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## Art-Based Resonance at Work

Terrence Letiche

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**Résonance de l'art au travail**  
***Art-Based Resonance at Work***

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# **Art-Based Resonance at Work**

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## PRECEDING

There are two pillars to the project I am presenting here. Traditionally the image of two pillars is represented as Boaz (Hebrew בֹּעַז bo'az "In him/it [is] strength") and Jachim (Hebrew יָכִין yakin "He/it will establish"); and/or there is one pillar of fire (giving light to make it through the night) and another of cloud (guiding one during the day). The play of two perspectives, or foreground and background, is here between the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs where I did my research and the research methodology I chose. Or as the photograph Stephan Vanfleteren put it (in Flemish), 'We look with the eye but we see with the brain'.<sup>1</sup> My eyes are art-based; my thought has been guided by Hartmut Rosa's awareness of resonance. The relationship between the two perspectives is and was complex: my access to the research site was based on the methodology, but my use of the methodology was profoundly influenced by what I found and experienced in the research site. The project started by 'selling' an art-based research proposal to the Ministry. My access, realized as a research fellowship, was defined as an art-based project; I was to interview staff, make art and run art-based feedback sessions. The goal of the art supposedly was to offer an alternative opportunity for staff to reflect, be aware and make affective contact with their circumstances. But hidden in that assignment there are issues about awareness, relationship and affect. The staff did not feel comfortable with their situation or themselves in their situation. I was, in effect, brought in to look at felt, but hidden, forms of being ill-at-ease; but I was not to make those dysfunctional feelings even more problematic. Thus there was a dilemma; how to address unease, upset and even anger, without exacerbating them. Art-based feedback loops seemed indirect enough to have potential value without making too many waves. I struggled at first to find an adequate name for the identity and emotional issues I had 'sort of' been brought in to address. I arrived eventually at *resonance* as that key nomer. And with that term came *accelerationism* as a name for the causes of the afflictions of haste, haggardness and discontent.

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Stephan Vanflederen *Buitenhof* NPO1 Televisie 27.12.2020.

My project is based on the assumption that art-based research is a valid, valuable and desirable form of research. There are plenty of forms of research that are (more or less) unquestionably legitimised: case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, action-research; and then there is art-based research, which is relatively exceptional. It exists; it has notable sources and there is a tradition. However, it remains relatively on the periphery and unlike the other above mentioned research methods, Art-based research is not self-evidently validated when those knowledgeable about qualitative research speak of methodology. Art-based research makes use of many of the same qualitative techniques as does other qualitative research, such as interviews and participant observation; but (in the form I subscribe to) it paints. Paintings are able to reveal circumstance, attitude and awareness in ways that are other than written social science texts. I am referring to art-based research wherein the art plays an essential role in seeing, discovery and awareness; i.e. investigation is done with art. There are forms of art-based research wherein art is used to convey research results but is not really used in the process of investigation itself. Art, or to be specific painting, was crucial here for the doing of the research. I realise that research into conditions of affect and work will evoke techniques like interviewing or observer participation, more than painting; that, leading to case studies and ethnography. However, we are living in a research context wherein the turn-to-affect and/or the turn-to-ontology indicate change, innovation and experimentation. But, I do not expect that you, the reader, will immediately think of art-based research as a current methodological innovation. There are definitely experimental and peripheral methodologies presently out there, and auto- or biographical-ethnography and art-based research are among these. In the methodology chapter I will describe various other researchers and art-based projects, to establish my reasoning and approach for my use of an art-based research methodology in this project.

My second assumption is that I believe that a lack of personal relatedness is crucial to often experienced discontent. I was told up-front that the staff I would be working with was unhappy, agitated and restless; and indeed, they proved to be unsettled, often ill-at-ease and uncomfortable with their situation. Work was not for them an invitation to cooperation, trust and self-confidence. Targets, ever more

demanding goals, and impersonal and often not-present leadership created tension. What I have come to recognize as *accelerationism*, or ever growing speeds of change, action, and demands were taking their toll. Strengthened or increased personal relatedness would I believe be much better. I feel that the quality of relatedness can improve relationship and is therefore greatly desirable or valuable to be aimed for. I believe that people should be more open to themselves and to each other; that is, more authentic and open to show more affect. By being more directly involved in how one sees oneself, one's situation and work, contact with self and other can be strengthened improving the quality of relatedness. In this project, I have witnessed the (in my opinion) negative effects of (over-)bureaucratism, and I believe that improved relatedness could address some of these negative effects. The amount of deep or genuine relatedness which occurs in the work is too limited and this is highly problematic.

