descriptions of his performances in 1975 in Urban 1976.

²²⁸ For example during a performance at the Beethoven Festival, Arnhem, 1979; Urban 1979; Gibbs 1979.

²²⁹ Performance in the Studio Mona Gallery, Naples; Archer 2002, p. 105.

²³⁰ Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, p. 44.

²³¹ Larsen and Puckey 1976, p. 2.

²³² Raemaekers 1993, p. 183; Wijers 1989, p. 14.

²³³ Raemaekers 1993, p. 182.

²³⁴ For example Andy Warhol, Jeff Koons and the Pop artists.

Several Netherlands-based artists created parodies on, or referred to iconic symbols from popular commercials, films and television shows in their performances. The artist Raúl Marroquin was particularly fascinated by the world of television and used symbols that were iconic of the contemporary television culture.²³⁵ For instance, the figure of ‘Superbman’ appeared in several of his works, a parody on the American legend ‘Superman’ (fig. 10).²³⁶ During a live performance in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1977), directed by Marroquin, Superbman was invited to open ‘the first European Bonsai Convention’.²³⁷ The hero – played by actor Titus Muizelaar – arrived late, but began to speak anyway. After a while, Superbman was interrupted by an assassination attempt on his life. The F.B.I. agent Pancho Penia saved the life of the hero, after which he escaped and the convention was cancelled.²³⁸ With this performance, Marroquin questioned the social status of super heroes. Instead of Superbman, the F.B.I. agent was the real hero in this story, while the ‘man of steal’ only performed a ceremonial function. Furthermore, Marroquin – in his Superbman episodes – raised the matter of uneven excitement about fictional problems and heroic deeds on the one hand, and real world problems on the other hand. His persiflage on film heroes or television shows, also underlined the effects of commercialization, popularization and seduction, hidden behind the world of television.²³⁹ Despite this critical sound, however, Marroquin himself also made use of mass media such as television and video in his works, to reach a larger public.²⁴⁰

The artist Marja Samsom, who alternately lived and worked in Amsterdam and New York, also imitated the world of media stars in her work. In most of her performances she appeared as her alter ego ‘Miss Kerr’, a parody on American stars and pin-up girls (video 2).²⁴¹ By adopting the role of ‘Miss Kerr’, Samsom reflected upon the popular myth of the ‘woman of the world’ presented by the media and also scrutinized the dark side of this myth.²⁴² Moreover, she criticized the way women had been portrayed by men, who were in charge of visual media for centuries.

Next to the parodies on, and references to stars, television shows and advertisement, several artists in the Netherlands also took the specific working of the media as a main theme for their performances. They particularly reflected upon the artificial and manipulated ‘reality’ of visual media in relation to real life. While scrutinizing the working of media, most artists tried to reveal the manipulated, biased and subjective view on reality, produced by the media. They also challenged their audiences to look at another way to the real world around them again. For example, Nan Hoover wanted to give the spectator a new experience in perception.²⁴³ In the 1970s, she carried out abstract and sculptural performances in which she moved her body through a spatial environment, made visible by means of light, cameras and monitors (fig. 11). The abstract images, created by the body movements and the reflecting light, were not quickly anticipated by the mind of the spectator and therefore activated the imagination and fantasy.²⁴⁴ New elements and nuances of beauty and reality were perceived in this way,²⁴⁵ elements which were suppressed in modern daily life, among others by the mass media and their particular dominant codes of representation.

Barbara Bloom also challenged her spectators to think about the perception of reality and falsity, in relation to the manipulating mass media.²⁴⁶ During a performance in De Appel in 1976, the

²³⁵ See on-line text of Raúl Marroquin posted on *Botánica* page (checked on 20.10.2009):

<http://www.inventati.org/communa/platanal/2009/06/21/raul-marroquin/>.

²³⁶ In 1976 Marroquin also had started to make a television series (11 episodes) with the name *Superbman's last adventure*.

²³⁷ *Superbman opens the 1st European Bonsai Convention*, 1977; Petersen 1982 (a), p. 37.

²³⁸ See also text by Josefine van Droffelaar, 1977, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder ‘Agora’.

²³⁹ See also on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Raul Marroquin, Biography (checked on 9.10.2009) :

http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/artist_biography.php?id=49.

²⁴⁰ See information sheet Agora, RKD, PDO, Buitenlandse Kunstenaars, folder ‘Raúl Marroquin’.

²⁴¹ The name ‘Miss Kerr’ is possibly a pun on the Dutch word ‘Kermis’ (Kerr Miss – Miss Kerr) which means ‘fun fair’ or ‘carnival’. This could refer to the idea of ‘woman as an attraction’, which corresponds to the themes in Samsom’s performances; see also information sheet De Appel, 1976, RKD, PDO, Nederlandse Kunstenaars, folder ‘Marja Samsom’.

²⁴² Schmidt 1978.

²⁴³ Quint 1987.

²⁴⁴ Raemaekers 1993, p. 180; Quint 1987.

²⁴⁵ Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, p. 41.

²⁴⁶ Bos 1987, p. 8.

artist made her audience watch a movie on a television. While the movie was playing, some real actions took place that coincided with the actions and texts of the film; the leading American actress of the movie rung at the door of De Appel.²⁴⁷ In this way, Bloom challenged her audience to discover the link and the differences between the actions on television and the actions in real life. All her mysterious works were directed at the reinforcement of the perception of reality and at seeing things in a new way.²⁴⁸

Consequently, it were in particular these five main themes that took up a central position with regard to the content of performances carried out by artists living in the Netherlands. It must be noticed, however, that these topics were not always dealt with in a strictly separate way. Sometimes they were combined with each other or with other minor issues. In addition, these main subjects were closely connected to the form of the performance and the attitude of the artists; as will become clear in the paragraphs below. Moreover, it must be emphasized that the characteristics mentioned here, were not unique for the Netherlands. The Dutch performance art took place in an international context and the above-mentioned main themes appeared to a greater or lesser extent also in performances in other countries. In chapter 3 more attention will be paid to the position of the Dutch performance art in its international context, and to the resemblances and differences between Dutch and foreign performance traditions.

2.2. Covering tendencies with relation to form

Compared to traditional forms of art, such as painting or sculpture, the form or the perceptible appearance of performances is very complex. The most important formal element of a performance is the act of the performer. However, next to that, several techniques, materials and attributes can be used to give shape to the action. The acts of the performer can even be completed with immaterial elements such as sound, smell, light, space or energy.

The complex form of performance art can be divided in two aspects. On the one hand, the formal elements and means which are used to create a performance, such as light, sound and attributes. In addition, materials and techniques fall under this category. The formal elements and means together give shape to the performance as a whole. This concerns the second aspect of form: the way the elements are arranged in time and space; i.e. the composition or *the arrangement* of the performance. In the performance tradition in the Netherlands, several characteristics can be discerned with regard to the form. Firstly, the *formal elements* which were regularly used will be explored below. They are followed by a discussion of the covering tendencies concerning the *formal arrangement* of performances. Just as with the covering tendencies concerning the content of performances, it should be noticed that the characteristics of form summed up here were not unique for the Netherlands. Although they were typical for the Dutch performance scene, also in other countries elements of pain, media, struggle, rituals etc. appeared in performances there. This will be further scrutinized in the next chapter.

2.2.1. Formal elements

Pain, aggression and violence

In 1977 Nikolaus Urban walked blindfolded with a sharp knife through a museum in Maastricht (fig. 12).²⁴⁹ Ben d'Armagnac hit with a plank against his temple, after which he bandaged his arms and legs in a performance in 1976.²⁵⁰ During the performance *Sex object* in 1979, Lydia Schouten was constricted in a leather corset, tied up with rubber ribbons to a metal frame. She tried to break

²⁴⁷ *Een avond met Barbara Bloom* (An evening with Barbara Bloom), 1976, performance at De Appel, Amsterdam; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 89.

²⁴⁸ See also Beenker 1976 (b); infosheet 'Zomerfestival Groningen', Corps de Garde, 1976, RKD, PDO, Buitenlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Barbara Bloom'.

²⁴⁹ *Knife performance* at the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht; Von Graevenitz 1979 (b), p. 71.

²⁵⁰ Performance at the Martinikerk, Groningen; Wijers 1995, pp. 146-148.

balloons with a whip, while she endured the pain and oppression of the corset (video 3).²⁵¹ Ulay and Abramović sat opposed to each other in a dark room and slapped each other by turns in the face during the performance *Light/Dark* (1977).²⁵²

These examples indicate that the use of pain, aggression and violence formed an important tendency within the performance art as it took place in the Netherlands. Performance artists employed these means for various purposes; to solve conflicts and tensions (as in the case of D'Armagnac), to provoke correct decisions or specific reactions (Urban) or to explore mental and physical boundaries (Ulay and Abramović).²⁵³ In some cases, pain, aggression and violence reflected the suffering experienced in the artist's personal life – as in the work of D'Armagnac and Schouten –, but also the suffering experienced in society.²⁵⁴ Furthermore, the elements were used to protest against existing situations in society; as resistance against ruling norms.²⁵⁵ Pain, violence and wounding could moreover, be interpreted as ritual or almost religious elements.²⁵⁶ In this respect, their utilization had a purifying effect, to free the human body from conflicts, problems or restricting norms. The elements were even used in a masochistic way, to research one's (sexual) relation to 'the other' and the functioning of power in that relation.²⁵⁷

Several authors have underlined that the infliction of wounding and pain to the body in performance art, leads up to psychical attachment and direct involvement of the spectators to the action. The body is an 'object' with regard to which psychical distance in advance seems to be impossible.²⁵⁸ This is even reinforced by the infliction of violence and pain to the body. The philosopher Rénée van der Vall has stated in her book *At the edges of vision*, that because of this physical and emotional involvement, art has a great potential to esthetical and ethical reflection.²⁵⁹ The art critic François Pluchart has also underlined that the psychology of the image of the body could lead to an ethical and moral system. This leads to the conclusion that nobody suffers alone, not even in performance art. "The laws of identification and of communication between images of the body make one's suffering and pain everybody's affair."²⁶⁰ Therefore, some performances were not only a trial for the artist, but also for the audience.²⁶¹

Silence, concentration and meditation

In contrast to the expressive aggression and violence, many performances carried out in the Netherlands were characterized by the elements of silence and concentration. As mentioned before, Dekker executed several quiet and plain performances, to come to terms with his problems with the world and to face his fears and conflicts (video 4). Ben d'Armagnac also carried out some performances characterized by silent, slow and concentrated acts. In the same way, Harrie de Kroon sometimes performed minimal and quiet gestures. During a performance in 1978, the artist sat behind a table and only blew three times against a half little ball lying in front of him, which started to rock (fig. 13).²⁶² With his simple acts, that caused small and intimate movements, the artist wanted to recall amazement among the spectators, or at least cause a moment of quietness in their perception.²⁶³

²⁵¹ Executed at Galerie Felison, Velsen (1975) and at Projects Arts Centre, Dublin (1979); see also Raemaekers 1993, pp. 181-182.

²⁵² *Light/Dark* at the Internationaler Kunstmarkt, Cologne; Jappe 1993, p. 31.

²⁵³ See also Von Graevenitz 1979 (b), pp. 70-73.

²⁵⁴ Goldberg 1996, p. 404.

²⁵⁵ Vergine 1974, pp. 21, 25.

²⁵⁶ See also Schröder 1990, pp. 113-132; Goldberg 1979, pp. 106-107.

²⁵⁷ Jones 1998, pp. 125-135.

²⁵⁸ Van den Hengel 2009, p. 7.

²⁵⁹ R. van der Vall. *At the edges of vision. A phenomenological aesthetics of contemporary spectatorship*. Aldershot 2008; cited in Van den Hengel 2009, p. 7.

²⁶⁰ Pluchart 1984, pp. 131-132.

²⁶¹ See also Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 84-85, 380-381.

²⁶² At Galerie A, Amsterdam; Von Graevenitz 1978 (a), p. 60.

²⁶³ Von Graevenitz 1978 (a), p. 60.

The immaterial elements of silence and concentration gave many performances a serious, severe, strenuous or even meditative character. This counted in particular for the performances of Nan Hoover (video 5). According to Hoover, there was too little space for silence, meditation and reflection in modern society. With her meditative performances she wanted to give her spectators the opportunity to turn into themselves again.²⁶⁴ The aspects of concentration and mediation could provide invisible but yet noticeable, psychical effects to the performer and his/her audience. They could bring about a new state of awareness, a new state of harmony or a transfer of new positive energy.²⁶⁵ This transfer played a central part in the works of Ulay and Abramović, Reindeer Werk and Cardena.²⁶⁶

Sound

Another invisible, but nevertheless sensorial perceptible element that was used increasingly by Netherlands-based performance artists, is sound. Both concrete, electronic or recorded sounds belonged to this formal category, and were often produced with minimal means.²⁶⁷ They were part of the performer's acts and could support the performed storyline. For instance, Janssen used the sounds of whales to underline the theme of threatened animal species, while D'Armagnac played the sounds of cows in a slaughterhouse referring to life and death.²⁶⁸ Gerrit Dekker made use of concrete, amplified sounds such as footsteps, breathing or street noises; often with an autobiographical meaning or to create physical and mental tension.

As a part of the body, the voice and its tones were also utilized by a number performance artists. For example, De Kroon used his voice in various ways: to read self-written philosophical texts, to whisper, to breath heavily or to scream extremely. During a performance in Warsaw, the artist knelt down in front of a sink, with a sieve in his hand (fig. 14).²⁶⁹ He opened the water tap and held the sieve under the jet of water. As soon as the water touched the sieve the artist started to scream. He repeated this act three times. In several of his works, De Kroon referred to the four elements: fire, earth, air and in particular water. In this performance the element of water seems to have been used because of its cleansing character and symbolism.²⁷⁰ This aspect of cleansing is emphasized by the straining of the water (an act of double purification). De Kroon's screaming voice can be considered as a sign of fear, pain, fright and anger. In relation to the symbolism of the water and the sieve, it can, however, also be interpreted as means of release; another form of purification.²⁷¹ Likewise, Ulay and Abramović used their voice in their examination of physical and mental boundaries. During the performance AAA-AAA in 1978, the artist duo sat opposed to each other and they screamed as long as their voices could take it (video 6).²⁷²

Symbolic attributes and materials

An important difference between performance art and the earlier movement of pure 'Body art', is the use of attributes during performances. The performance artists in the Netherlands also contributed to this tendency. They particularly applied meaningful attributes and materials that referred to personal, historical or ritual issues, or connected to iconographic traditions. In this way, they gave a new meaning to the use of symbolic signs. In particular, D'Armagnac, Schouten and

²⁶⁴ Oele 1983; Van Ginneken, 1982.

²⁶⁵ See also Quint 1987; Perrée 1991, p. 65.

²⁶⁶ See on transfer of energy in the works of Ulay and Abramović, Reindeer Werk and Cardena also Raemaekers 1993, pp. 177, 183; Van Ginneken 1976 (b).

²⁶⁷ Van Droffelaar 1979 (a), pp. 105-106.

²⁶⁸ See Servie Janssen's *All values of things glitter on me* (1978) and Ben d'Armagnac's performance at the Multi Arts Point, Amsterdam (1978); Wijers 1995, p. 169.

²⁶⁹ At the Remont Gallery, Warsaw, 1978; Von Graeventiz 1978 (c), p. 61.

²⁷⁰ In some of De Kroon's performances, the element of water also refers to cycle of water, and more general to the circle of life; the cyclicity of nature and life, and the unity of everything is a central theme in the work of De Kroon.

²⁷¹ See also Van Droffelaar 1979 (a), p. 105.

²⁷² Executed in Amsterdam; on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Abramovic/Ulay, Works, AAA-AAA (checked on 9.10.2009): <http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/>.

Janssen dealt with symbolic attributes such as organs, bandages, targets, plastic animals, arrows, drums and whips (fig. 15). They also used meaningful materials such as water, powder, sand and feathers. These elements often referred to meanings outside the performance, such as life and death, pain and destruction, old rituals or experiences in the artist's personal life.

With relation to the use of symbolic attributes and materials, it is interesting to note that dry granular matters such as sand, salt and soil, and powders such as flour and cement took up a central position in performances carried out by Netherlands-based artists (fig. 16). These matters frequently appeared on the ground during actions, while the artists walked or rolled through it, or blew it away.²⁷³ The meaning of this utilization is most likely to be found in rituals and customs of primitive cultures, in which substances such as sand and salt (referring to the earth) had a purifying effect. Furthermore, old medicine-men and shamans blew into natural powders to get in touch with the spiritual world. Often these powders had a psychedelic effect like drugs. The use of powders in performances may also have been a reference to the contemporary popularity of psychedelic drugs in the 1970s.

Costumes and suits

Another remarkable tendency in the performance art in the Netherlands was the use of costumes and suits. On the one hand, several artists wore particular performance outfits. Ben d'Armagnac, for instance, was always dressed in grey, black or white overalls during his actions, made by his wife.²⁷⁴ Lydia Schouten mostly wore tight suits of tricot when she carried out a performance. On the other hand, performance artists made use of costumes, with which they could adopt another identity or carry out a persiflage, as in the case of Hans Eijkelboom, Wally Stevens and Marja Samsom.

The element of parody (i.e. the identification with someone else) by means of costumes sometimes resulted in entertaining situations. However, this disguise could also function as a form of defense or distancing oneself. With the help of various outfits, the ego could falsify itself in order to avoid feelings and experiences that would otherwise be too painful; they were projected away from the ego and situated onto another 'personality'. In some cases the element of parody was even related to the search for another self or another partner, in order to be able to love or be loved again.²⁷⁵ The artist Hannes van Es also made use of specific outfits to adopt another identity. He appeared as a Las Vegas star with a pink suit, white high shoes and blue sunglasses during a performance at De Appel in 1977 (fig. 17).²⁷⁶ In 1978 he was in charge of the opening ceremony for an exhibition on performance art in museum Fodor and would have appeared as 'Johnny Nitwitt' in a three-piece suit.²⁷⁷ That costumes not always caused cheerful entertainment, appears from Van Es' performances in which sadness, rejection and disappointment were the central themes.²⁷⁸

Media

In section 2.1. it has been explained that various artists were – regarding the content of their performances – occupied with the world of media. As a logical consequence of that, the use of media symbols and media such as televisions, video equipment and monitors also took up a central position in their works. These media were particularly applied to visualize things in a new way, or show various situations at the same time. Furthermore, they were used as critical instruments that could be applied to comment on, or change the media and television culture.²⁷⁹ This tendency was strongly

²⁷³ Compare for instance Servie Janssen's *All values of things glitter on me* (1978) and *Kantelen* (Turn over, 1978), Ben d'Armagnac's performances at the Biennale de Paris (1975) and at the Documenta 6, Kassel (1977), and Lydia Schouten's *Love is every girls dream* (1977); granular matters like salt and flour were also used by foreign artists such as Ulrike Rosenbach and Vito Acconci (see chapter 3).