These assumptions are elaborated in the DURING section of this text. The extreme use of protocols, or what Habermas calls *system-world* is exaggeratedly dominant in the ministry. Using Habermas's language: the lifeworld (*lebenswelt*) or the more relational, spontaneous and personal forms of relationship, are in the organisation deeply under pressure, and the need for lifeworld relatedness, as spontaneity and authenticity is enormous. In this text I will explain and elaborate on this set of ideas and values based on Hartmut Rosa's theories of *acceleration* and *resonance*. For Rosa, *acceleration* is crucial to the depersonalising structures and dominant assumptions of the contemporary western society. Rosa comes to the conclusion that organisations within our society do not offer space for relatedness and are thereby dehumanising and destructive. Rosa attempts to counter this negative and bleak perspective by describing what relatedness is, arriving at his championing of *Resonance*. Rosa came to his position via a sociological analysis of the contemporary western world wherein he identified *accelerationism* as crucial. The ever-faster pace of change, with sped-up product cycles, and a climate of social uncertainty, Rosa has claimed, has led to the impasse of overwrought expectations and disappointments. *Resonance*, or lived relatedness, is proposed as an ontological necessity whose neglect requires immediate correction. But in his most recent, *Unfigurability / unavailability (Unverfügbarkeit)* book (2020), Rosa seems unable to

maintain Resonance as a dominant ontic descriptor of the contemporary society. Resonance will be handled here as a key factor in the quality of interaction that is studied; it serves as a crucial descriptor of what is felt, needed and problematic. But whether resonance is actually realizable remains in abeyance. For one thing, I do not feel that Rosa achieves much resonance in his relationship to his readers (or in fact, in relation to his auditors in seminars and conferences). Thus, there is a major issue here of performative consistency: does one really come closer to resonance when one champions it? I neither designed my project, nor did I frame this writing, as an exercise in implementing resonance. Rosa has sensitized me to 'resonance' as a descriptor of the sort of relatedness that I believe in, as the goal of art-based activity and research. But I was already underway with my Art-Based project when I discovered Rosa's theory. Rolling out of a resonance-based organization change program, as I imagine consultants would do, seems to me to be utterly self-contradictory. Imposing relatedness denies what it pretends to want to achieve. And, if as a researcher one assumes a definition of resonance and then simply tries to hunt it up, one's stance denies what one has pretended to champion. Research as self-fulfilling prophecy I believe is not research at all.

I have assumed that my art-based research was a way to strive to work in relatedness with the researchee Other. I have hoped that relatedness both between them and me as researcher, and between them and the artwork, could strengthen the contact between themselves and their work. My assumption was that art-based research has relational value. But I realize that I can only provide anecdotal evidence for this. My sample was small --- two times five persons; and the amount of time involved was large --- more than a year. The research cycle was demanding: individual interviews, interview analysis, paintings made based on the data, individual feedback sessions, assessment and writing; and given how hectic the researched's work often was, it was a challenge bringing the project to a successful conclusion.<sup>2</sup>

I repeat, it was only after I had initiated the research that I discovered Hartmut Rosa's theorization of relationality as Resonance. Resonance is thus a descriptor

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, not all the feedback appointments were possible because persons had left the Ministry.



that I discovered thanks to the research process. I began the art-based project, observed the process, and was convinced of its import. I then searched for a way to label the interactions I had witnessed. It was not my goal to prove or disprove Resonance as a concept; nor was it my intention to create an experimental text that should be in Resonance with the reader. My goal has been to convince the reader of the worth of art-based research. Resonance is a conceptualization that has helped me to make my point. As already stated, I feel that Rosa has not performatively succeeded with his texts about resonance; I hope (believe) that I have done better. My research question was always about the power of art-based research and its feedback loops to bring persons into contact with themselves and their awareness in their work situation. My goal has been to demonstrate how art, grounded in researchees' experience of their work circumstances, could support a turn-to-affect strengthening of relational awareness in the work situation. The research question has to do with: 'What can I discover with art-based research about relatedness and about how people live their professional work situation'; or, in other words: *workart*. This is a *workart* thesis that came to the term Resonance as an valuable concept in the description of *workart*.