²⁷⁴ Wijers 1995, p. 124.

²⁷⁵ See Vergine 1974, p. 33.

²⁷⁶ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 172.

²⁷⁷ These plans were changed later; Van Straaten 1978.

²⁷⁸ See small exhibition catalogue from Gallery Willy Schoots, 1988, RKD, PDO, Nederlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Hannes van Es'.

²⁷⁹ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 14.

related to the video art of the 1970s and most performance artists using this equipment were also occupied with pure video art.

As mentioned before, Nan Hoover, Barbara Bloom and Raúl Marroquin made use of video and television in their performance works. In addition, the artist Michel Cardena carried out performances in front of an audience, in which he employed cameras and monitors, also to record his actions (fig. 18).²⁸⁰ These works were also known as 'live video-performance'. Cardena also applied video equipment to visualize processes, to display contradictions with different shots and to show things from different angles.²⁸¹ Moreover, he wanted to underline the illusion and subjectivity of the medium and made his audience think about reality.²⁸²

2.2.2. Formal arrangement

Test and research

Within 'Body art', the examination of the human body had taken up a central position. However, also in the performance art of the 1970s tests and research regarding the human body remained an important characteristic. In particular Ulay and Abramović, who collaborated since 1976, explored psychical and mental boundaries in their performances. They tested their endurance by means of physical violence, self-inflicted pain, exhausting bodily confrontations and mental trials that required sustained meditation and concentration.²⁸³ Since Ulay and Abramović were doing their performances together, the element of competition was added to their performances; they tested who could keep up the longest.

The cooperation between Ulay and Abramović also led to the research of relationships between human beings.²⁸⁴ In their performances of the 1970s, their so-called 'Relation works', they explored their interpersonal symbiosis as colleagues, lovers and as a man and a woman (related to gender roles).²⁸⁵ During the performance *Relation in space* in 1976, they tested their relation by running against each other, harder and harder (video 7). When Abramović was in danger of falling, Ulay caught her – whether out of love or to save the performance.²⁸⁶ In addition, the artists examined their relation to the world around them, and in particular to their audience. In Bologna in 1977, the visitors of a gallery had to pass the two artists, who were standing nakedly along two sides of a small doorway (fig. 19). In this way the artists tested the reaction of their audience, after the uncomfortable moment of physical contact.²⁸⁷

Next to Ulay and Abramović, who gave a new impulse to bodily examination in the Netherlands, also Ben d'Armagnac, Harrie de Kroon and Servie Janssen confronted their body with heavy tests and investigated the boundaries of their staying-power (video 8 and 9). However, not only the human body was the subject of the research of performance artists. In section 2.1. it has been demonstrated that human behaviour, human identity, reality, illusion and manipulation in the media world, were also examined in the action works. Several performances had the form of a *psychological* research, as in the case of Urban, who confronted his audience with difficult choices and even manipulated them. Other works resembled the research methods of *sociology* and *anthropology*. For example, Hans Eijkelboom made use of inquiries, interviews, random checks and even set up a 'laboratory' for his research on social identity.²⁸⁸ Artists such as Cardena, Bloom,

²⁸⁰ Perrée 1983, pp. 61-62.

²⁸¹ Van Ginneken 1976 (b); *Video-kunst van Michel Cardena* 1976.

²⁸² Perrée 1983, p. 62; *Video-kunst van Michel Cardena* 1976.

²⁸³ See also texts in on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Abramovic/Ulay, Works and Bibliography (checked on 10.10.2009): <http://catalogue.nimk.nl/>.

²⁸⁴ McEvilly 1985, p. 10.

²⁸⁵ See also Raemaekers 1993, p. 177.

²⁸⁶ At the Venice Biennale; see also on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Abramovic/Ulay, Works, Relation in Space (checked on 9.10.2009): <http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/art.php?id=1831>.

²⁸⁷ *Imponderabilia* (1977) at the Galleria Comunale d'Arte Moderna, Bologna; see on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Abramovic/Ulay, Works, Imponderabilia (checked on 9.10.2009): <http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/art.php?id=7094>.

²⁸⁸ G. Willems. 'Documenten van het dagelijks leven.' 1999, on-line *Hans Eijkelboom page*, Texts, Gerrit Willems (checked on 9.10.2009): *Hans Eijkelboom page*: <http://www.photonotebooks.com/PDF/Gert-Willems-NL.pdf>.

Marroquin and Hoover particularly used technical media to examine notions of reality, illusion, perception and manipulation.

Battle or struggle

Next to the form of a test – and in some cases closely related to it –, various performances resembled the form of a battle. The Netherlands-based artists fought against forces and materials from the outside (video 8 and 9), struggled with their personal fears and problems from the inside, or tried to conquer their mental and physical boundaries. This often resulted in emotional or exhausting battles for the purpose of mental or physical liberation. By means of their battle, the artists tried to break with existing situations and to fight for a new state of being. Ben d'Armagnac, for instance, tried to conquer his fears and problems during his battle-performances. According to the artist, this battle was also required to live in harmony with other people.²⁸⁹ In addition, the exhausting performances of Ulay and Abramović had to lead to a higher state of harmony and to a liberation of restrictions.²⁹⁰ Therefore, they had to struggle with their mental and psychical boundaries and with each other.

Lydia Schouten's performances were also real battles of attrition, with wild and turbulent movements that often started as quiet gestures of the body.²⁹¹ For many of her works she created beautiful surroundings with matters such as flour, treacle, mud, sand or mirrors, often in the form of a circle. Afterwards, she started to disturb the environment by crawling and rolling through the materials. For her work *Breaking through the circle* (1978) Schouten created a circle of feathers on the ground with a circle of treacle in the middle (video 10).²⁹² Dressed in a tricot ballet suit, the artist started to crawl through the mud, after which she rolled through the feathers. These acts unavoidable call up the association with the famous *Swan Lake* ballet and with swans in general (symbolizing female beauty). At the same time it reminds one of the mediaeval punishment of sending away undesirable people, covered with pitch and feathers. After the crawl on the ground, Schouten walked to a wall on which small hearts had been hung in the shape of a spiral. With an arrow she destroyed the hearts, which suggests the discontent with love. The element of the circle present in this performance, seems to refer to an inner world or a closed and ongoing situation. During her struggle on the ground, the artist tried to break out of the circle, as if she wanted to break with an existing, oppressing situation or with her inner fears; in this case related to issues of beauty, love and humiliation. In most of her performances, Schouten tried to break free from an oppressing situation, which required a struggle full of frustration and aggression.

Ritual

Rites and old religions seem to have been an important source of inspiration for performance artists on an international level in the 1970s.²⁹³ In the Netherlands, many performances also resembled the form of ritual practices. Aggressive acts, violence and pain, but also contemplation, meditation and silence, gave performances the radiation of a ritual. In addition, the use of matters such as blood, sand and water produced analogies with ritual acts and religious practices, in which these substances had purifying and spiritual powers. Moreover, the principle of repetition which was characteristic of rituals, determined the arrangement of several performances in the Netherlands (video 11). Artists found inspiration for the ritual form of their performances in old Christian, pagan and eastern rituals, including Zen Buddhist practices.

²⁸⁹ D'Armagnac cited in Wijers 1995, p. 148: "Alle handelingen waren dan ook het symbool voor de strijd die nodig is om te leven met de andere mens."

²⁹⁰ See also on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Abramovic/Ulay, Works, Relation in time and Light/Dark (checked on 9.10.2009): <http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/>.

²⁹¹ Nelissen 1994.

²⁹² Performed at De Appel, Amsterdam and at the Ludwig Museum, Aachen; see also fig. 25; Von Graevenitz 1979 (a), p. 31; on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Lydia Schouten, Works, Breaking through the circle (checked on 20.10.2009): <http://catalogue.nimk.nl/>.

²⁹³ See for a description of the appropriation of elements from magical and religious rites by performance artists in the 1960s and 1970s also McEvilly 1983, pp. 62-71.

The relation of performance artists to the traditions of old rites was a logical consequence of several general resemblances between a performance and a rite. In the first place, in both rituals and performances the act is used as a form of expression for an idea. Secondly, a ritual is of old an intense and direct life experience, with an extraordinary authenticity and a power to push back boundaries, just like a performance.²⁹⁴ In addition, a rite does not serve any direct practical use, but refers to a more comprehensive meaning – as is the case with a performance.²⁹⁵ More specifically, the art historian Antje von Graevenitz pointed out the particular correspondence between a performance and an initiation rite. During an initiation rite, youngsters learned to suppress fears and pains by means of isolation, transition and reintegration.²⁹⁶ The path of initiation could lead to a new consciousness and a new identity.²⁹⁷ Likewise, the performance artist had to endure his ritual performance as a kind of trial, in order to reach a new state of being or a new identity. For instance, D'Armagnac used his performances to suppress his inner fears and find his real identity, characterized by true power and freedom.²⁹⁸ Ulay and Abramović endured their exhausting struggles to reach a new state of consciousness. In their case, the influence of Eastern meditation rituals, by which the body was submitted to the mind, was discernable. The artists were particularly interested in Asian culture and freely appropriated philosophical and spiritual concepts for their work.²⁹⁹ Ulay and Abramović, and several other performance artists, also tried to surpass the purifying, renewing or extending effects of their ritual performances to their audience or even broader, to society.

Therapy

In connection to the purifying and renewing effect of the ritual form, Dutch performances also frequently resembled the form of a therapy. In the first place, many action works functioned as self-therapy for the artist, in which personal conflicts and problems had to be dissolved or the mental consciousness should be broadened. In addition to that, performances also suggested a healing effect on behalf of the audience. Several artists tried to bring about a form of release among their spectators via their boundary-breaking performances.³⁰⁰ For instance, the performances and workshops of Reindeer Werk had a social and therapeutic function for the audience and even for society. Their actions resembled the approach of (psycho)therapy, and were suspected to lead to the awakening of mental consciousness and to the change of negative values into positive values regarding individual and social behaviour.³⁰¹

Thus, in all kinds of ways the performance in the Netherlands resembled the form of a therapeutic medium, with the potential for self healing and social transformation. The art historian Thomas McEvilly has underlined that the multifarious appropriation of ritual and therapeutic characteristics in performance art should be seen in the light of the 1960s and 1970s.³⁰² That was the period of psychedelic drugs and a time in which traditional religions could no longer provide for intense, renewing and purifying experiences. The art partly took over this function and received its therapeutic powers, which is particularly discernable in the performance art.

Narrative scene

Considering the four above-mentioned characteristic forms of performances, it can be concluded that these were closely related to, and often strongly integrated with each other. Moreover, it must be noted that not all performances executed by artists living in the Netherlands adopted the forms

²⁹⁴ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 71-72.

²⁹⁵ See also Jappe 1993, pp. 37-39.

²⁹⁶ Von Graevenitz cited in Jappe 1993, pp. 38-39 (no further reference noted by Jappe).

²⁹⁷ See also Schröder 1990, pp. 125-126.

²⁹⁸ D'Armagnac cited in I. Haan. 'De Vleeshal Middelburg. Ben d'Armagnac/Tentoonstelling.' Middelburg 1982, Library SMA, *Ben d'Armagnac* [Knipselmap], Knmap 00694: "Werkelijke kracht en vrijheid zijn in onszelf aanwezig."

²⁹⁹ See on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Abramovic/Ulay, Bibliography (checked on 9.10.2009): http://catalogue.nimk.nl/artist_biography.php?id=3.

³⁰⁰ For instance in the case of Nan Hoover and Ulay and Abramović; Oele 1983; Raemaekers 1993, pp. 177-178.

³⁰¹ Raemaekers 1993, pp. 182-183; Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, p. 44.

³⁰² McEvilly 1983, p. 65.

discussed above. Several performances displayed a more narrative arrangement, reminding of a small play and scene-like forms of art. In these narrative scene-like performances, storylines were worked out, recognizable situations were imitated or parodied and typical characters and roles were enacted. This form of performance could be discerned in the works of a variety of performance artists; from Janssen and Stevens, to Marroquin and Cardena. For instance, Janssen reported on one of his journeys, while he navigated on a surface made of nautical charts in *Highland platform navigation* (1976).³⁰³ Marroquin parodied a news bulletin in his performance *Fandangos Evening News* (1977), acted out by the actor Titus Muizelaar (video 12).³⁰⁴ The tone of these narrative performances could be serious, critical or cynical, but in the case of the foreign artists living in the Netherlands the works also often had a funny and entertaining effect.

2.3. Covering tendencies with relation to the attitude of the performance artist

Since the performance artist plays a prominent part in his/her art work (and not only during the coming about of the work), the attitude and role of the artist became determining factors for the form and content of performances. Therefore, the most important characteristics concerning the attitude of the Netherlands-based performance artists during their action works will be summed up here. These can be deduced from performances carried out in the 1970s, and are closely related to the characteristics concerning the form and content, discussed above.

Warrior

The art critic Thomas McEvilly has described the acts of Ulay and Abramović in their 'Relation works' between 1976 and 1979, as the activities of warriors.³⁰⁵ Their performances were indeed characterized by struggle, aggression and competition. However, the attitude of a warrior can be attributed to a larger group of performance artists in the Netherlands. Many of them adopted the role of a warrior and struggled with themselves, with personal dilemma's, materials, each other, the audience or social questions. This often caused pugnacity, aggression, exhaustion or concentration in the performance room. In addition, socially engaged artists, such as Albert van der Weide who fought for minority groups in Africa and Poland, can be called warriors for social justice and equality.

Shaman

In the art historical literature, the attitude of performance artists has often been related to the role of a shaman.³⁰⁶ A shaman is of old an intermediary between the human and spiritual worlds. He or she can treat illness and is capable of entering supernatural realms in order to obtain answers to the problems of their community. A shaman applies trance to effect a transition of consciousness and to enter into the spiritual world. This trance can be brought about by means of psychoactive plants or particular rituals such as drumming, dancing, wounding and fighting. A shaman applies particular attributes (skeletons, mirrors, drums) and costumes during his shamanistic performances. Furthermore, the utilization of the powers of particular animal species takes up a central position in shamanism; it enables the shaman to mediate between culture and nature.³⁰⁷

Considering these characteristics, some remarkable similarities between the attitude of a shaman and that of performance artists in the 1970s come to the fore. In that period, the influence of Zen Buddhism and other eastern views updated the ideas about the shamanic function of the performers.³⁰⁸ Just like the traditional shaman, many performance artists in the Netherlands and in other countries made use of rituals, meditation, self-injury or real dangers during their actions or tried to reach an extended consciousness. Also, they acted like a solver of problems and conflicts, a

³⁰³ At the Anna Leonowens Gallery, Halifax, Canada; Szénássy 1978, pp. 11-12.

³⁰⁴ At Multi Art Points, Amsterdam (via De Appel); Van Mechelen 2006, p. 293.

³⁰⁵ McEvilly 1985, p. 10.

³⁰⁶ See in particular McEvilly 1983, pp. 62-71.

³⁰⁷ See also Eliade 1974, chapters 1-5.

³⁰⁸ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 67.

healer of fears and complaints, and a person who realizes change, awakening and positivity. Furthermore, several artists tried to act as a mediator between human culture and nature, and particularly worked with animals or imitated animal activities. In addition, the decoration and covering of the body by performance artists can be related to the standard shamanic activities.³⁰⁹

The shamanistic attitude of Netherlands-based performance artists can, for instance, be discerned in the case of Harrie de Kroon. This artist particularly worked with the elements of water, earth, wind and fire in his performances; of old four spiritual energy sources. Furthermore, in most of his works he referred to the cyclicity of nature and life, and the unity of everything in it. Also, Servie Janssen considered himself as a mediating shaman, who should unite human beings with nature again and bring back freedom and balance to the world by way of ritual performances. According to Janssen, the modern artist is, on the one side, situated in the world of creativity, mysticism and artistry, and on the other side living in the age of technology and technocracy. Therefore, he or she fulfills the role of a mediator.³¹⁰ The artists Nikolaus Urban and Ben d'Armagnac both linked up to shamanistic practices by imitating the behaviour of animals in their performances.³¹¹ In addition, Lydia Schouten covered her body with mud, feathers or mirrors in correspondence to the attitude and acts of a shaman.

Researcher

Next to the attitude of a shaman, many performance artists active in the Netherlands adopted the attitude of a researcher. They enacted the role of a psychologist, sociologist or anthropologist and examined, as such, several aspects of human life (see also section 2.2.2., *Test and research*). The presence of both the artist and an audience during a performance, and the work taking place in real time and real space, may have stimulated the artists to adopt the attitude of a researcher. During their performances they could directly test the reaction of the audience, confront people with a dilemma, or scrutinize situations from 'real life'. In addition to the attitude of a researcher, the artist could at the same time take up the function of research object. It was often the performance artist himself who endured risky tests, changed his outer appearance or opened up his psyche.

Clown

Although pure entertainment did not yet enter the Dutch performance scene in the 1970s in the way it did in the United States that time, the attitude of several Netherlands-based performers can be characterized as clownish. Just like a clown, many artists dressed up to adopt another role or identity. Sometimes this 'disguise' had a serious character, as in the case of identity research. In other cases, performance artists – such as Marroquin and Samsom – applied costumes in order to realize parody, entertainment and playfulness; however, also with a critical sound.

Next to the aspect of dressing up, the attitude of some artists reminded of a clown, because they created absurd or laughable situations and misled people in a playful way. In particular, Nikolaus Urban acted in a clownish way in order to provoke a particular reaction among his audience; for example by dressing up like a blind man and acting as a person who is able to see. Also, Michel Cardena reminded of a clown when he walked on coals which were painted *as if* they were burning, during the Dutch Art Fair in 1977.³¹² With this performance the artist poked fun at the tendencies of 'Body art' and performance art in which the body was exposed to real pain and danger. In particular Cardena and his colleague Marroquin brought playful humour, clownish characters and entertaining situations into the world of performance in the 1970s; elements that also reminded of the Fluxus-

³⁰⁹ For more interfaces see McEvilly 1983, pp. 66-70.

³¹⁰ Szénássy 1978, pp. 6-8.

³¹¹ Urban, *Milk event*, 1975, performance at the Agora Studio, Maastricht and D'Armagnac, 1978, performance at Multi Art Points, Amsterdam (via De Appel); Urban 1976; Wijers 1995, p. 169.

³¹² Performance titled *Cardena; smiling and barefoot, Cardena walks on burning coal*, 1977; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 282.

mentality of the 1960s.³¹³ Thus, next to the more serious attitudes described above, a clownish attitude was also present in the performance scene in the Netherlands.

Director

When performance artists adopted one of the attitudes and roles mentioned above, they took up a central and visible position during their performance. However, some artists stayed at a distance or even remained invisible during their performances. In these cases the performance artists adopted the attitude of a director and oversaw and directed the work from the sideline; while maintaining their prominent function. Other persons (mostly actors, dancers and artists) executed the performance and took up the role of warrior, researcher, research object or clown. This tendency was also present in the Netherlands, although on a small scale. For instance, Marroquin never acted as the main performer, but only appeared as the director of his performances. His works were executed by performers and actors with artist names such as 'Titus Muizelaar', 'C.V. Kent' and 'Andy Dandy'.³¹⁴ Also, Marjo Schumans particularly acted as the concept writer, the director or the dresser of performance projects.³¹⁵ She started her career with solo performances (fig. 20),³¹⁶ but very soon she chose for a function at the sideline.

The artist Barbara Bloom also preferred the role of the director instead of the role of the central performer. In 1976 she executed a performance in which the audience and a group of performers walked around in the Prinsenhof in Groningen, while the artist herself stayed out of sight.³¹⁷ Furthermore, Michel Cardena organized performances by which he only acted as the director, while the acts were carried out by dancers, musicians or other artists.³¹⁸ With this approach, that was strongly related to a Fluxus-mentality, Cardena also tried to fade out the boundaries between the different art disciplines.³¹⁹

2.4. Final observations

When considering the characteristics and covering tendencies described in the previous paragraphs, a few observations about performance art in the Netherlands can be made. In the first place it can be concluded that the performance artists working in the Netherlands largely elaborated on the tendencies of 'Body art'. During many of their performances, the body was exposed to all kinds of trials, dangers and risks, in order to push back physical and mental boundaries. An important development with regard to the earlier 'Body art' was, however, the use of various (symbolic) materials, attributes and other elements in the performances of the 1970s.

Secondly, it can be concluded that most of the subjects, elements and forms mentioned above are closely related to human life and particularly resemble human activities (e.g. identity, behaviour, violence, struggle, therapy etc.). The performances of Netherlands-based artists were in particular characterized by a search or struggle through human life, or an examination and testing of elements of human existence. This focus is a logical consequence of the characteristics of performance art in general. The performance artist, with his/her own body and personality became part of the art work, which made it easy to refer to his/her personal life or human life in general. Next to that, the artist was taking position in front of other persons, which underlined his position with regard to 'the other' – an important characteristic of human existence. Furthermore, the effect

³¹³ See also Perrée 1983, p. 62; Lamoree 2004; Vogel 1976; text from Marroquin, 1976, RKD, PDO, Buitenlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Raúl Marroquin'.

³¹⁴ See on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Raul Marroquin, Works (checked on 9.10.2009): <http://catalogue.nimk.nl/>.

³¹⁵ This can be concluded from the various volumes of *Fandangos 1973-1980* and program sheets of Agora Studio, Maastricht, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder 'Agora'.

³¹⁶ For example *Nog wat rondjes Amsterdam* (Still a few rounds Amsterdam), 1976, performance at De Appel, Amsterdam; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 115.

³¹⁷ Infosheet 'Zomerfestival Groningen', Corps de Garde, 1976, RKD, PDO, Buitenlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Barbara Bloom'.

³¹⁸ Vogel 1976; Van Ginneken 1976 (b).

³¹⁹ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 282.

of reality present in performance art (i.e. real time, real space, real persons) functioned as an important base for referring to real (human) life.

In the last place, it can be concluded that in the Netherlands a more 'serious' category *and* a more entertaining and playful category of performance art developed in the 1970s. The more 'serious' category covered exhausting, cathartic and self-mutilating actions. These actions were often characterized by a serious trial and the denouncement of personal and social problems. The physical body took up a central position in this and was exposed to real violence, risks, struggles, tests, rituals and self-examination. In most cases, the purpose of these 'serious' performances was self-realization or awakening among the audience. The early phase of performance art in the Netherlands was particularly dominated by this 'serious' category of performance art. Marga van Mechelen speaks in relation to this early form about 'performance art *pur sang*'. Her description of performance art *pur sang* corresponds strongly to what is here called the 'serious' category of performance art.³²⁰

Around 1975 a few new developments entered the world of performance art in the Netherlands. These developments were, among others, the use of communication media and media symbols, the examination of the media world in relation to the real world and – most important in this respect – an entertaining or playful approach. This resulted in a more entertaining and playful category of performance art, which was not so much directed at corporeality, real dangers, the push back of boundaries and the solution of personal conflicts. The body and act of the artist still took up a central position, but this time to create an esthetical arrangement or a parody, to refer to issues related to the media world, to emphasize ambiguities in western society, or to examine human behaviour in general. The use of costumes, dancers and actors, communication media, role-playing and a narrative structure was characteristic of this category. Although described here as 'entertaining and playful', these performances were not intended as pure entertainment. On the contrary, they often had a serious or critical overtone. However, the packaging and atmosphere of the performance was light-hearted, playful and often laughable, reminding of the Fluxus-tradition in the 1960s. Thus, in the scene of performance art in the Netherlands, a more 'serious' category and a more light-hearted category could be discerned. It must, however, be noticed that variations and intermediary forms also appeared in the Dutch performance scene. Some artists and characteristics described above can strictly be related to one of the two categories, but others can be related to both.

Now that the tendencies that characterized the performance art in the Netherlands in the 1970s have been described above, the question arises how these tendencies were related to the international performance circuit of that time. Were these characteristics unique for the Netherlands or did they run parallel to performance tendencies in other countries? Therefore, in the next chapter the developments in the Netherlands will be compared with and related to developments of performance art in the rest of Europe and America. In addition, it will be revealed that the 'serious' category found its equivalent mainly in the European performance tradition, and the more entertaining category particularly in the American tradition.

³²⁰ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 74.

3. Performance

art in the Netherlands in an international context

3.1. Interfaces with European performance art

In the performance scene of the 1970s 'typical European' and 'typical American' performances could be discerned next to each other.³²¹ In Western Europe, artists particularly contributed to the development of relatively short, serious and severe action works. In the United States a serious form of 'Body art' could also develop in the late 1960s, executed by artists such as Vito Acconci and Bruce Nauman. However, in the course of the 1970s this art form was mainly replaced by longer, entertaining and narrative performances (see section 3.2.). In the art historical literature a European and an American tradition of performance art are, therefore, distinguished. Evidently, this distinction is based on a generalization and a strict division between the American and European traditions is not always tenable. Nevertheless, in Europe and America respectively two types of performance came to the fore, both with their own characteristics.

In Europe the performances were focused on the physical, narcissistic expression of the body and the exploration of physical and psychical boundaries. The actions were simple and formally reduced, with a high sensibility and concentration. According to Elisabeth Jappe, the 'typical European' performance was also directed at the sensory transfer of an idea or concept, and not at particular technical or bodily skills.³²² Furthermore, European performance art has often been described as 'theoretical' and 'intellectualized', because of its short demonstrations of one single idea and the apparent rejection of narration and entertainment.³²³

When comparing the characteristics of the 'typical European' performance art and the tendencies characterizing performance art in the Netherlands, some clear interfaces can be discerned. The Netherlands-based performance artists seem to have linked up to the European performance tradition to a great extent. In particular, their performances show some striking resemblances with the work of the Viennese Actionists (Wiener Aktionisten), transformer artists, body artists and German artists such as Joseph Beuys, Ulrike Rosenbach (1943) and Jochen Gerz (1940). These artists were well-known in Western Europe and played an important part in the development of the European performance art or certain pre-forms of it. Below, the work of these artists will be described briefly, followed by an enumeration of parallels to the works of Netherlands-based performance artists. If possible, it will also be indicated, to what extent these similarities could

³²¹ Jappe 1993, p. 28.

³²² Jappe 1993, pp. 28-32.

³²³ Gale 1979, p. 7.

be the consequence of direct or indirect *influences* or *interaction* between performance artists in the Netherlands and artists from abroad.³²⁴

In the first place the performance art in the Netherlands showed some remarkable connections to the work of Joseph Beuys, an important founder of live action art. With the device 'jeder Mensch ist ein Künstler' and the equation of life and art, Beuys' work was directed at awakening, democratizing and the possibilities to change society. Also, with his ritual actions he created transformation processes and transitional situations. Beuys considered performance art as a therapeutic medium with the potential for self healing and social transformation. He believed that by enacting self-invented rituals, he could assume the role of a modern-day shaman and affect the world around him.³²⁵ Therefore, Beuys examined the mythic relation between man and nature, tried to 'heal humanity' and referred to metaphysic and spiritual elements during his performances (fig. 21). In his action works the artist also made use of daily attributes, symbolic objects, energy sources and natural materials, inspired by physics, mythology, anthropology, shamanism and personal experiences.³²⁶

Several performance artists living in the Netherlands resembled the works and ideas of Joseph Beuys in their actions. The therapeutic, autobiographical and ritual approach of Beuys, was also discernable in the works of artists such as D'Armagnac and Dekker. The artists of Reindeer Werk related to the German master with their sociological and therapeutic projects and the transformation processes connected to that. The utilization of symbolic attributes and references to a mystical atmosphere, characteristic of Beuys' works, also took up a central position in the performances of Servie Janssen.³²⁷ In addition, the concept of warmth as the base energy for the human existence developed by Michel Cardena, showed a remarkable parallel to the theories of Joseph Beuys. Some artists referred directly to the works of Joseph Beuys in their own performances. Nikolaus Urban, for example, tried to teach a quotation from Ludwig Wittgenstein to a parrot and worked with hungry dogs; these performances resembled respectively Beuys' conversation with a dead hare and his action with a hungry coyote (compare fig. 21 and 22).³²⁸

These parallels suggest that Beuys was a source of inspiration for several artists in the Netherlands. Raúl Marroquin has remarked about the German artist, "Joseph Beuys was obviously the most influential artist among my generation in my immediate surroundings [...] what impressed me from Beuys was his presence, his super hero appearance, not his discourse."³²⁹ In the course of the 1970s, Joseph Beuys and his revolutionary works became known more widely, starting in his home-country Germany. In the Netherlands, artists were also informed about Beuys, via periodicals, friends or video evenings in De Appel.³³⁰ In addition, they could have met the artist during art events throughout Europe, including the Netherlands. Beuys had a special relation with this country. He was

³²⁴ In this respect, there is a difference between 'influence' and 'interaction'. Influence means (in this context) a one-way effect from one artist to another, for which direct contact between people is not necessarily needed (influencing can also take place via mediums such as periodicals or exhibitions). On the other hand, interaction means mutual exchange among artists, for which direct contact is mostly needed.

³²⁵ Beuys' shamanist approach can be related to a broader Zen-oriented tendency within the Fluxus movement. This so-called 'Zen-oriented Fluxus' was characterized by ritual and spiritual works with ethereal yet earthly qualities, references to folk culture, and magical and mythical elements; Friedman 1984, pp. 60-66.

³²⁶ See on Joseph Beuys and his work Bremer 1968, pp. 170-175; Mekking 1995 (a), pp. 39-40; De Visser 1998, pp. 223-227.

³²⁷ See also *Servie Janssen* 1978.

³²⁸ Compare Urban's *Parrot Training*, 1976, De Appel, Amsterdam and *Performance Meat Plan*, 1977, Kunstmarkt K45, Vienna, and Beuys' *How to explain pictures to a dead hare*, 1965 and *I Like America and America Likes Me*, 1974; see also Van Mechelen 2006, p. 87; project description, 1977, archives De Appel, file Urban, cited on *Kunstbus.com*, Lexicon, "De Appel", 1978: <http://www.kunstbus.nl/agenda/1978/1248634.html>.

³²⁹ See on-line text of Raúl Marroquin posted on *Botánica page* (checked on 20.10.2009):

<http://www.inventati.org/communa/platanal/2009/06/21/raul-marroquin/>.

³³⁰ See for instance an article on Beuys in Bremer 1968, pp. 170-175; a video evening with Joseph Beuys' videos took place in De Appel on 14 April 1976; Barten 1978, p. 38.

living near the border between Germany and the Netherlands and therefore spoke a bit Dutch.³³¹ Furthermore, he had his first international museum exhibition there in 1968, organized in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven.³³² In the summer of 1970, an exhibition of Beuys's drawings followed in Middelburg. Ben d'Armagnac helped with the preparation of this exhibition and had the chance to meet Beuys personally there.³³³

Beuys was back in Eindhoven in 1971, where he executed his *Aktion im Moor*, for which he waded through a bog.³³⁴ In 1975 the artist came to the Netherlands for an exhibition, a lecture and a discussion about his work and his notions on art in the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht.³³⁵ Performance artists in the Netherlands had the chance to meet Beuys again during the performance festival in Arnhem in 1978, where he carried out a workshop.³³⁶ In the same year, Beuys had already met several Netherlands-based artists during *Documenta 6* in Kassel. There he collaborated, for instance, with Reindeer Werk, which gave a new impulse to their works: "our collaboration with Joseph Beuys during Documenta 6 led to further collaborations with Beuys' Free International University and the establishment of our own adjunct grouping: associates."³³⁷ Thus, via these kind of information channels and moments of contact the performance artists in the Netherlands got informed about, and inspired by the German master. In this way, Beuys seems to have given a particular impulse to the ritual, therapeutic and autobiographical tendencies in the performance art in the Netherlands, just as to the use of symbolic attributes and materials.

Next to the link with Joseph Beuys, the performance art in the Netherlands also showed some interesting parallels to the work of two other German artists who had a great influence on the development of performance art in Europe: Ulrike Rosenbach and Jochen Gerz. As a pupil of Beuys, Rosenbach was encouraged to scrutinize her position as a wife, a mother and an artist during her performances. By means of autobiographical research, she encountered the general problems of women, which enabled her to position her personal situation in a social context. A journey to the United States and contacts with female artists there, stimulated Rosenbach's engagement with feminism. In relation to her research on female identity, the simultaneous use of body and video equipment was an essential part of her performance work. Furthermore, Rosenbach frequently applied old, spiritual or iconographic symbols (a circle, an arrow, a labyrinth) and natural materials, which gave her performances a ritual atmosphere (fig. 23).³³⁸

In the Netherlands, in particular the artists Lydia Schouten and Nan Hoover showed some correspondences with Rosenbach. For instance, just like her, Hoover used her own body in combination with video equipment and light projections in her performance work. The Austrian artist Valie Export (1940) also integrated visual media into her performance work and reacted with this on the media world and feminist themes. Export and Rosenbach – both pioneers in the fields of feminism and new media³³⁹ – probably influenced each other in this respect, but it was Rosenbach who visited the Netherlands several times and could exchange artistic ideas there.

The resemblances between the works of Rosenbach and Schouten are particularly striking. In the first place, Schouten used the same costumes (tricot ballet suits), attributes (monitors, safety

³³¹ The brothers Van der Grinten may also have played a stimulating part in the introduction of Joseph Beuys in the Netherlands; they collected the works of Beuys since the 1950s, lived in Kranenburg (Germany) near the border with the Netherlands and also spoke Dutch; Evenhuis 1994.

³³² Organized by Jean Leering; Bremer 1968, pp. 170-175.

³³³ Wijers 1995, p. 81.

³³⁴ Vervaart 1997.

³³⁵ See on-line *Bonnefantenmuseum Maastricht Page*, Hedendaagse kunst, Collectie, Highlights, Joseph Beuys (checked on 12.10.2009): http://www.bonnefanten.nl/nl/hedendaagse_kunst/collectie/highlights/dossier/artist/8/18.

³³⁶ Janselijn 1978, p. 184.

³³⁷ See on-line *Thom Puckey page*, Reindeer Werk: information (checked on 12.10.2009): <http://www.thompuckey.com/index.php?reindeer-werk/reindeer-werk-information/>.

³³⁸ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 85-87; Jappe 1993, pp. 155-157.

³³⁹ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 235.

harnesses, cables) and symbols (circles, arrows, labyrinths) as Rosenbach in her performances.³⁴⁰ In addition, Schouten reflected on female identity and touched feminists ideas, just like her German colleague. However, Schouten repeatedly underlined that she executed her performances with female topics for purely egocentric reasons and not because of real engagement with feminism.³⁴¹ Another parallel between Rosenbach and Schouten is that both artists used to lie or roll on the ground during their performances, sometimes in the middle of natural environments made of salt, flour or soil – an element which also returned in the work of D’Armagnac (compare fig. 24, 25 and 16).³⁴² The parallels between Rosenbach and the Netherlands-based artists were – to a certain extent – possibly the result of a form of interaction among them. This mutual exchange could have taken place when Ulrike Rosenbach visited the Netherlands several times in the 1970s. She carried out performances in Amsterdam, Arnhem and Maastricht and took part in the event ‘Feministische Kunst Internationaal’ (together with Schouten).³⁴³ In addition, she was closely related to De Appel and Wies Smals, who had great confidence in her vision on art and performance.³⁴⁴

The artist Jochen Gerz, who started as a writer of literature and concrete poetry, was born in Berlin, but settled in Paris in 1966. Well into the 1960s, he started to carry out action works in which he tried to unite life and art, characterized by a form of social engagement. In his early (video) performance works he examined his physical boundaries, for example by screaming ‘hello’ as long as his voice could take.³⁴⁵ In the mid-1970s, the artist started examining the reaction of his audience, for instance by pulling away chairs. Furthermore, he analyzed different aspects of cultural behavior in his performances. Therefore, he also intervened in daily situations in the public space, often without being noticed as an artist (fig. 26). In many of his works Gerz thematized the notions of presence and absence, reproduction and reality, and fiction and reality. Also, his work was full of social, anthropological and ethnological references.³⁴⁶

Several elements that characterized the performance work of Jochen Gerz, could also be discerned in the works of a few performance artists living in the Netherlands. For example, Nikolaus Urban, also intervened in daily situations, worked with the notions of fiction and reality and examined the reaction of his audience.³⁴⁷ In addition to that, the performances of Ulay and Abramović displayed some interesting parallels to the work of Gerz, regarding exhausting exercises, relation research and interaction with the audience. In particular their performance AAA-AAA (1978) linked up to Gerz’ video performance *Rüfen bis zur Erschöpfung* (Calling to the point of exhaustion, 1972). It is very well possible that Ulay and Abramović had met the German artist at the Venice Biennale in 1976 and at the Documenta in Kassel in 1977.³⁴⁸ For as far as the available information on Gerz’ activities and exhibitions points out, the artist visited the Netherlands only once.³⁴⁹ In 1970 he participated in a program on concrete poetry in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. Possibly, the Gerz had contacts with other artists engaged in concrete poetry, who were living in the Netherlands and who were later related to the In-Out Centre or the Agora Studio. Since Urban was also moving in

³⁴⁰ These symbols find their roots in Zen-Buddhist rituals and were also used within the tradition of American feminist performances, with which Rosenbach had a close connection; see also Jappe 1993, pp. 155-157.

³⁴¹ Depondt 1988; Reitsma 1984; Van den Hooff 1989.

³⁴² Compare for this parallel Rosenbach’s *For ten thousand years I slept* (1976) and *Don’t believe I’m an Amazon* (1978), Schouten’s *Huis* (House, 1979), *Love is every girls dream* (1977) and *Smile* (1979), and D’Armagnac’s performance during the International Performance Week, Bologna (1977).