Summarizing: My primary hermeneutical focus is on *workart* as illuminated by Art-based research. Resonance is a descriptor which I found during the research process, allowing me to describe my results in a more social-science way. Rosa enabled me to better see and make sense of what was happening in the project. In short: The combined data from the Interviews and painting feedback sessions show various aspects of *workart* relatedness. I am an art-based researcher; not a sociologist.

My two pillars are: (i) valuing art-based research; and (ii) exploring and defending the need or even necessity for increased relatedness (Resonance).

Thus, in the text I will explain what art-based research is, and defend my choice to do art-based research. I will show that art-based research has a tradition and a literature justifying its existence, and I will clarify the basic concepts which the thesis is based on: namely that people find interaction, support and contact, with one another via acknowledgement of one another. Feeling interaction with one another,

as demonstrated via art-based research, will be valued here. In fact, it is my assertion that Rosa's championing of resonance does not go far enough; there is too little actual lived-resonance in his oeuvre. In my examination of art-based research, I will clarify that there are forms of art-based research which do not apply to my project, and I will discuss these insofar as it is relevant; but my emphasis will be much more on what I did than on what I did not do.

Concluding, I will look back at whether or not the project was successful and I will examine if indeed art-based research worked successfully within this project, focussing on whether this thesis has produced successful art-based research results, wherein relatedness is better lived, defined and/or understood. Lastly, based on my results, I will look at what further research is desirable or necessary.

## OUTLINE

I will now provide a brief outline of the project, describing what is to come in the chapters ahead and providing a quick overview:

- The thesis is divided into three parts (excluding the *Preceding*) which are called *Before*, *During* and *After*. Throughout the text there are reflexive descriptive texts where I provide personal insights, these I've called **Intermezzo's**.

- The **BEFORE** section is split into three chapters. In (i) *INTRODUCTION: THE VOYAGE TO THE RESEACH SITE* I give an account of how I came to the idea behind the research, what route I took and what inspired me to continue along the way chosen.

The *Introduction* is followed by the chapter: (ii) *ON ART-BASED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY*, wherein I introduce the use of art-based research; examine different sources and researchers, indicating where I do and do not see connections. I situate myself and my research in relationship to the other art-based projects. I end the chapter by describing several art-based projects that have inspired me and have acted as role models for me. I end the **BEFORE** section with the chapter (iii) *RESONACE*, wherein I establish the link between this research project and Hartmut Rosa and Resonance.

- The **DURING** section is split into seven chapters. The firsts three are: (i) *THE RESEARCH SITE*, (ii) *WHO DID THE RESEARCH & HOW SO PAINTING* and (iii) *WHO WAS THE RESEARCHED & WHERE*. These three chapters describe the organisation I conducted the research at; the situation the organisation was in at that time, the various people and departments chosen to participate, and who was involved with this research project. I describe how I interacted with the various parts of the organisation. This allows me to describe the project in further depth and how the project took the shape that it has had thanks to all of these factors. Now that the project has been grounded the text moves through the various stages of the research. The Chapter *INITIAL INTERVIEW DATA* gives the reader an insight into the

transcribed data collected from two different parts of the organisation. In the chapter FROM INTERVIEWS TO PAINTINGS, I describe the thoughts and processes whereby I transformed the collected interview data into the paintings. The chapter THE ART FEEDBACK SESSIONS is an account of the participants being introduced to the paintings, created out of the initial interview data; and their reactions and thoughts to these paintings in relation to their work. The Chapter THE PAINTINGS consists of the ten paintings involved in the feedback sessions presented in the text.

- The **AFTER** section is where I switch gears, from practically doing research to analysing precedents and results, as well as reflecting on my role throughout the research process. In REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH SITE, I look back at the project from the perspective of the artist as well as that of the researcher. Complementary information about the research and the research site, not conveyed through the interview transcripts, is provided. Comparisons are made with other art-based projects and analysis of how this research project relates and differentiates from these is offered.

Throughout the "fieldwork" I kept my ideas about the paintings 'out of the picture'. The focus was on researchee awareness, reaction, perception and reflection. In this section I address the artistic assumptions I held and some of the thoughts and feelings I had throughout the process of creating the paintings. I describe the limitations I felt both as an artist and as a researcher, and how I found ways to overcome them.

In the chapter CONCLUSIONS, I bring the strands of research together, connecting the various bits and pieces into a single narrative whole from start to finish, and I discuss where I see room for future likeminded art-based research projects, as well as pointers for aspects within my own project where I see room for improvement and continuation. I conclude with a set of five paintings; art-based self-reflection and a final (parting) gesture to you the reader; this, in CONCLUSION: PAINTINGS which entails my personal artistic reflection on the project as a whole.

## BEFORE

### INTRODUCTION: THE VOYAGE TO THE RESEARCH SITE

The research found in this thesis had its beginnings in my Masters thesis at the University of Leiden; perhaps more in what I was not allowed to do than what I was able to do. That thesis was the product of a social artistic experiment; that is, the effort to melt art and research wherein art acts as research and research is undertaken with artistic means. The project centred on issues of communication and electronic feedback. I built a visual feedback system, inspired by the work of Philippe Mairesse and the work of Frederic Kaplan (Kaplan, et al., 2012a, 2012b). Mairesse (Mairesse, 2014), (Bobadilla, Lefebvre & Mairesse, 2017) had built a communication system wherein people around a table sit in front of a microphone and can talk, but they cannot control who listens. Participants could without the others knowing tune in and listen to any speaker. The normal power of the speaker to determine the social situation was hereby interrupted and the power of the listener was proportionately increased. Mairesse's idea was that one could use the microphone and earphone technologies to destabilise the normal power relations of speech. His inspiration was from the artistic tradition of the installation. He saw his technologically mediated discussion table as a sort of installation. He created and studied his experiment from the approach of art appreciation. He did not see his experiments as social science: he did not try to define causality or explanation with the use of, for instance, psychology. His theoretical base was Jacques Rancière and the theory of the 'partage du sensible' or the 'distribution of the sensible'. One can see the Rancière influence in the disruption of how the participants experience discussion. Instead of the dominant speaker defining the situation, the passive listeners were empowered and really had control (or at least much more control) over the situation. Rancière thought that art defines a distribution of the sensible and that art should intervene in such distributions in order to allow (more) voice for the silenced. Thus, this is a project very much in the Spivak tradition of the 'subaltern has no voice'; those whose social economic position is passive are robbed of having any voice. They cannot speak and are structurally silenced but the refusal of others (the powerful) to listen to them. Thus Mairesse's communication installation was an artistic project with a fairly clear

philosophical-political agenda. Contrastingly, Frederic Kaplan is much more technology driven and interested in communication as such and not so much as a political phenomena. Kaplan was responsible for a communication's experiment wherein persons around a table took part in a group discussion. If one spoke a lot a coloured circle projected on the table in front of you got more intense, and bigger and bigger; if you stayed silent your circle got weaker, and smaller and smaller. The research question was what would be the effect of such immediate feedback on the participants. Obviously it would make them increasingly self-conscious. As the system was geared to the quantity of participation and not at all to the quality, there are questions to be addressed about its assumed value pattern. Is equal time a value unto itself? Are there not very different sorts of the use of a speaker's time in a group? The raw quantification of the Kaplan experiment seemed dubious to me. But it was, again, a dramatic communication experiment. My position was somewhere between Mairesse's and Kaplan's. I identified with Mairesse's arts-based methodology, but was closer to Kaplan in what I chose to build. From Kaplan I took the idea of the communication feedback loop as my issue and the immediate visualisation of participants of their situation. But I rejected Kaplan's simplification of speech into something quantitatively simple. I agreed with Mairesse that communication is complex and should not be simplified to an automated mirror system. In Mairesse it was the evaluation process where the participants discussed their experience that was the crux to awareness. I agreed entirely with that. The system can be a catalyst but I do not see it as the subject of the experiment. The people are the subject, the set-up is just that, a means to make something happen. And I agreed with Mairesse that the distribution of the sensible is the crucial theme, though I did not subscribe to the radical politics of Rancière. I was not convinced that my arts-based experiments could change anyone's fundamental sense of the distribution of power or roles. Here I was closer to Kaplan, experimentation might make something interesting visible, but I did not want to pretend to a change agenda. Also, I did not see how the participants in such relatively short-lived experiments could be adequately followed to see what effects (if any) the experiments had further down the road.