³⁴³ She performed at De Appel, Amsterdam (1976), the Amazone Gallery, Amsterdam (1978), the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (1978), Festival Arnhem (1978), Festival Feministische Kunst/Internationaal (via De Appel), Amsterdam (1979).

³⁴⁴ Smals had met Rosenbach in Paris during her Europe-journey in 1975 and also visited her in her studio in Düsseldorf; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 54; Barten 1978, p. 103.

³⁴⁵ *Rüfen bis zur Erschöpfung* (Calling to the point of exhaustion), 1972, video performance.

³⁴⁶ See on Gerz also Mekking 1995 (c), p. 117; Molderings 1983, pp. 166-180.

³⁴⁷ For instance, Urban intervened in daily situations in *Blind-deaf* event (1975) and *Invalid chair* (1975); Urban 1976.

³⁴⁸ See on-line *Jochen Gerz page*, Biography, Group shows (checked on 12.10.2009):

http://www.gerz.fr/html/04_biography_03.htmlart_ident=3&res_ident=84e63a24a975a1474f1c480ee0dff25; on-line *Ulay page*, CV (checked on 12.10.2009): http://www.ulay.net/pdf/ulay_cv.pdf.

³⁴⁹ On-line *Jochen Gerz page*, Biography, Group shows (checked on 12.10.2009):

http://www.gerz.fr/html/04_biography_03.htmlart_ident=3&res_ident=84e63a24a975a1474f1c480ee0dff25.

the circles around these institutes (see chapter 4), he was perhaps informed about or even came in touch with the German artist via this way. In any case, there were clear parallels between the works of Gerz and several tendencies in the Netherlands, which do not seem to be coincidental.

As well as the German Joseph Beuys, the Austrian 'Viennese Actionists' were important founders of life action art. This group – with Günter Brus, Otto Mühl, Hermann Nitsch and Rudolf Schwarzkogler as its central representatives – carried out bloody, theatrical and erotic actions between 1962 and 1970. Their works were characterized by destructive acts onto the human body, such as wounding, disturbance and violence (fig. 27).³⁵⁰ The Actionists wanted to protest against the narrow-minded pragmatism of conservative powers and the hypocrite mentality in Austria. They strived for a liberation of oppressed, human inner drives (such as fears, desires, aggressions and traumas) and tried to break down social, sexual and cultural taboos. To free and 'heal' themselves, the audience and society, the Viennese artists employed the approach of self-mutilation, and executed sacrifice- and redemption rituals.³⁵¹

The therapeutic and ritual approach of the Viennese Actionists, with aggressive and violent elements in it, displays several parallels with the work of some Netherlands-based performance artists in the 1970s. It is very well possible that they were aware of the works of their Viennese predecessors and were influenced by them. Since the Viennese Actionists had been active in the 1960s, their fame had spread well into the 1970s in Europe. In the Netherlands, an extra impulse was given to their name by means of an exhibition program about the group in De Appel in 1976.³⁵² In particular, the performances of Ben d'Armagnac showed similarities to the Viennese actions and more specific to the work of Schwarzkogler (fig. 28). Just like this Viennese artist, D'Armagnac made use of dead animals, body liquids, bandages, self-analysis and ritual elements in his works. An important difference is, however, that Schwarzkogler only directed his actions – often in front of a photo camera –, while the Dutchman performed himself with the presence of an audience.³⁵³ In spite of the clear parallels with the Viennese Actionists, D'Armagnac himself stated not to feel any connection to the group.³⁵⁴ A possible explanation for this denial can be the different purposes of the noisy and undermining works of the Actionists on the one hand, and the personal and sensitive performances of D'Armagnac on the other hand.

In contrast to D'Armagnac, the artist Servie Janssen did not hide his admiration for the Actionists and even made a video work titled *Zwarte kogel – in memory of Rudolf Schwarzkogler* (1973), in which he used bandages and dead animals.³⁵⁵ One may assume, that the Viennese artists also exerted a certain influence on Janssen's performance work, since he examined the work of the Actionists extensively.³⁵⁶ Also, Puckey and Larson based their energetic, therapeutic and collective projects on the works of the Viennese Actionism.³⁵⁷ Although there were not so many direct moments of contact between the Netherlands-based performance artists and their Viennese 'colleagues' – also because the Actionists had been active in the 1960s –, the artists in the Netherlands were well informed about their works via other ways. Therefore, the Viennese artists have stimulated a few important tendencies in the performance art in the Netherlands.

As mentioned before, the works of Netherlands-based performance artists also revealed some interfaces with the tradition of the European body artists who were active between 1968 and 1975 (see also sections 1.1. and 2.4.). These parallels were not only related to the execution of bodily

³⁵⁰ Klocker 1988-1989, p. 44; Zell 2000, pp. 22-23.

³⁵¹ See also Buchloh 2004, pp. 464-469; Wilson 1996, pp. 513-514.

³⁵² Barten 1978, pp. 78-98; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 90-93.

³⁵³ See also Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 72-73.

³⁵⁴ Wijers 1995, p. 14.

³⁵⁵ See on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Servie Janssen, Works, *Zwarte kogel* (checked on 12.10.2009):

<http://catalogue.nimk.nl/>.

³⁵⁶ Wijers 1995, pp. 105-106.

³⁵⁷ See information sheet of Galerie nächst St. Stephan, RKD, PDO, Buitenlandse Kunstenaars, folder 'Reindeer Werk'.

examinations and the integration of risks, pain and danger, but also to an introspective character and the focus on existential questions. Furthermore, 'Body art' was characterized by a search for personal identity, freedom, awakening and spirituality, and a break with personal and social conflicts, boundaries and restrictions.³⁵⁸ These elements were also discernable in the later performance art. In particular the work of the French body artist Gina Pane displayed resemblances with the performance art in the Netherlands. Pane's body actions were characterized by the utilization of pain, self-mutilation, ritual acts and risks, but also by the use of symbolic attributes and costumes (to adopt another identity) (fig. 29). In addition, with her works she searched for a connection with an autobiographical context and focused in particular on the female elements in it.³⁵⁹ These elements also characterize the works of artists such as Ben d'Armagnac, Lydia Schouten and Ulay and Abramović. In 1975, Pane visited the Netherlands to carry out a performance in De Appel.³⁶⁰ This created a possibility for artistic exchange between her and the performance artists there.

Considering the interfaces between 'Body art' and the later performance art, the issue of identity plays a particular part in both traditions. However, identity politics also took up a prominent position in the European movement of Transformer art, represented by artists such as Urs Lüthi, Luciano Castelli, Jürgen Klauke and Luigi Ontani. Transformer artists questioned the boundaries of male and female identity determined by society, with the help of role exchange, disguise and sexual ambiguities (fig. 30). They related identity particularly to outward appearances, which created the possibility to adopt other identities during their performances. Often these identity changes resulted in a travesty act, to underline the ideal of androgyny.³⁶¹ The characteristics of Transformer art, returned in particular in the work of Wally Stevens and in some of Ulay's early solo performances.³⁶² But also more general, the movement of Transformer art reveals some interfaces with the performance art in the Netherlands and its focus on identity and disguise. These interfaces can partly be explained by the fact that De Appel paid much attention to Transformer art in its program of 1975.³⁶³ Several important Transformer artists such as Klauke, Ontani and Castelli, executed a performance in the art centre.

It must be noted at this point that the parallels mentioned above principally relate to Western European artists and traditions. The performance art as it developed in the Netherlands also must, undoubtedly, have demonstrated several correspondences with the performance art in Eastern Europe that time. For instance, Marina Abramović and Nikolaus Urban were stemming from Eastern Europe. They may have brought certain elements they picked up in their home countries to the Dutch performance scene. Furthermore, two important meetings between artists from the Netherlands and Eastern Europe took place in the 1970s; the manifestation 'I AM' in Warsaw in 1978 and the event 'Works and Words' in De Appel in 1979 (see section 1.4.). During these events there were many opportunities to see each other's work, discuss it and exchange ideas and experiences. Moreover, there is some proof that important foundations for personal relationships and connections were laid between artists and curators during these events.³⁶⁴

In spite of these clear moments of contact, it is difficult to conclude if interaction has taken place and in which fields resemblances can be pointed out between Netherlands-based and Eastern European performance artists. This is particularly difficult since performance art in Eastern Europe in the 1970s is not easy to characterize. Up to the present an extensive research on, or description of

³⁵⁸ See also Mekkinck 1995 (b), p. 45.

³⁵⁹ See on Pane also Mekkinck 1995 (e), p. 237; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 69.

³⁶⁰ Smals had met Pane in Paris during her Europe-journey in 1975 and invited her to carry out a performance in De Appel; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 56-57, 68-69.

³⁶¹ Mekkinck 1995 (b), p. 45; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 61-66; Willink 1979, pp. 63-66.

³⁶² Raemaekers 1993, p. 177; on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Ulay, Works (checked on 12.10.2009): <http://catalogue.nimk.nl/>.

³⁶³ The focus on Transformer artists in De Appel followed from Smals' contact with Peter Gorsen and Jean-Christophe, who were both occupied with exhibitions on Transformer artists; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 60.

³⁶⁴ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 243-255.

this form of art is still lacking. Also, in the art historical literature on performance art, little attention has been paid to the developments in the Eastern part of Europe. Elisabeth Jappe was one of the first authors to give a short description of performance artists and their works in the former communist countries, although this description is (out of necessity) very general.³⁶⁵ In her text, Jappe has underlined that art in Eastern Europe was under surveillance of the state in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, many artists started to work with the ephemeral medium of performance art, which could not be controlled or destroyed by the authorities. In this way, an enormous tradition in the field of performance art could develop in this part of Europe. However, because of the surveillance of the state, little remains or descriptions of performances in that time have survived. There were also distinctions between the various countries in Eastern Europe and even between cities in one country (because travelling and communication was not always possible).

All these aspects obstruct a clear view on, and a characterization of performance art in Eastern Europe in the 1970s. The only characteristics that can be mentioned are social and political criticism and the union of art and life. From reports of the event 'Works and Words' it appears that with respect to these characteristics there were obvious differences between the Netherlands-based and Eastern European artists, which handicapped the interaction.³⁶⁶ To get a clear view on the interfaces between the two groups and the particular exchange between them, further research is needed.

3.2. Interfaces with American performance art

The United States

While the tradition of European performance particularly stemmed from the visual arts, performance in the United States found its origins partly in dance, music and theatre. Consequently, particular skills – such as being able to dance or sing – formed an important basis for performances there. Jappe has stated that, in contrast to the European tradition, the 'typical American' performances tended towards specialization and that artists particularly concentrated on the way *how* the performance was executed.³⁶⁷ RosaLee Goldberg has also emphasized that experiments in the field of dance, music, film and storytelling (all specific skills), were important characteristics of the American performance during the 1970s. This resulted eventually in an entertaining form of performance art, which dissociated itself more and more from the experimental art world.³⁶⁸ Although a more serious form of 'Body art' still existed in the early 1970s, very soon the performance in the United States started to show a strong reference to entertainment, commercial television and broader media issues. Also, performances became more interdisciplinary, narrative, story-oriented and longer in length.³⁶⁹ At first sight, there are no obvious parallels between these American characteristics and the covering tendencies distinguishable in the performance art in the Netherlands in the 1970s. Indeed, the performance art in the Netherlands linked up to a stronger degree to the European tradition. However, when scrutinizing the American performance art more specific, some interesting correspondences with the performance art of Netherlands-based artists can be discerned.

In the 1960s, the United States had been an important cradle for several forms of live art, such as Happening, Fluxus and dance performances. Artists such as Allan Kaprow, Robert Rauschenberg and Robert Morris had executed legendary actions during the 1960s there; actions which have been described above as pre-forms of the 'real' performance of the 1970s.³⁷⁰ The development of performance art in the 1970s, started in the United States with the movement of 'Body art', just like in Europe. According to Goldberg, this early generation of body artists was still strongly rooted in the

³⁶⁵ Jappe 1993, pp. 57-68.

³⁶⁶ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 255.

³⁶⁷ Jappe 1993, pp. 28-32.

³⁶⁸ Goldberg 1979, pp. 111-126; Goldberg 1996, pp. 407-409.

³⁶⁹ See also Gale 1979, p. 7.

³⁷⁰ These pre-forms of the 1960s will not be further scrutinized here.

experimental art world with its philosophical and moral questions, and could only reach a small audience of 'art intelligentsia'.³⁷¹ Like the European 'Body art', the works of the American body artists, displayed several interfaces with the performance art in the Netherlands. These could particularly be discerned in the field of (dangerous) body examinations, but also – on a small scale – with respect to the body in space.³⁷² American body artists such as Bruce Nauman, Dan Graham and Trishia Brown explored the body as an element in space. In the Netherlands, this kind of research appeared in the work of Ulay and Abramović, Nan Hoover and some artists of the 'second generation'. However, the parallels between performance art in the Netherlands and the American 'Body art', especially showed up with relation to the artist Vito Acconci.

In his body works, Acconci trained, wounded and examined his body and its plastic qualities. He modified his individual body in a physical and psychical way.³⁷³ His works had a strong individual and introspective character and the artist remarked about this: "my immediate purpose is not to reach other people but to reach into myself."³⁷⁴ The private world of the artist not only played a prominent part in his bodily examinations, but also in his other performances of the early 1970s. Acconci was especially interested in the interaction between the individual and other people and objects in a particular physical space.³⁷⁵ This led to performances in which the artist created settings, in which the audience became part of his physical space and private world (or the other way around). With these kind of performances Acconci wanted to confirm his own identity and intensify his relation with others.³⁷⁶ In some of his works, he created spaces in which his presence was only *suggested* by means of sound and video. Furthermore, the artist also produced several video works displaying close-ups of his head and its gestures in the early 1970s (fig. 31).

Acconci's introspective examinations of the body and of the tension-field between the private and the public world, presented some clear similarities with the works of Netherlands-based performance artists. Just like the American artist, Gerrit Dekker invited his audience in the physical world of the artist, made use of empty rooms and communicated his presence by means of sound.³⁷⁷ In addition Ulay and Abramović executed several relationship studies and examined the interaction between people, in correspondence to Acconci.³⁷⁸ An autobiographical context, concentrated gestures and the execution of private situations linked up D'Armagnac to the American artist.

The Netherlands-based artists could have been informed about Acconci via periodicals, journeys or stories from others. In addition, a retrospective exhibition of the artist's works was organized by the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1978 and he created a sound-environment in the Netherlands in 1979.³⁷⁹ However, Acconci's action and video works were already on display in De Appel before 1978. There people could watch several video-tapes of his actions, on request or during a video-night in 1977.³⁸⁰ As a direct consequence of this, D'Armagnac made a confronting and enlarging video recording of himself while he tried to vomit, after he had seen the private, frontal and concentrated gestures of Acconci on videotapes in De Appel in 1976 (video 13).³⁸¹ Also, Dekker's video documentation of a performance in 1977 in which he constantly moves his eyes ups and down,

³⁷¹ Goldberg 1984, pp. 73-77.

³⁷² Goldberg 1979, pp. 103-104.

³⁷³ See also Haks and Van Straaten 1971, pp. 195-1999; Pluchart 1984, p. 127.

³⁷⁴ Haks and Van Straaten 1971, p. 195.

³⁷⁵ Goldberg 1979, pp. 100-101.

³⁷⁶ See also Haks and Van Straaten 1971, pp. 195-1999; Jones 1998, pp. 103-150.

³⁷⁷ Compare Dekker's performances at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1977), at the Brooklyn Museum, New York (1977) and at the Gemeentemuseum, The Hague (1978), and Acconci's *Association Area* (1971); see also Von Graevenitz 1978 (a), pp. 58-59; Haks and Van Straaten 1971, p. 199.

³⁷⁸ Compare Ulay and Abramović' Relation works in particular to Acconci's *Three relationship studies* (1970).

³⁷⁹ Petersen 1982 (a), p. 39; the sound-environment was called the *Peoplemobile* and was located at five different places in the Netherlands; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 214-215.

³⁸⁰ Videos of Acconci on display in De Appel in the 1970s: *Home movies* (1973), *Indirect approaches* (1973), *Full circle* (1973), *Theme song* (1973), *Come back* (1973), *Shooting* (1973), *Cowboy* (1974), *Turn* (1974), *Mouth* (1974); Barten 1978, p. 35.

³⁸¹ Wijers 1995, pp. 13, 144-145; compare in particular D'Armagnac's video from 1976 and Acconci's video *Mouth* (1974), which was available in De Appel.

is most likely inspired by Acconci's close-up videos (video 4).³⁸² These examples underline that the work of Acconci had indeed a stimulating effect in the Netherlands. In the video room of De Appel, also recorded live actions of American artists such as Allan Kaprow, Bruce Nauman and Dennis Oppenheim could be watched.³⁸³

Next to the early generation of body artists, Goldberg has pointed out a second generation of performance artists in the United States. Just like their mentors, this younger generation indulged in "personal histories, sentimentality and 'everyday life'."³⁸⁴ However, they added narrative and sequential presentations to it and started to resemble traditional performance modes (such as theatre, cabaret and comedy). Furthermore, the second generation provided intelligent and provocative entertainment, and started to apply various (mass) media in their interdisciplinary works. With this they entered the domain of popular culture and reached a larger and more general audience.³⁸⁵

The second generation of American performance artists in the 1970s, mainly consisted of female artists such as Laurie Anderson, Julia Heyward, Hannah Wilke, Martha Wilson and Betsy Damon. In the United States, a large group of women – on the East and the West Coast – was occupied with the medium of performance art. The tradition developed by these performance artists was, in the first place, characterized by an autobiographical character. Female artists were basically responsible for introducing and developing personal performances in the United States.³⁸⁶ By means of an autobiographical content, personal stories and self-made characters, the female performance artists could portray elements of women's life and raise female issues. The autobiographical content was often combined with elements of myth, ritual and fantasy, which were particularly related to the history of women (fig. 32). The female artists employed, for instance, aspects of medieval witchcraft, practices from sacred female rites and images of goddesses as sources of inspiration for their own ritual performances.³⁸⁷ In relation to this, they used an extended range of ancient, ritual and mythic symbols, materials and attributes. Another characteristic of the American female performance art was the utilization of works to comment upon social issues and in particular to express feminist ideas; sometimes this even led to feminist activism.³⁸⁸

This tradition of female performance art proves that the autobiographical and personal character of performances not only played an important part in the Netherlands, but also in the United States. In addition, the works of Netherlands-based artists displayed similarities to this American tradition regarding the utilization of ritual, mythical and symbolic elements. Also, in the Netherlands several artists commented upon social issues, although feminist engagement was not widely spread. The interfaces between the American and Dutch tendencies can partly be explained by the fact that several American female artists visited the Netherlands in the 1970s.³⁸⁹ They got the chance to carry out a performance in De Appel or Corps de Garde since 1976, and some of them also participated in the event 'Feminist Art International' in 1978 (see section 1.4.).³⁹⁰ These moments of contact may have caused a form of interaction between the American and Netherlands-based artists. Also, the artist Ulrike Rosenbach was most likely an important intermediary between the two groups, since she had close connections with the American feminist artists and, as mentioned, also visited the Netherlands regularly.

³⁸² Documentation video of performance at the Bonnefantenmuseum, 1977; resembles in particular Acconci's videos *Mouth* (1974), *Eye control* (1971) and *Watch* (1971).

³⁸³ Ruhé 1982, p. 43; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 61.

³⁸⁴ Goldberg 1984, p. 73.

³⁸⁵ Goldberg 1984, pp. 72-94.

³⁸⁶ Roth 1983, p. 21.

³⁸⁷ Roth 1983, pp. 22-27; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 45.

³⁸⁸ Roth 1983, pp. 28-32.

³⁸⁹ Among them Laurie Anderson, Julia Heyward, Martha Wilson, Betsy Damon, Alison Knowles and Jana Haimsohn.

³⁹⁰ Infosheets Corps de Garde, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Groningen B-E, folder 'Corps de Garde'; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 142-144, 237.

The second generation of American performance artists not only introduced a particular female and personal content, but also broke a lance for a form of entertaining performance, intended for a larger audience. The artists – both male and female – produced performances combined with singing, dancing, story-telling and cabaret (fig. 33); in correspondence to their own cultural period full of rock music, Hollywood movies, soap opera and theatre.³⁹¹ This development to forms of real entertainment stayed out in the Netherlands in the 1970s.³⁹² Nevertheless, aspects of dance, role-playing and playful cabaret entered the world of Dutch performance, via the works of Samsom, Cardena, Marroquin and Hoover. Marroquin and Cardena were even able to leave the art world occasionally and integrated their performance work in the popular culture of film and television.³⁹³ The popular, narrative and entertaining elements in the work of Netherlands-based performance artists were, thus, in accordance with the American tradition of performance art. Artists such as Samsom and Nan Hoover were acquainted with this tradition, since Samsom partly lived in the United States and Hoover was born there. In addition, well into the 1970s many American performance artists also visited the Netherlands. They found a podium in De Appel, Corps de Garde and in Agora Studio, institutes which all demonstrated a certain interest in the American performances.³⁹⁴ In this way American and Netherlands-based artists could meet and learn from each other.

Part of the narrative and entertaining tradition in American performance, was the use of costumes. From a very early stage, American performance artists dealt with costumes to adopt another identity or to play a particular character.³⁹⁵ This was, for example, clearly visible in the work of the artist James Lee Byars (1932-1997). During his performances, Byars presented himself as a magician,³⁹⁶ dressed in a black, white or golden costume, with a blindfold, a top hat or a golden staff (fig. 34). This kind of costume-use also became a frequently returning element in the works of performance artists in the Netherlands. Together with some other American performance artists, Byars may have been a great stimulus to this development. Since 1973 he carried out his most important performances in Western Europe and already in 1975 he visited the Netherlands and executed several performances there.³⁹⁷

In the United States an important impulse was also given to the integration of visual (mass) media in performances. Artists such as Dan Graham, Laurie Anderson and Vito Acconci experimented with television, film and video equipment, often employed in a multimedia performance. The media were, on the one side, simply used to visualize and transfer ideas and inventions. On the other side, the artists tried to clarify the working of television, radio and video or applied media to criticize the media and consumer culture.³⁹⁸ Several artists also dealt with video equipment to study perception and the active and passive conduct of the viewer. In relation to that, they tried to create heightened consciousness and produce new views on reality among the spectators. The subtle analysis and use of visual media was also present in the work of several Netherlands-based performance artists, such as Cardena, Marroquin, Bloom and Hoover (fig. 35). Certainly, a form of interaction took place between these artists and their American colleagues, who could see each other's works in several ways, as explained above.

In the same way, a certain form of exchange likely took place in the field of sound media. American artists such as Nauman, Acconci, Anderson and Charlemagne Palestine integrated various aspects of sound and sound media in their performance work. Anderson constructed an assortment

³⁹¹ Goldberg 1979, pp. 117-120.

³⁹² This development is only present in the oeuvre of Monique Toebosch and the performance work of the 1980s.

³⁹³ See for instance Cardena's television film *Somos Libres!?* (1981) and Marroquin's television series *Superbman's Last Adventures* and television project *The Link* (1981); Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 286-288.

³⁹⁴ See Wynia 1981; infosheets Corps de Garde, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Groningen B-E, folder 'Corps de Garde'; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 142-144; Van Straaten 1975, p. 129; Kusters 1991; *Agora* 1975; program sheets Agora, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder 'Agora'.

³⁹⁵ Goldberg 1979, p. 117; Goldberg 1984, pp. 79-80.

³⁹⁶ Byars was a pupil of Joseph Beuys, which explains his magic and shamanic appearance.

³⁹⁷ Ruhé 1982, pp. 44-45; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 66-68.

³⁹⁸ Von Graevenitz 1982, p. 64.

of strange musical instruments for subsequent performances or used recorded words in her works.³⁹⁹ Acconci particularly used recording tapes of his own voice, while Nauman dealt with monotonous and repeating sounds of footsteps and drums.⁴⁰⁰ The artist Charlemagne Palestine, who visited both De Appel and Corps de Garde in the 1970s, was in particular known as a sound performer. He created sounds and music by means of his own voice and utilized the space and the movement of his body to influence the produced sounds (fig. 36).⁴⁰¹ Several interfaces can be pointed out between these American artists and Netherlands-based artists such as Janssen, Dekker and De Kroon.

Latin America

Next to artists from the United States who visited or settled down in the Netherlands, various Latin American artists also resided in the country; among them Ulises Carrión (born in Mexico), Raúl Marroquin and Michel Cardena (both born in Colombia). These artists were most likely acquainted with the art traditions and artists in their home-countries, maintained contacts there and could have brought along Latin American elements to the Dutch performance scene. They also seem to have stimulated Agora Studio in Maastricht to get in touch with artists and institutes in Latin America, and to organize several events concerning Latin American art.⁴⁰² The presence of Latin American artists are, consequently, a possible explanation for some interfaces between particular forms of 'action art' in Latin America and the performance art in the Netherlands.

Up until today, little is known about performance art in Latin America. In the art historical literature on performance art the focus is on the main centres of art in North America and Europe, and not on the periphery, Latin America included. Furthermore, as far as the information about art in the South of America is available, there are no clear indications that artists there were engaged in what has been described here as 'real' performance art. However, that does not mean that no 'live art' or 'action art' took place there. In particular in the tradition of conceptualism in Latin America in the 1960s and 1970s, forms of 'live art' could arise.⁴⁰³ Proceeding from a political activism, the conceptual artists there, tried to effect political and social change with their works of art. One of the ways to do so, was by means of happenings and artistic events, which reappeared in practically all countries in Latin America.⁴⁰⁴ These events were characterized by creative and active resistance, the utilization of mass media to reach a large audience, and an interrelation of art and social issues.⁴⁰⁵ In addition, the use of costumes, the employment of actors and a playful spirit played a particular part in the live art traditions in Latin America.⁴⁰⁶

The artistic events in Latin America displayed several parallels to the performances of Netherlands-based artists. For instance, the interrelation of art and social issues was also present in the works of artists such as Van der Weide, Janssen and Cardena; although this social engagement evidently arose in a totally different social and political climate as in Latin America.⁴⁰⁷ In addition, the utilization of mass media appeared in the works of performance artists in the Netherlands; in the case of Marroquin and Cardena also to reach a broader audience. Furthermore, the use of actors and dancers, and the playful approach in the works of some Netherlands-based artists can be related to the traditions in Latin America. In the last place, the creation of fictional characters was a returning phenomenon in the conceptual art in Latin America; both in literature and visual art.⁴⁰⁸ This

³⁹⁹ Goldberg 1979, p. 112.

⁴⁰⁰ Vito Acconci 1996, p. 113; Mekking 1995 (d), p. 220.

⁴⁰¹ Ruhé 1982, p. 45.

⁴⁰² See correspondence and programs Agora Studio, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder 'Agora'.

⁴⁰³ See on conceptualism in Latin America Camnitzer 2007; Ramírez 1993.

⁴⁰⁴ Camnitzer 2007, pp. 1-36, 61.

⁴⁰⁵ An important example to these artistic events also were the political events of the guerilla group of the Tupamaros in Uruguay; see Camnitzer 2007, pp. 44-59.

⁴⁰⁶ See also the work of the Brazilian artists Lygia Clark (1920-1988) and Hélio Oiticica (1937-1980); Brett 1993, pp. 100-104; Brett 1989, pp. 268-269; Camnitzer 2007, p. 168.

⁴⁰⁷ Also several interfaces are to be discerned between the artistic events in Latin America and the Happenings and Provo-events in the Netherlands in the 1960s.

⁴⁰⁸ Camnitzer 2007, p. 119.

phenomenon was also present in the works of several performance artists in the Netherlands such as Samsom, Van Es and Marroquin, often combined with costume-use. The Latin American artists Cardena and Marroquin seem to have played a particular part with regard to these parallels. However, to gain more insight into the links between performance traditions in Latin America and the Netherlands, and the particular exchange between the various countries, further research is needed

3.3. Final observations

Considering the interfaces emphasized above, it can be concluded that the performance art developed by artists living in the Netherlands to a large extent run parallel to international tendencies. With a focus on identity problems, (dangerous) body examinations, media culture and social behaviour, and an autobiographical, therapeutic, ritual and investigating approach, the artists linked up to international performance qualities. Regarding Europe, it were in particular the performance artists from German-speaking countries that revealed similarities to the artists in the Netherlands. These interfaces were mainly present in the fields of therapeutic, ritual and masochistic aspects, and the examination of boundaries, social behaviour and identity. Also, it can be concluded that the 'serious' category of performance art in the Netherlands particularly connected to the European tradition. The 'European' parallels can be partly explained by the fact that performance artists in the Netherlands were well informed about developments in European performance art. In particular De Appel played a prominent part in this, with a program that gave a good survey of European performance during the first years. According to a report written on behalf of the Amsterdam counsel of art in 1978, De Appel in particular gave a good image of current developments in Switzerland, West-Germany and Austria. In addition, several meetings between European performance artists from different countries could take place in art centers and at festivals, in the Netherlands or abroad.

Furthermore, it has been revealed that performance art in the Netherlands run parallel to American performance tendencies. These interfaces particularly showed up with regard to the female performance tradition in America, with its ritual, symbolic and autobiographical characteristics. Next to that, to a certain degree, in the field of entertaining performance (with dance, sound, role-playing and costumes) some interesting similarities between artists in the Netherlands and the United States can be discerned. The same applies to the use of communication media and references to the media world. With respect to these interfaces, one can say that the more entertaining category of performance art, particularly linked up to tendencies in the United States. However, on a more 'serious' level there were also resemblances to the work of especially Vito Acconci. In the course of the 1970s, in the Netherlands more and more attention was paid to the American performance art. De Appel, Corps de Garde and Agora Studio all had close relations with American artists and invited them to perform in the Netherlands. Following their tracks, also the more traditional art institutes such as museums and galleries started to show an interest in these American artists.⁴⁰⁹ This growing interest and the close relations can explain the interfaces between Netherlands-based and American performance artists. Moreover, there was some interest in the art in Latin America and several parallels to forms of 'live art' there have been pointed out. These appeared in particular in the fields of social issues, mass media, costumes, fictional characters, playful positions and the use of actors and dancers. The Latin American artists living in the Netherlands seem to have played an important part in this (see also section 4.2.).

On the base of the many international interfaces, it can be concluded that most of the characteristics of performance art in the Netherlands were not 'unique' for the country. Nevertheless, in spite of the resemblances to other countries, the qualities mentioned in chapter 2 can still be considered characteristic and typical of Dutch performance art. After all, in particular

⁴⁰⁹ For example the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam invited Lucinda Childs, Buky Grinberg and Vito Acconci in the second half of the 1970s; Petersen 1982 (a), pp. 33-42.

these elements could find support and become frequently used in the Netherlands, and were therefore characteristic of the performances there. Furthermore, several qualities could develop independently from international influences, within the specific context of the Netherlands. For example, the personal and autobiographical context of performances, became a typical characteristic of performance art in the Netherlands and was having a broad support there, compared to other countries. Although autobiographical issues also appeared in other countries, some particular Dutch factors stimulated this aspect in the Netherlands (see also chapter 4). In addition, the performance artists living in the Netherlands gave a new impulse to therapeutic and ritual performances, but also to the element of trial within a performance. The use of specific materials and attributes also formed a typical tradition in the Netherlands. For instance, elements such as furniture, water and sand or powders returned frequently in performances in the Netherlands – more as in other countries – and developed to a particular Dutch characteristic. A new meaning was also given to research on human behaviour and human relations in performances; such as executed by Ulay and Abramović, Nikolaus Urban and Gerrit Dekker. Moreover, regarding the exploration of possibilities of video and film in performances, of a lot of pioneers work has been done in the Netherlands, by artists such as Hoover, Cardena and Marroquin.

Thus, the Dutch performance scene was, on the one hand, characterized by openness to international influences. The Netherlands was an important transit land for contemporary tendencies. On the other hand, Netherlands-based artists were also capable of giving new impulses to particular performance qualities, which therefore became typical 'Dutch'.

In this chapter, the interfaces between performance art in the Netherlands and international developments have become clear. Furthermore, it has been emphasized that these interfaces could arise partly as a result of direct and indirect influencing or interaction, via exhibitions, periodicals, videos, stories and incidental meetings between artists. In particular the incidental meetings between Netherlands-based artists and artists from abroad seem to have caused a form of artistic exchange, and can be interpreted as important stimuli for specific tendencies in the performance art in the Netherlands.

Considering these *incidental contacts* between Netherlands-based and foreign artists and the mutual exchange resulting from that, the question arises to what extent there was interaction among the Netherlands-based artists themselves. Which contacts and relationships existed among the performance artists living and working in the Netherlands in the 1970s and what were the consequences of these? Are there explanations to be found in these *structural relation networks* for the tendencies and characteristics in the performance art in the Netherlands; in particular for those which developed independently from international tendencies? In the next chapter the focus will therefore be on the structural relation networks among Netherlands-based artists.

4. Structural relation networks

As discussed in section 1.3., there was a regular group of performance artists active in the Netherlands, consisting of both Dutch and foreign artists. Since these artists all performed on a regular base, they had the chance to meet each other occasionally on locations and at events where podia for performance art were offered. In this way, the Netherlands-based performance artists were informed about each other's works and even friendships and structural contacts could develop. The structural relationships among performance artists could lead to forms of interaction and are, therefore, a possible explanation for the returning characteristics and a certain homogeneity in the performance art in the Netherlands. Below, an outline will be given of different structural relation networks among the Netherlands-based performance artists and the mutual exchange resulting from that.

4.1. The circle around Ben d'Armagnac

Ben d'Armagnac defined the Dutch performance art to a great degree.⁴¹⁰ He was a pioneer in the field of performance art and also had a certain influence on other performance artists of his generation. D'Armagnac's friend and biographer Louwrien Wijers has written about this: 'Both in the places where he lived in the period he executed performances, and during performance festivals, where he worked together with other artists for a longer period, Ben d'Armagnac exerted an influence on other people around him.'⁴¹¹ This influence was in his case mainly possible because he maintained many contacts with other artists. However, before D'Armagnac passed on his ideas to other artists, he himself had been influenced by the intensive contact with the artist Anton Heyboer (1924-2005).⁴¹²

In 1965 D'Armagnac frequently visited Anton and Maria Heyboer in Den IJp, and even lived there for a while. In Den IJp, Heyboer – who was schooled in his attitude as an artist by Henri Frédéric Boot (1877-1963) – lived in a stubborn way in a barn, surrounded by cars, stoves, driftwood and animals. Later, also several women came to live with him. During his stay with Heyboer in 1965, D'Armagnac was formed as both an artist and a person.⁴¹³ The working-method and the way of living the young artist experienced there, were inseparably related to each other.

⁴¹⁰ See also Van Mechelen 2006, p. 73.

⁴¹¹ Cited and translated from Wijers 1995, p. 14: "Zowel op de plekken waar hij woonde in de periode dat hij performances deed, als tijdens performance-festivals, waar hij langere tijd samen met andere kunstenaars werkte, oefende Ben d'Armagnac grote invloed uit op de mensen om hem heen." It must be noted that Wijers was a personal friend of D'Armagnac, which may have influenced her vision on his work and position.

⁴¹² Wijers 1995, p. 7.

⁴¹³ Wijers 1995, pp. 41, 43-44.

In the first place, Heyboer, who was a graphic artist and painter himself, learned his pupils to make art starting from their personal, emotional life. A work of art had to carry highly personal feelings, thoughts and experiences, which were to be found in the individual self. In addition to that, Heyboer preached to live and work in 'absolute positivity'. A work of art should have a positive radiation, based on liberating direct perception and an intuitive truth. In real life, the aspect of 'absolute positivity' meant a respectful association with other people, full of honesty and purity. Another important credo in this lifestyle was to be yourself as much as possible, by means of pure instinctive acting and reacting. Heyboer's existentialistic life philosophy was, thus, characterized by individual freedom, individual responsibility and subjectivism. He also propagated an individual struggle against a changing and technical western society, and an aversion against the world. As a pioneer of a mentality that sought a total withdrawal from urban life, Heyboer retreated in nature and concentrated on his inner self and human relationships.⁴¹⁴

Ben d'Armagnac largely adopted the working-method and life philosophy of Anton Heyboer. This appears from several characteristics in his life and work. In imitation of Heyboer, the younger artist translated his own personal feelings and experiences in his work and 'exposed' himself with his performances. Furthermore, D'Armagnac's life and work were characterized by a positive radiation, full of respect, purity and honesty. He tried to act and react instinctively and focused on the existential freedom of the individual, to find himself and to get along with the world; which he experienced as his individual struggle with society and the world.⁴¹⁵ On a more practical level, D'Armagnac followed Heyboer by wearing typical costumes (also in daily life), shaving his head, developing love relationships with several women at the same time and living a secluded life.⁴¹⁶ Consequently, several elements from the life- and art philosophy of Anton Heyboer entered the scene of performance art in the Netherlands via Ben d'Armagnac.⁴¹⁷ The personal base of an artwork, the instinctive acting and the struggle of the individual were in particular transmitted to other performance artists. This line of transmission, via contacts with other artists was, in the first place, discernable in the case of Gerrit Dekker.

Directly after his departure from Den IJp in 1965, D'Armagnac visited the artist Gerrit Dekker, who he knew from the Graphic School in Amsterdam since 1957. From that moment, the two artists remained close friends and continued to live and work in intense collaboration until the end of D'Armagnac's life.⁴¹⁸ The cooperation between the two artists caused an exchange of ideas, in particular from D'Armagnac directed to Dekker.⁴¹⁹ Very soon after their reunion, Dekker also shaved his head and began to wear self-made costumes.⁴²⁰ He moved with D'Armagnac to Zeeland in the South-West of the Netherlands, where the artists worked closely together in the same style, using nature as their central source of inspiration.⁴²¹ Via D'Armagnac, Dekker also got acquainted with the range of thoughts of Heyboer. Dekker has said about this: '[...] Ben told pretty much about Heyboer [...] and about the aversion to the world. That was very interesting to me.'⁴²² Furthermore, D'Armagnac inspired Dekker to carry out performances. In relation to these performances, Dekker particularly adopted the existential ideas of Heyboer and executed a personal content in imitation of D'Armagnac. Therefore, Dekker's works were also a personal struggle, in order to become himself as much as possible and to live in freedom and honesty with others.⁴²³

⁴¹⁴ See on Heyboer and his way of working and living also Zutter 1972, p. 21; Wijers 1995, pp. 10, 15, 39-44; Goerres 2000; Thompson 2000, p. 56.

⁴¹⁵ See also Blok 1994, p. 182; Goerres 2000.

⁴¹⁶ Wijers 1995, pp. 44, 45, 50, 77.

⁴¹⁷ Wijers 1995, p. 15.

⁴¹⁸ Thompson 2000, p. 56.

⁴¹⁹ See also Heyting 1975; Brand and Dekker 1988.

⁴²⁰ Heyting 1975.

⁴²¹ Zutter 1972, p. 21; Brand and Dekker 1988; Wijers 1995, pp. 49-76.

⁴²² Wijers 1995, p. 45: "[...] Ben [heeft] vrij veel verteld over Heyboer. Hij heeft verteld over het kippenhok en de ratten, en over de afkeer van de wereld. Dat was voor mij heel interessant."

⁴²³ Gachnang 1974 (a), pp. 46, 50.

Next to Dekker and D'Armagnac, there were several other artists who displayed a similar life and work development. The artists Hannes van Es (1950-2002), Hans de Vries (1947) and Louwrien Wijers (1941) were also influenced by the ideas of Heyboer.⁴²⁴ In addition, this group was strongly attracted to the life and work of D'Armagnac, who they saw as an important representative of Heyboer's range of thought. For example, Hannes van Es was a friend of D'Armagnac and carried out some works in imitation of D'Armagnac's performances.⁴²⁵ Louwrien Wijers was in another way closely related to the life and work of D'Armagnac. She was one of his wives, worked together with him and was present during most of his performances (also in order to describe them).⁴²⁶ As an artist and a writer, Wijers was well informed about international art developments and had visited the United States several times. Furthermore, she knew and met with several important performance artists from abroad.⁴²⁷ It is very likely, that Wijers informed D'Armagnac about international art developments and artists, and influenced him with her knowledge and contacts. She was, for example, impressed by the work of Acconci and Beuys;⁴²⁸ a preference which can also be discerned in the case of D'Armagnac. Although D'Armagnac, Dekker, Wijers, Van Es and De Vries were not all performance artists, they were related to each other and informed about each other's work and life.⁴²⁹ This caused a form interaction in the field of existential and artistic ideas.

D'Armagnac was not only surrounded by the group of Heyboer-followers. The artist also gathered around him a circle of friends and colleagues consisting of 'hard core' performance artists. In any case, Gerrit Dekker, Ulay and Abramović and Reindeer Werk belonged to this group. They performed frequently at the same occasions – in the Netherlands and abroad – where they could meet and get to know each other. The existence of this group of friends also appears from a statement of Marina Abramović concerning the death of D'Armagnac: "His death brought a completely different atmosphere in the group of friends. We [Ulay and Abramović] immediately left Holland, and also others started to travel, like Gerrit Dekker who went to live in India."⁴³⁰ Furthermore, Ulay underlined during an interview that 'Ben left a group behind.'⁴³¹ D'Armagnac was also an important point of reference to Ulay: 'Ben knew much more about performance than me, thus now I miss that reference.'⁴³² According to Wijers, Reindeer Werk even settled in the Netherlands in 1977, because they were attracted by D'Armagnac. During D'Armagnac's last performance Thom Puckey said: "We should think of him as a saint."⁴³³ All these statements seem to underline a structural relation network, with a central role for D'Armagnac.

Via the relations between D'Armagnac, Dekker, Ulay, Abramović and Reindeer Werk, a certain interaction could arise and the artists could adopt particular qualities from each other. Their works display several similarities in the fields of a personal content, physical and psychical tests, research on human behaviour and relationships, and the use of therapeutic and ritual elements; elements that all took up an important position in performance art in the Netherlands. These similarities seem to underline a mutual exchange among the friends; they stimulated each other to develop these qualities. It is not always easy to determine who influenced who with relation to particular parallels. However, in the case of this group, some elements can particularly be traced back to one of the artists, who may have inspired the others with it. For instance, the personal approach found its roots largely in the performance work of D'Armagnac, the central player of the group. In imitation of him, not only Dekker, but also Ulay and Abramović focused on their personal experiences, personal boundaries and personal relationships. Furthermore, Ulay and Abramović gave

⁴²⁴ Gachnang 1974 (b). pp. 1-5; Wijers 1995, p. 15.

⁴²⁵ Smolders 1988.

⁴²⁶ Goerres 2000; Wijers 1995, pp. 77-78.

⁴²⁷ For instance, Wijers met Joseph Beuys, Robert Rauschenberg, Luigi Ontani and Vito Acconci; *Louwrien Wijers* 1980, pp. 2-4; Goerres 2000.

⁴²⁸ *Louwrien Wijers* 1980, p. 4.

⁴²⁹ See also Gachnang 1974 (b), pp. 1-5; Wijers 1995, chapter 4-7.

⁴³⁰ Wijers 1995, p. 14.

⁴³¹ Wijers 1995, p. 14: "Ben heeft een groep achtergelaten."

⁴³² Wijers 1995, p. 14: "Ben wist veel meer dan ik over performance, dus nu mis ik die referentie."

⁴³³ Wijers 1995, p. 16.

an impulse among the group to the research on relationships between human beings. In 1977 Dekker also started to research his relation to other people, for instance by walking through a space until he felt the resistance of another human being.⁴³⁴ The 'Relation works' of Ulay and Abramović were possibly an important example to him. Reindeer Werk also began to focus on the relation networks among people in their workshops, after their arrival in the Netherlands. In all probability, it was also Marina Abramović who particularly stimulated the examination of physical and mental boundaries among the small group of colleagues and friends. While still living in Yugoslavia, Abramović had focused on a break of physical and mental boundaries, which she further developed together with Ulay.⁴³⁵ The artist duo Reindeer Werk, on the other hand, seem to have exerted a certain influence on the other artists with their psychological focus on human behaviour. They had developed this form of 'behaviour art' already in England before they brought it to the Netherlands.⁴³⁶ Thus, these artists all had their own agendas and points of interest, with which they could influence other performance artists, and in particular their close friends and colleagues.⁴³⁷

In addition to the parallels and mutual exchange among the group around D'Armagnac, it is remarkable that in particular these six artists can be associated with the 'serious' category of performance art in the Netherlands. Their common characteristics are mainly related to this category and they – with D'Armagnac, Ulay and Abramović in the lead – seem to have determined the identity of performance art *pur sang* to a great extent.⁴³⁸ This underlines that these artists, who had structural and close relations with each other, also stimulated one another to move into the same, more 'serious' direction of performance art.

Interaction in the field of the above-mentioned characteristics and the influence of artists such as Ulay, Abramović and D'Armagnac, evidently reached further than their small group of friends. For example, in the work of De Kroon, Schouten and Janssen, several parallels to the performances of Ben d'Armagnac can be discerned. They all contributed to particular traditions that were stamped by D'Armagnac: a personal content, a ritual and therapeutic attitude, a form of struggle during a performance and the use of symbolic attributes and materials, such as water and sand. These interfaces suggest a form of exchange among Ben d'Armagnac and the three other artists. Since these artists all belonged to the 'core group' of performance artists in the Netherlands, one can assume that they were acquainted with, and adopted from each other's work. For instance, already during his period at the academy in Maastricht, Servie Janssen got in touch with the work of Ben d'Armagnac. Between 1973 and 1977 D'Armagnac lived in Maastricht and influenced several students of the Jan van Eyck Academie there, among them also Raúl Marroquin and Marjo Schumans.⁴³⁹ This latter was even one of D'Armagnac's girlfriends for a while.⁴⁴⁰ In imitation of her friend, Schumans shaved her head and carried out performances with a very personal content, in this period.

4.2. The circle around the Latin American artists in the Netherlands

Next to the circle around Ben d'Armagnac, another circle of artists could be discerned among the Netherlands-based performance artists. While the above-mentioned group of friends formed a mix of Dutch and foreign artists, this circle mainly consisted of foreign artists living in the Netherlands. The circle centred around the three Latin American artists Ulises Carrión, Michel Cardena and Raúl

⁴³⁴ Performance at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, 1977; Von Graeventiz et al. 1978 (c), p. 58.

⁴³⁵ See also on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Marina Abramovic, Works (checked on 14.10.2009):

<http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/artist.php?id=4498>; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 61-63, 80-83; Raemaekers 1993, p. 177.

⁴³⁶ Van Duyn and De Graaf 1988, p. 44.

⁴³⁷ See also Wijers 1995, pp. 14-16.

⁴³⁸ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 74; Jappe during a lecture in Amsterdam 1993, cited in Wijers 1995, p. 14: "Ben d'Armagnac en Marina Abramović & Ulay, de belangrijkste Europese performance-kunstenaars, hebben het karakter ervan gevormd." (Ben d'Armagnac and Marina Abramović & Ulay, the most important European performance artists, have shaped its character.)

⁴³⁹ Wijers 1995, pp. 104-109, 124; Van Mechelen 2006, p. 41.

⁴⁴⁰ Wijers 1995, pp. 134, 141.

Marroquin, who got in touch around 1972, when they formed a collective to establish the In-Out Center.⁴⁴¹ But also after that, the Latin Americans stayed closely connected and acquainted with each other's work.⁴⁴²

The works of the three Latin American artists displayed several interfaces, which seems to indicate a particular form of interaction between them. In the first place, they were all occupied with new and experimental forms of art, with a specific focus on performance art on the part of Cardena and Marroquin. Remarkably, the performance work of these two Latin Americans revealed a lightly, playful and often ironic attitude.⁴⁴³ The performances of both artists were, in addition, characterized by the utilization of various media (also for media research), costumes, fictional characters, narrative structures, social issues, actors or dancers and elements of entertainment (see chapter 2). On the one hand, these qualities were partly related to the traditions of performance art in the United States. In the previous chapter it has been explained that the artists in the Netherlands could get informed about American performance art in several art institutions, such as De Appel and Agora Studio. On the other hand, however, the characteristics of their performances were related to the 'live art' traditions in Latin America (see section 3.2.). Cardena and Marroquin, both seem to have stuck to several artistic qualities from the continent they were born and raised at. Probably, they got in touch with these characteristics when they still lived in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s,⁴⁴⁴ or they were informed about it via contacts they still had there.⁴⁴⁵

The special relation among Carrión, Marroquin and Cardena – partly based on their common background – seems to have stimulated them to hold on to several Latin American, artistic characteristics. However, they not only stimulated each other, but also brought about interaction with other performance artists in the Netherlands, regarding the use of media, costumes, entertainment etc. In first instance, the Latin Americans developed personal contacts with other foreign artists living in the Netherlands. In Amsterdam in the early 1970s, a local company of foreign artists had arose, who could met each other at first in the In-Out Center and had their own mouthpiece in the form of the international magazine *Artzien*.⁴⁴⁶ Via this network, Carrión, Marroquin and Cardena got in touch with 'deferred' performance artists such as Sigurdur Gudmundsson, Michael Gibbs and Michael Druks, and the 'real' performance artists Nikolaus Urban and Nan Hoover.⁴⁴⁷ Later, they also got in touch with the Dutch Marjo Schumans, via Agora Studio (see also section 4.5.). In the work of this circle of artists some interesting parallels can be discerned in the fields of narrative structures, the use of costumes, the use of language,⁴⁴⁸ the employment of actors, the utilization of various media and a playful and entertaining approach; which underlines a form of mutual stimulation. On the base of these parallels and relations, it can also be concluded that via the circle around the three Latin American artists, in particular Latin and North American characteristics were introduced and developed in the Dutch scene of performance art.

⁴⁴¹ Carrión and Cardena met each other for the first time in 1968; Ruhé 1982, p. 41; Boers 1982, p. 102.

⁴⁴² This connection appears from infosheets Agora, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder 'Agora'; Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 304-305; *Fandangos* 1973-1980.

⁴⁴³ See also Gribling 2004.

⁴⁴⁴ Cardena came to the Netherlands in 1962 and Marroquin in 1971; Boers 1982, p. 102; on-line *Catalogue NMAI*, List of Artists, Raul Marroquin, Biography (checked on 15.10.2009): http://catalogue.montevideo.nl/artist_biography.php?id=49.

⁴⁴⁵ For instance with Jorge Glusberg (Argentina), Antonio Caro (Colombia), Cecilia Vicuña (Chille) and Claudio Bertoni (Chille); these names appear in the program sheets Agora; RKD PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder 'Agora' and in *Fandangos* 1973-1980, vol. 1, 5, 6; this seems to underline a form of contact or cooperation between artists in Latin America and the (Latin American) artists in the Netherlands.

⁴⁴⁶ Boers 1982, p. 102.

⁴⁴⁷ Boers 1982, p. 102: Cardena, Marroquin and Hoover also got in touch with each other, because they were all three working with video.

⁴⁴⁸ In Latin America there was a strong tradition of Visual poetry and Concrete poetry, in which poetry was combined with the visual arts. The Latin American artists who settled in the Netherlands, and in particular Carrión, gave an inspiring impulse to the artistic combination of language and visual arts in their new country; Belder 1982, p. 92; D. Conwell. 'Personal worlds or cultural strategies.' 2002. *E-flux.com*, projects, Do It, notes, essay e003 (checked on 8.10.2009): http://www.e-flux.com/projects/do_it/notes/essay/e003_text.html.

4.3. Two circles, two categories

When considering the personal relations among performance artists in the Netherlands, one can conclude that the structural relation networks centred roughly in two circles. On the one hand the circle around Ben d'Armagnac, with artists such as Dekker, Reindeer Werk, Ulay and Abramović. On the other hand a group around Cardena and Marroquin, consisting of mainly foreign artists living in the Netherlands (with the exception of Schumans). It is remarkable that these two circles can respectively be related to the two different categories of performance art in the Netherlands, which have been distinguished in chapter 2. Generally speaking, D'Armagnac and associates represented the 'serious' category of performance art; while the circle of Marroquin and Cardena represented the more entertaining category, combined with multimedia performances. These observations seem to support the fact that the structural relationships among performance artists had a certain influence on the character *and* direction of the work of the particular artists related to each other.

Although there are roughly two circles of performance artists to discern in the Netherlands, related to two categories of performance art, these cannot be strictly separated from each other. A few artists connected the two groups – and the two categories – to each other by means of their contacts. For example, Marjo Schumans had a short relationship with Ben d'Armagnac around the start of 1976, and was influenced by him in life and work as mentioned above. At the same time, however, she was a close friend and colleague of Raúl Marroquin, who stimulated her to carry out Fluxus-like performances with the artist as director.⁴⁴⁹ Thus, Schumans was successively related to the two circles of artists and influenced by both. Furthermore, the artist Servie Janssen had connections with both circles. As noticed above, Janssen knew D'Armagnac and his work since his student days and was in several ways influenced by him. However, in Maastricht, Janssen also became acquainted with Raúl Marroquin, who studied at the same academy.⁴⁵⁰ With relation to their performance work, the two artists took different roads, but their video works show some interesting resemblances. In the 1970s, Janssen for instance made several videos, with a central role for American media and consumer culture. In addition, both Marroquin and Janssen displayed a certain interest for the work of Joseph Beuys. The two artists may have inspired and stimulated each other during their study period in Maastricht and stayed in touch ever since.⁴⁵¹

At first sight, the artist Nan Hoover seemed to have developed in a very individual and personal way. However, she had several contacts among the performance artists in the Netherlands, in both circles.⁴⁵² Hoover not only was a 'mediator' between the two circles, but also her work connected with the more serious category (with elements of concentration, silence and mediation) and with the American tradition (with the use of multimedia and the notion of reality). The same applies to the performance artist Nikolaus Urban. At the one side, he was connected to Marroquin and Cardena since the time of the In-Out Center in 1972, and related to their playful way of working. At the other side, he connected to the tradition of Reindeer Werk, and Ulay and Abramović with his tests on human behaviour, his psychological and sociological research and his violent and risky acts.

These examples, and there may be some more, underline that the two circles and categories did not function strictly separated from each other and that several artists functioned as mediators between them. Moreover, it must be noticed that apart from the abovementioned circles, several other circles could be discerned in the Netherlands, in which performance artists were related to each other. These circles were connected to respectively De Appel, Agora Studio and Corps de Garde and provide another insight into the structural relationships among the performance artists.

⁴⁴⁹ See a.o. *Agora* 1975.

⁴⁵⁰ Wijers 1995, p. 15.

⁴⁵¹ Their relation was underlined by a video work of Marroquin in 2007 (Casco, Utrecht), in which he filmed the shadow of Servie Janssen; see *YouTube* (checked on 20.10.2009): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYpUG93bpKY>.

⁴⁵² This appears for one thing from her online register of condolences, on which several artists refer to the 1970s and their relationship with Hoover in that time, among them Thom Puckey, Servie Janssen, Ulay and Michael Gibbs; see *Condoleance.nl* (checked on 20.10.2009): http://www.condoleance.nl/registers/register_10254.html.

4.4. The circle around De Appel and Wies Smals

Since the second half of the 1970s, De Appel was a respected centre of performance art with an international radiation.⁴⁵³ In retrospect, Marina Abramović has characterized the performance art in De Appel as belonging to the establishment of the discipline. According to her, the most important performance artists carried out their work in De Appel, the epicentre of performance art.⁴⁵⁴ Nan Hoover has stated that for her De Appel was “the most viable place in Europe for performances and video. Also there [was] a great exchange between the artists. Even during my trip through America everybody talked about De Appel there.”⁴⁵⁵ One can conclude from this that De Appel was a place to get in contact with other important performance artists and a place to exchange ideas – also on an international level.

The performance artists who had the opportunity to visit and perform in De Appel were selected principally by Wies Smals, the founder and director of the institute. Although she was assisted by Aggy Smeets since 1975 and Josine Droffelaar since 1978, Smals remained largely responsible for the attraction of artists to the art centre.⁴⁵⁶ From the very beginning, three performance artists were in particular involved in De Appel, also with relation to the forming of ideas concerning the institute: Ben d’Armagnac, Gerrit Dekker and Ulay. Via Ritsaert ten Cate, the founder of Mickery, Smals got in touch with D’Armagnac and Dekker in 1974.⁴⁵⁷ She met Ulay on her own in the time she had her former gallery (Gallery Seriaal).⁴⁵⁸ D’Armagnac, Dekker and Ulay formed the beginning of a core group of performance artists that surrounded Wies Smals and De Appel in the 1970s. From the literature on De Appel it appears that Nan Hoover, Marina Abramović, Michel Cardena, Nikolaus Urban, Harrie de Kroon, Marja Samsom, Albert van der Weide, Hans Eijkelboom, Barbara Bloom, Servie Janssen and Raúl Marroquin also belonged to this group that was structurally related to Smals and her institute.⁴⁵⁹ Eventually, in particular these artists made a name as performance artists in the Netherlands and abroad.

The art institute in Amsterdam was an important operating base for the above-mentioned circle. Via De Appel, the artists were introduced to other performance podia in the Netherlands and abroad, financial grants were applied and even living accommodation was arranged for them. Furthermore, international curators of important art manifestations appealed to the institute, for advice and artists. Consequently, the members of the circle around Smals and De Appel could participate in the Documenta 6 in Kassel, Biennales in Venice and Paris and performance festivals in Knokke, Vienna, Arnhem, Middelburg and Groningen.⁴⁶⁰ In this way, De Appel fulfilled an important position for both Dutch and foreign performance artists living in the Netherlands.

Not only De Appel as an institute, but also Wies Smals as a person, played a significant role for the circle of artists around her. Artists such as Ulay, Abramović, Bloom, Cardena and Hoover informed the director about recent art developments or artists. However, the other way around, Smals also advised the artists with regard to their performance art. She had the talent to stimulate artists to give shape to their ideas and turn them into actions.⁴⁶¹ In the case of Ben d’Armagnac, for example, many of the changes in his work can be traced back to his relationship with Wies Smals. According to Wijers, D’Armagnac did most of his activities in close consultation with her.⁴⁶² In addition, Smals informed artists about the current situation in the international art world, by means of stories, video tapes or arranged meetings. Because of her advising and stimulating role among the

⁴⁵³ Jappe 1993, p. 28.

⁴⁵⁴ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 304.

⁴⁵⁵ Boers 1982, p. 108.

⁴⁵⁶ See also Van Mechelen 2006, p. 53; Boers 1982, p. 102.

⁴⁵⁷ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 51.

⁴⁵⁸ See also Belder 1982, p. 91.

⁴⁵⁹ This group is also mentioned in Van Mechelen, p. 73, 304-305; *Servie Janssen exposeert* 1988; Smolders 1988.

⁴⁶⁰ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 304-305.

⁴⁶¹ Jappe 1993, p. 28.

⁴⁶² Wijers 1995, p. 13, chapter 5-7.

performance artists, to a certain degree Wies Smals put her stamp upon performance art in the Netherlands.

The artists that were structurally related to De Appel also stimulated and inspired each other. In De Appel, they could execute their own works and attend performances of others. In this way the members of the circle could meet each other on a regular base and were informed about each other's works. As mentioned above, the circle around De Appel started with D'Armagnac, Dekker, Ulay and later also Abramović. In the first year of the institute, these artists found in De Appel a podium to develop their so-called 'serious' performances.⁴⁶³ They could see performers from abroad there, such as Transformer and Body artists, but were also enabled to execute their own 'serious' body examinations and inspire each other with this. Around 1976 the circle of performance artists around Smals was further expanded. As appears from the list of names above, at the end of the 1970s it was a mixed and large group, with Dutchmen and foreigners, and representatives of various types of performance art – including the entertaining type. Resulting from this expansion over the years, De Appel also became a place for exchange and interaction in the fields of multimedia and entertaining performances. Furthermore, the mixture of artists brought about a mixture of elements from the 'serious' and the more entertaining category of performance art. This form of mixture, explains why a strict division between the two categories is not always manageable. Moreover, within the core group of De Appel the two circles of artists mentioned above, mingled with each other. Over the years De Appel, thus, evolved from an institute associated with 'serious' performance art to an agent of performance art in a broader sense; with consequences for the interaction between artists of various fields of performance.

4.5. The circle around Agora Studio

Just like De Appel, the Agora Studio in Maastricht was surrounded by a fixed group of performance artists. As indicated above, the founders of the studio, Ger van Dijck and Theo van der Aa, and the (performance) artists Raúl Marroquin and Marjo Schumans formed the core group of Agora.⁴⁶⁴ These four people gathered around them a larger group of artists – both performance artists *and* other artists – in the course of the 1970s. This circle consisted of artists that exhibited in, or visited the Agora Studio on a regular base. In addition, they contributed frequently to *Fandangos*, the magazine related to the centre.

When going through the archives of Agora Studio and the various numbers of *Fandangos* – which was published between 1974 and 1980 – insight can be gained into the group of artists that were structurally related to the art centre in Maastricht.⁴⁶⁵ On the one side, the circle consisted partly of artists that had been connected to the In-Out Center in Amsterdam between 1972 and 1974: Ullises Carrión, Michael Gibbs, Michael Druks and the performance artists Michel Cardena and Nikolaus Urban. Since Marroquin, who also had been connected to the In-Out Center, took up a prominent position in Agora Studio, it is understandable that he attracted some of his former colleagues to Maastricht. On the other side, the circle around the Agora Studio consisted of artists that were related to Maastricht, by way of living, working or studying there. Both Marroquin and Schumans, but also Urban and Servie Janssen studied and lived in Maastricht, and frequently visited the art centre. Furthermore, several foreign artists living abroad such as Anna Banana, General Idea and Jorge Glusberg – mainly originating from Latin and North America – were related to the Agora Studio. Their connection to the institute was particularly based on postal correspondence and contributions to *Fandangos*. Because of the focus of this chapter on the structural relationships among Netherlands-based performance artists, these incidental contacts with foreign artist will not be further scrutinized here. Although they were of great importance for the character and activities

⁴⁶³ Van Mechelen 2006, pp. 72-85.

⁴⁶⁴ *Agora* 1975.

⁴⁶⁵ RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder 'Agora'; *Fandangos* 1973-1980.

of Agora, these foreigners did not regularly visit the Netherlands and were not (always) able to develop structural and personal relations with the performance artists there.

Via Agora Studio, the above-mentioned group of Netherlands-based performance artists could regularly meet each other and see each other's works. The performances these artists executed in the centre deviated strongly from the so-called performance art *pur sang*. Most of them continued a tradition that had also prevailed in the In-Out Center: the Fluxus-like performance.⁴⁶⁶ In Agora Studio, this tradition developed gradually into the direction of a playful, interdisciplinary and entertaining form of performance.⁴⁶⁷ In addition, most of the performance artists of the Agora-circle were occupied with aspects related to performance traditions in the United States and Latin America, such as the use of various media, costumes, the artist as director, narrative structures and entertaining situations. Even the publication of the magazine *Fandangos* can be related to the Latin American tradition of setting up specific media for artists; just as the realization of an international network. This resulted in the first place from the involvement of the Latin American artists Cardena, Marroquin and Carrión in Agora Studio. Secondly, the close relations with artists from the United States and Latin America were a stimulus to link up to these traditions.

Thus, the group of performance artists surrounding Agora Studio – which overlapped partly with the circle around the three Latin American artists – clearly tended towards a particular direction within performance art. Their works were characterized by an entertaining approach and the integration of various media, and rested on Fluxus and American traditions.⁴⁶⁸ From this it can be concluded that the performance artists who could meet each other in and around the art centre, exerted a certain influence on each other and stimulated each other to get occupied with this particular form of performance art. The magazine *Fandangos* was also an excellent medium for the artists to influence and stimulate each other. In addition, it must be noted that the entertaining, more playful type of performance with which the Agora Studio and its circle was associated, corresponded exactly to the general mentality of the studio in Maastricht. As described in section 1.4., Agora Studio operated from a Fluxus-mentality, characterized by the integration of artistic activities in daily life, interdisciplinarity and the realization of international networks. Proceeding from this mentality, Agora attracted a particular range of artists, which brought about a certain homogeneity; not only among performance artists, but also broader than that. Also, in *Fandangos* a homogeneous sound is discernable among the artists contributing to the magazine; a sound that corresponded to the circle of performance artists surrounding Agora Studio.

4.6. The circle around Corps de Garde and Leendert van Lagestein

Leendert van Lagestein in Groningen developed close relations with many of the artists he selected for the program in his art centre Corps de Garde.⁴⁶⁹ In some cases, these personal relations could develop when Van Lagestein offered an artist to stay in Groningen for a longer period within the 'artist-in-residence-program'. Furthermore, he wrote personal letters to the artists – and they wrote him – as was the case with Ben d'Armagnac.⁴⁷⁰ In this way, Van Lagestein gathered around him a circle of artists, who were related to him and his art centre in the course of the 1970s.

Two performance artists who participated in this circle, were Ben d'Armagnac and Gerrit Dekker. Leendert van Lagestein became acquainted with these two artists in 1974, through the

⁴⁶⁶ See also Van Straaten 1975, p. 129; Kusters 1991.

⁴⁶⁷ This can be deduced from the short descriptions of actions and performances executed in Agora Studio and the background and working-style of artists invited in the studio; RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Maastricht A, folder 'Agora'; *Fandangos* 1973-1980.

⁴⁶⁸ Despite this strong tendency, there also was some space for the more 'serious' forms of performance art in Agora, but on a much smaller scale.

⁴⁶⁹ Van Mechelen 2006, p. 42.

⁴⁷⁰ Various of these letters (which underline the personal bond between Van Lagestein and D'Armagnac) have been published in Wijers 1995, pp. 117, 120, 122, 124, 129, 134, 137, 144, 149, 152.

agency of Wies Smals, after which an intensive collaboration followed.⁴⁷¹ For Dekker and D'Armagnac, the personal contact with Leendert van Lagestein was an important stimulus for their artistic projects.⁴⁷² The same applied for the performance artist Barbara Bloom – who also became Van Lagestein's partner in 1975⁴⁷³ – and the artist duo Reindeer Werk.⁴⁷⁴ Next to these performance artists living in the Netherlands, Van Lagestein also worked closely together with American performance artists, such as Alison Knowles, Tony Morgan and Charlemagne Palestine. That the performance artists mentioned here were closely related to Corps de Garde *and* also to each other, appears for instance from the action they organized together in 1977 and the information flyer on this action.⁴⁷⁵ To support the art centre in Groningen financially, they – and several non-performance artists with them – sold art works to collect money; and with success.

The performance artists who were related to Van Lagestein, got the opportunity to realize artistic projects in Corps de Garde. Furthermore, he introduced them to other art manifestations in Groningen, such as the summer festival. During art events organized in and via Corps de Garde, interaction could take place among the various performance artists related to art centre. For instance, Tony Morgan and Ben d'Armagnac were both involved in the summer festival of 1976, through the agency of Van Lagestein. There, D'Armagnac executed a performance in a totally dark church (the Martinikerk), where only the performance area was lightened up with black light. The costume and the attributes of the artist were covered with reflecting phosphorescent paint and were therefore the only things visible in the dark surrounding. During the performance, D'Armagnac was sleeping on the floor, since had taken sleeping pills in advance. When he woke up, he moved crawling through the audience, which visualized a form of contact without talking. After that, he hit with a plank against his head, taped one of his arms and legs with bandages and went back to sleep. He repeated this procedure four times.

According to the artist, all acts were a symbol of the battle that is required to live with other people. He visualized the pain, trouble and energy it takes to get in touch with other people. He literally tried to penetrate in the world of the other, by crawling through the audience. In his sleepy twilight state, between awareness and unconsciousness, the artist also tried to break down the walls of his own ego and personal fears, to be able to make contact with other people.⁴⁷⁶ Morgan witnessed this performance of D'Armagnac and was impressed by the artist's turn inwards and his use of the dark space in the church. 'That was probably what I learned the most of that performance, the possibility to handle an enormous space.'⁴⁷⁷ Undoubtedly, the Netherlands-based performance artists related to Corps de Garde, also collaborated in such a way and mutually learned from each other.

Considering the group of performance artists around Van Lagestein and his Corps de Garde, it can be concluded that it was largely overlapping with the circle around Wies Smals and De Appel. This can be explained by the fact that there was a lot of contact between Corps de Garde and De Appel in the 1970s. Following from this contact, many ideas and artists were exchanged between Amsterdam and Groningen.⁴⁷⁸ In addition, it is remarkable that the artists related to Corps de Garde, represented various types of performance art. On the one side, several artists were occupied with

⁴⁷¹ Wijers 1995, p.113

⁴⁷² Van Mechelen 2006, p. 401 (note 76).

⁴⁷³ Wijers 1995, p. 129.

⁴⁷⁴ From the archives of the Press Documentation of Corps de Garde in the RKD, an impression can be gained of the artists who belonged to the circle around Corps de Garde and Leendert van Lagestein; among them the performance artists D'Armagnac, Dekker, Bloom and Reindeer Werk.

⁴⁷⁵ See information flyer Corps de Garde 1977, RKD, PDO, Tentoonstellingen Nederland, Groningen B-E, folder 'Corps de Garde': "Een dozijn kunstenaars, nauw betrokken bij het programma van Corps de Garde, wil een concrete bijdrage leveren aan de voortzetting van de activiteiten." ('A dozen of artists, closely related to the program of Corps de Garde, wants to contribute concretely to the continuation of the activities.')

⁴⁷⁶ See also Wijers 1995, pp. 146-149.

⁴⁷⁷ Wijers 1995, p. 148: "Dat is wat ik waarschijnlijk het meest van die performance geleerd heb, die mogelijkheid om een enorme ruimte te hanteren."

⁴⁷⁸ Barten 1978, p. 61.

the 'serious' category of performance art, including D'Armagnac, Dekker and Reindeer Werk. On the other side, Corps de Garde attracted artists who represented the American and entertaining performance, such as Bloom and other artists still living in the United States. Thus, Corps de Garde formed – just like De Appel in the 1970s – an important base for the two categories of performance art that could be discerned in the Netherlands. Consequently, within the circle around Corps de Garde, interaction between different categories of performance art took place.

4.7. Structural relation networks: interaction and intermixture

On the basis of the circles described in the previous paragraphs, it can be concluded that several structural relationships existed among the performance artists living and working in the Netherlands in the 1970s. It has been revealed which performance artists could meet each other on a more regular base and, as a consequence from that, who could form particular structural relation networks together. Although the specific connections between the performance artists can be revealed, it is not in every case easy to point out what kind of artistic exchange this connection brought about. Nevertheless, the structural relationships among performance artists in the Netherlands undeniably created possibilities for interaction in the field of performance art, and some general conclusions can be drawn about this.

In the first place, it can be concluded that the performance artists that were structurally related to each other, often stimulated each other to move into the same direction of performance art. For example, the circle around Ben d'Armagnac was mainly focused on a serious and ritual form of performance, while the circle around Marroquin and Cardena was engaged in an entertaining form. This seems to prove that within a close circle of artists, interaction took place and a certain homogeneity could arise. However, this does not apply to the situation in De Appel – after 1976 – and in Corps de Garde. Within the circles around these institutes, performance artists occupied with various types of performance art were related to each other. This could result in mutual exchange between the 'serious' and the entertaining category of performance art, and explains certain cross-links between the two categories. In addition, when the circles of performance artists in the Netherlands are put side by side, it is noticeable that a number of artists belonged to several circles. Owing to this, the artists were influenced from several sides and intermixture between the various circles and various categories was possible.

The analysis of the circles of performance artists has also proved that the structural relation networks involved both Dutch artists and foreign artists who had settled in the Netherlands. This created possibilities for interaction between Dutch and foreign artists working in the Netherlands in the 1970s. In this way, Dutchmen and foreigners could contribute together to the development of performance art in the Netherlands. Furthermore, via the structural contacts with foreigners, artistic elements from abroad could also enter the Dutch performance scene; in particular from the United States, Latin America and Eastern-Europe. For instance, the American artists Nan Hoover and Barbara Bloom were familiar with the traditions in the United States. They introduced elements of it to the Netherlands, such as the use of different media and elements of media research. Cardena and Marroquin most likely brought along artistic elements from their home-countries in Latin America, such as the use of costumes, the use of mass media and the participation of dancers and actors during a performance. It is difficult to say which elements were brought to the Netherlands by artists stemming from Eastern-Europe. It is, however, clear that Abramović in Yugoslavia already executed dangerous performances, in order to test her physical and mental boundaries.

All in all, it can be concluded that the structural relationships among Netherlands-based performance artists, between Dutchmen and foreigners, brought about interaction in the field of performance art. In this way, particular characteristics and tendencies could be introduced, stimulated and further developed in the Dutch performance scene of the 1970s.

5. Conclusion

A rather large group of ‘real’ performance artists – twelve Dutchmen and nine foreigners – contributed to the development of performance art in the Netherlands in the 1970s. In literature on this art form published so far, in particular artists such as Ben d’Armagnac and Ulay and Abramović are related to the performance art in the Netherlands. Indeed, these three artists took up a prominent position in the Dutch performance scene. However, it has also been demonstrated that there were several other artists in the country who frequently executed performances and contributed to the development of the ‘new’ art form; among them Lydia Schouten, Servie Janssen, Harrie de Kroon and Nikolaus Urban.

In this thesis, it has also been revealed that there were several places in the Netherlands where performance art could be executed and developed. In first instance, alternative art spaces and art festivals offered a podium for the ‘new’ art form, but in the course of the 1970s the museums and traditional galleries followed steadily. In particular, De Appel functioned as an important podium for performance art since 1975. It was the only institute in the country that dedicated its program almost completely to the performance art in the 1970s. Furthermore, De Appel was the centre of national and international traffic of performance artists, it tried to map out the developments of performance art and functioned as an (international) information centre in this field. Indeed, on both a national and an international level, De Appel took up a prominent position in the scene of performance art. However, also podia such as Agora Studio and Corps de Garde played an important part in the field of performance art. They also formed a base for the international traffic of performance artists, were surrounded by fixed groups of performance artists and stimulated them to carry out their works – although on a smaller scale than De Appel.

As noted in the introduction, performance art took up a ‘marginal’ position in the Dutch art world of the 1970s. Furthermore, the performance scene initially had a closed character; only a select audience visited the performances. Nevertheless, some meaningful developments took place in the field of performance in the Netherlands. Particular podia for performance art were opened and various artists were occupied with the experimental art form, and made a name with it on a national and international level. In addition, performance art turned out to be of great importance for the Dutch and international art world and continued to be a widely used medium up until today.⁴⁷⁹ Moreover, in spite of its ‘marginal’ position, various artists of the 1970s considered performance as the most liberating art form in comparison to several other non-conventional and experimental art forms of that time. According to them, performance was the most direct way to communicate with the spectator, it was the most intimate way to transfer a work of art and it was most closely related to real life.

The group of artists involved in performance art and the number of art institutions offering a podium for performance, prove that performance art had enough base to rise and develop in the

⁴⁷⁹ Consider for instance the work of the contemporary artists Tino Sehgal, Andrea Fraser and Marc Bijl.

Netherlands. The main goal of this thesis has been to characterize the performance art that could develop there *and* to demonstrate the consequences of international contacts among Netherlands-based artists for this particular character. In the first place, conclusions can be drawn about the character of the performance art with regard to content, form and attitude. The content of performance art as it developed in the Netherlands in the 1970s, was characterized by a focus on personal experiences, social engagement, identity (politics), human behaviour and the world of media. The form was in particular characterized by the integration of violence, aggression, silence, concentration, sound, symbolic attributes and materials, costumes and suits, and various visual media. The arrangement of performances were characterized by the form of a test, a struggle, a ritual, a therapy or a narrative scene. The attitude of the Netherlands-based performance artists particularly resembled the qualities of a warrior, a shaman, a researcher, a clown or a director. These aspects frequently returned in the works of Netherlands-based performance artists and, thus, largely determined the character of performance art there. In connection to these elements, the performance art in the country was also characterized by the development of two specific categories of performances: a 'serious' and a more entertaining category. In particular these two performance types found support there. Most of the characteristics mentioned above and most of the Netherlands-based performance artists, therefore, can specifically be related to one of the two categories.

In the second place, it can be concluded that with relation to the character of Dutch performance art, the international contacts of Netherlands-based performance artists played a particular part in its forming. These international contacts can be divided into *incidental contacts* and *structural contacts*. The *incidental contacts* among foreign and Netherlands-based performance artists had consequences for the introduction and development of several qualities in Dutch performance art. It has been revealed in chapter 3, that most of the characteristics of performance art in the Netherlands, were also discernable in the work of various foreign artists. The performance art as it developed there largely corresponded to European and (Latin) American performance tendencies. These interfaces with international tendencies can partly be explained on the basis of the contacts and meetings that took place with foreign performance artists. For instance, several Netherlands-based performance artists were able to meet Joseph Beuys during the 1970s, which furnished a form of artistic exchange in the fields of therapeutic, ritual, autobiographical and social performances. In the same way, there were encounters with artists such as Gina Pane, Ulrike Rosenbach, American feminist performers, James Lee Byars, Charlemagne Palestine and many others. These contacts with foreigners brought about artistic interaction and stimulated the development of particular (international) performance characteristics in the Netherlands.

The *structural contacts* among performance artists living in the Netherlands also had consequences for the character of performance art there. On the one hand, via structural relation networks, particular artistic qualities could be spread, find more support and become characteristic of the Dutch performance art. For instance, D'Armagnac was particularly engaged in performances with a personal content. Via his personal contacts he could stimulate his colleagues also to work with autobiographical experiences and stories. In this way, the execution of a personal content became characteristic of performance art in the country. In the circle around D'Armagnac, the performance artists were also occupied with human behaviour, human relations, physical and psychical trials, therapeutic and ritual elements. Because of their close relationship, the artists stimulated each other to work with these aspects, which became therefore important Dutch characteristics. Also, via the circle around the Latin American performance artists qualities such as media-use, a playful attitude, costumes and the artist as director were spread and adopted in the performance scene in the Netherlands.

On the other hand, via structural relation networks the 'serious' and more entertaining category of performance could find more support and achieve a prominent position in the Dutch art scene. Via their structural relations, the Netherlands-based performance artists stimulated each other to move in the same direction of performance art: the 'serious' or the more entertaining direction. Some of the circles described in chapter 4, were therefore particularly related to one of

these two categories. Evidently, the two categories were closely related to the various characteristics of Dutch performance art.

The structural contacts among Netherlands-based performance artists did not only have consequences for the development of particular qualities and categories of performance art. Via these relations also various elements from abroad could be introduced to Dutch performance art. Within these structural relation networks, both Dutchmen and foreigners were connected to each other and could interact with one another. Consequently, the foreigners could spread artistic characteristics from their home countries among their colleagues in the Netherlands. For instance Barbara Bloom and Nan Hoover, who originated from the United States, were occupied with media and media politics in their performances. These aspects found an important base in the United States, but would also become characteristic of performance art in the Netherlands. The Columbian Raúl Marroquin and Michél Cardena, were working with media, costumes, playful attitudes and functioned often as the director of their performances. These elements took up an important position in Latin American 'live art', but were also introduced to the Dutch performance art. The Yugoslavian Marina Abramović seems to have stimulated the execution of physical and mental tests in the country, while Reindeer Werk gave an extra impulse to the focus on human behaviour; which these three artists had already developed in their home-countries.

Since the development of a number of characteristics in the performance art of the Netherlands was stimulated by contacts with foreign artists – both incidental and structural – several parallels to international tendencies are discernable. Because of these interfaces, it can be concluded that most of the characteristics of Dutch performance art were not unique for the country. Nevertheless, the elements mentioned above can be considered 'characteristics' of performance art in the Netherlands, because in particular these elements were stimulated and developed by artists living there. Although they were not unique for the small country, in particular these elements could find support there and become characteristic of its performance art.

To sum up, the international contacts among performance artists in the Netherlands had particular consequences for the character of performance art in the country. Firstly, several artistic elements could be spread, find support and finally become characteristic of the performance art there, via international contacts among performance artists. This applies to both incidental contacts with foreign artists living abroad and structural contacts among performance artists living in the Netherlands. In the second place, the structural relation networks among Netherlands-based artists had a stimulating effect on the development of two categories of performance art; the serious and the entertaining category. Thirdly, as a consequence of both structural and incidental contacts among Dutch and foreign performance artists, several 'foreign' elements could be introduced in the Netherlands and become characteristic of performance art there. Thus, the development of the character of performance art in the Netherlands can largely be explained on the basis of interaction and stimulation via structural and incidental relation networks. Where artists were working or living closely together, interaction could take place and particular artistic elements and tendencies could predominate.

The conclusions that have been drawn here, are particularly related to the situation in the Netherlands, regarding performance art. Proceeding from this 'Netherlandish' situation, it has been concluded that the performance artists there largely linked up to international developments. Next to that, it can be concluded that the country played a certain part in the international performance circuit. For instance, several Netherlands-based performance artists were invited to carry out a performance abroad and the Dutch art institutions and curators often contributed to foreign events concerning performance art. In addition, many foreign performance artists executed a work in the Netherlands and several meetings took place between Netherlands-based and foreign artists in the 1970s. In this thesis, the focus has been on the consequences of these meetings for the performance art in the Netherlands. However, one may assume that by means of these meetings and the interaction resulting from that, the Netherlands and its artists also left their traces abroad. To draw

further, well founded conclusions about the function and position of the Netherlands in the international performance circuit and its 'influence' on performance artists abroad, further research has to be executed.

The research as it was shaped in this thesis, also brings up several other questions that can form the basis of further research. As appeared in chapter 3, the situation concerning performance art in Eastern Europe is barely examined. In relation to the Dutch performance art, but also within an international context, it is of great importance that the performance art as it took place there will be scrutinized extensively. Also, the artistic situation in Latin America asks for further research with regard to performance art. More particular, it would be interesting to examine the role of Latin American artists in the Netherlands more profoundly. Ulisses Carrión, Cardena and Marroquin took up a central position in the Dutch art world of the 1970s, and not only in the field of performance art. It would be interesting to research this position thoroughly, as well as their relations to their home-countries and the consequences of their settlement in the Netherlands for the Dutch art world.

Because of its exploring and synthetic starting point, in this thesis many topics have been discussed only very briefly. Therefore, a lot of subjects touched on in this thesis can form the starting point of further research, among them the activities in Agora Studio, the influence of Zen-Buddhism on performance art or the relation between Joseph Beuys and the Netherlands. Beuys visited the Netherlands several times in the 1970s and exercised influence on several performance artists there. It would be interesting to scrutinize the meaning of the Dutch art world to Joseph Beuys and – the other way around – the influence of Beuys on artists in the Netherlands. This should not be limited to the decade of the 1970s or the circuit of performance art, but can also be examined in a broader perspective.

In the last place, this thesis calls up questions concerning the further development of performance art in the Netherlands and the reception of this particular form of art. Because of the limited dimension of a master thesis, the focus of this research has been on the 1970s. However, it would also be interesting to examine the development of performance art in the 1980s, 1990s and afterwards, and the role of 1970s performance art in that development. Moreover, this thesis particularly zoomed in on the performance artists, their works and the surrounding art world. Regarding further research, it would be interesting to examine how the physical, narcissistic and sometimes shocking performances were received by the audience and art critics.

The performance art as it arose in the 1970s was open-ended, with endless variables; it gave the artists several artistic possibilities to express, demonstrate or research various elements of human life. Anno 2009, performance art has the same effect in the field of art history; it still offers researchers various possibilities to examine this particular art phenomenon.

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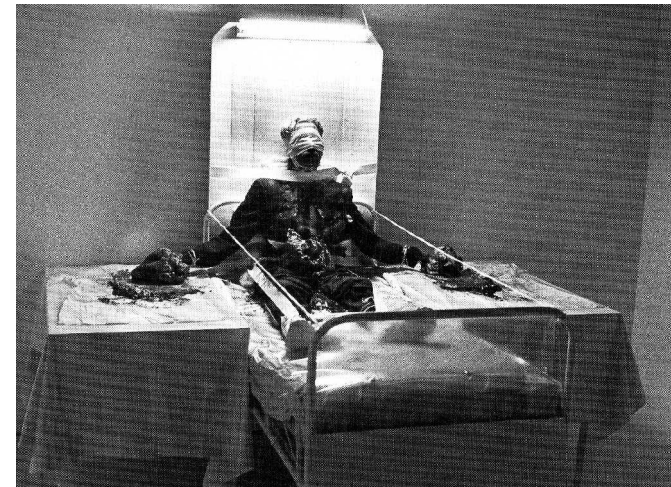
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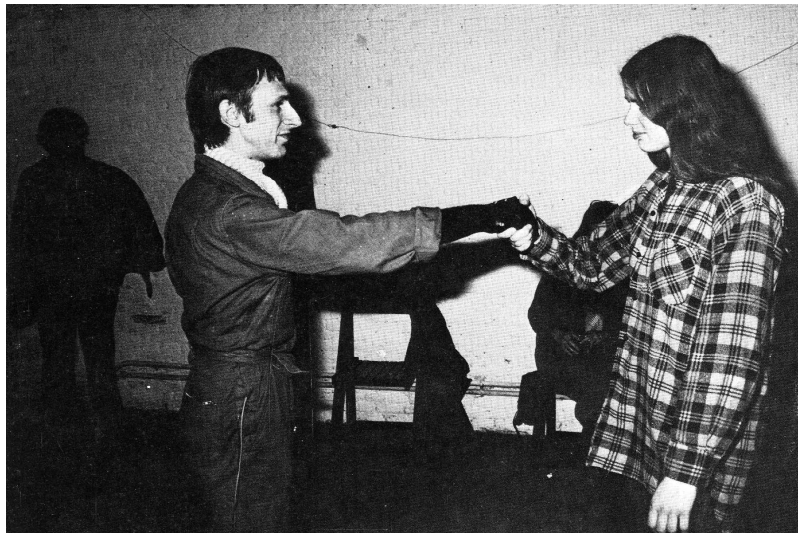
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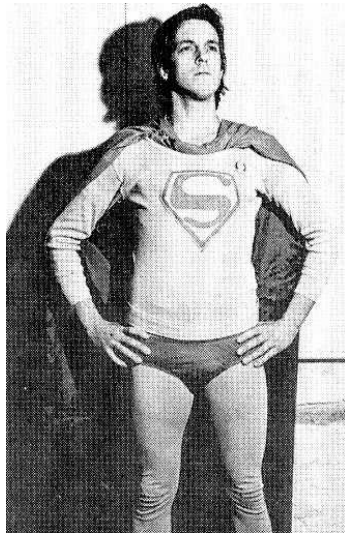
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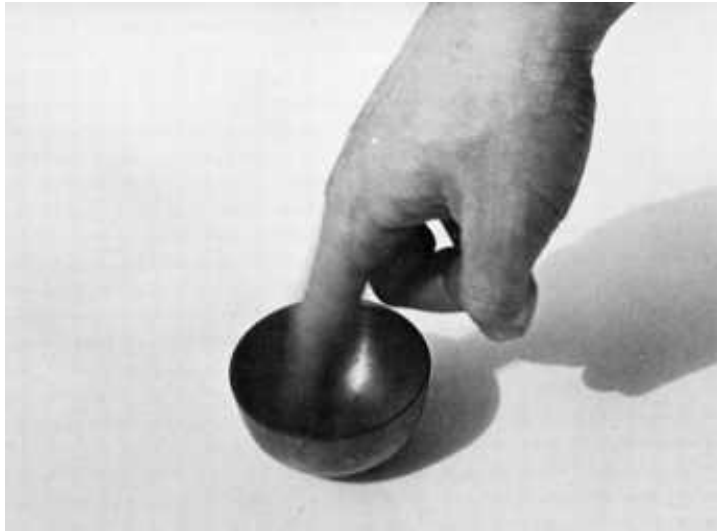
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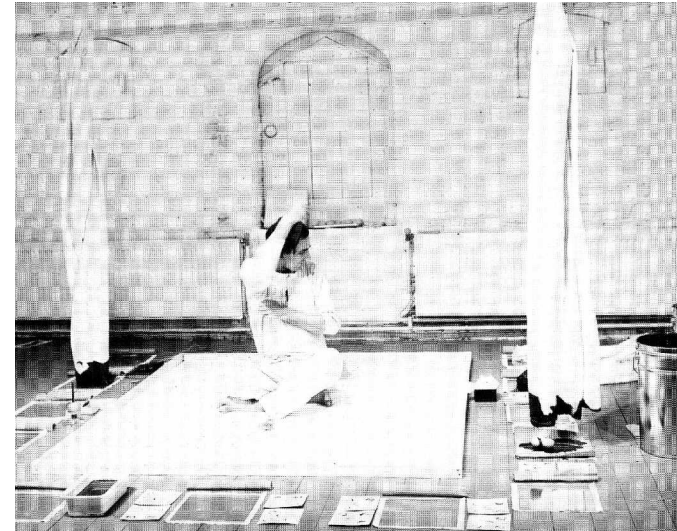
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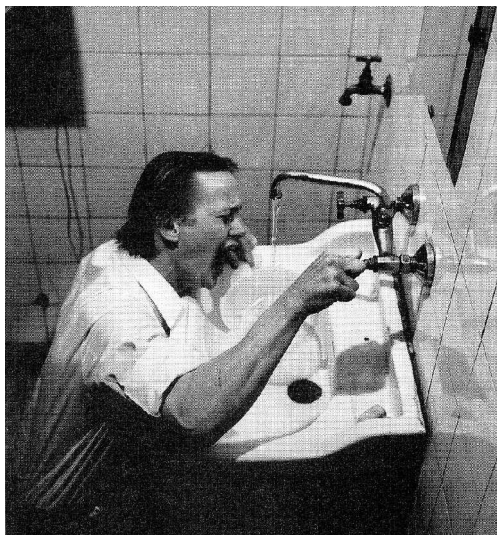
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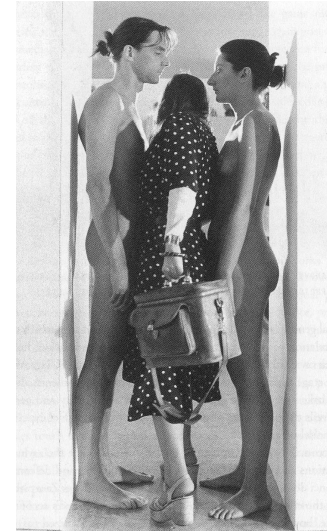
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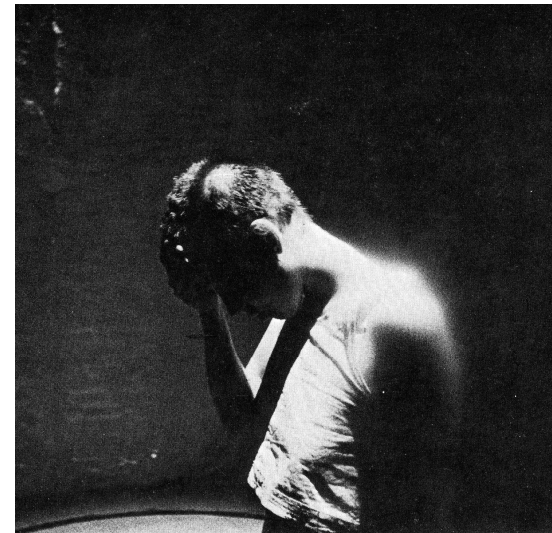
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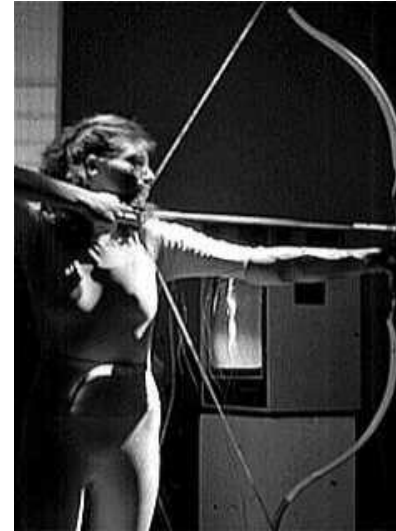
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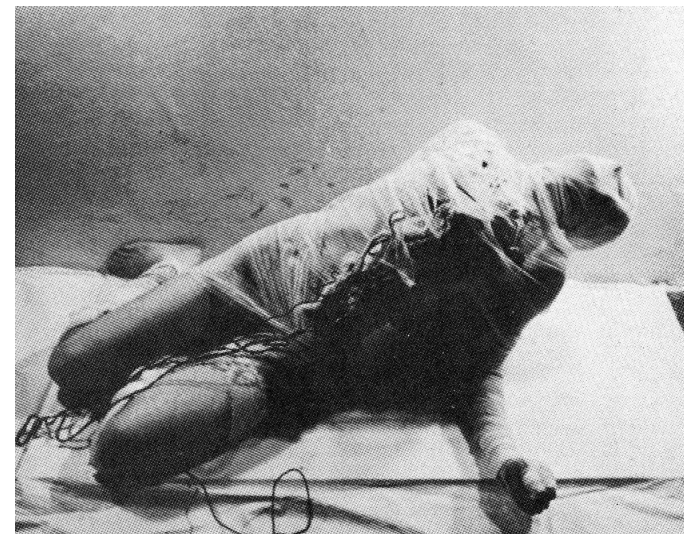
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