I had witnessed a trial of Mairesse's system at a seminar in Paris and the results had been stunning. The context was one where the organisers of the seminar (not

Mairesse) had strongly insisted that everyone, supposedly, was equal. The meeting was supposed to explore radical equality of communication and the papers had all be very strongly ideologically targeted at equality, Deleuzian values of relatedness and radical communication studies. But the format had been 90% traditional; speakers presenting papers in a fairly rigid format. The Mairesse experiment was the break with this routine. In Mairesse's feedback session, one participant claimed that this was the first time in the meeting that listening really happened instead of listening being championed as ideology and not actually realised at all. The American chairwoman of the meeting was furious and reacted incensed. She saw the feedback as an insult and attack. The meeting polarised between supporters of the chairwoman and supporters of the man who had given the feedback. One group saw the meeting as performatively fundamentally flawed and dominated indeed by ideology that was not put into practice; and the other group saw the criticism as repressive, false and politically motivated. The two groups, thereafter, were never reunited. My lesson was that such communication disruptive systems really could be powerful, but that the feedback aspect had to be very carefully organised. It was clear to me that such a communication system could work as a so-called breaching experiment, whereby Garfinkel's work (Garfinkel, 1967) is crucial. Non-reflective assumptions about communication make communication possible. If the implicit social rules of speech are disrupted that can be experienced as threatening and you can get very charged reactions. This is what had happened in the Paris meeting. The chairwoman was convinced of the rectitude of her position but also of her power position. She had organised the seminar, chosen the speakers, set the tone. She was not expecting her authority to be challenged and reacted very upset at this happening. That there was an enormous performative contradiction between the ideological message of the meeting and its actual form or structure, seems in retrospect pretty clear. But the chairwoman was ideologically motivated and not willing (able?) to address the performative issue. After all, the issue of authoritarianism in the circles of critical social studies is a major issue, but not one that is easily resolved. For me the lesson was to make sure that my role was consistent with whatever values I claimed in introducing the system and that I must not become defensive in the feedback session. My role as system designer was to try and facilitate experimentation around technology and feedback to see what sorts of effects the visual feedback loop might have. Since I knew that I would

only have time and means for three runs of my system, I realised that 'generalisability' was out of the question. My best hope was that my system would produce some sort of interesting response and at the very best, differentiated response (i.e. not the same reaction three times). My assumption was that different groups discuss differently and the system should make difference visible. If the system reduced all conversation to sameness, then I would have to suspect that the system flattens difference and works repressively. But if the system produced lots of difference, in its use and in the feedback, then the idea that the installation was constructive would be defensible.

Thus, I built a system around a discussion table where the participants had foot pedals under the table. Each participant was randomly linked to one other participant and instructed to give feedback to the person they were linked to. If you thought the other was participating in a positive or good way you made their projected circle grow, and if you thought their contribution was not good you were instructed to diminish their circle. Thus, the system demanded multitasking; the participant was to take part in discussion and evaluate one other participant at the same time. The system was designed so that you never were giving feedback to someone next to you and the pattern of who was coupled to who was not evident. Thus, in principle you knew that someone around the table was judging your contribution but you did not know who.

I had three runs of the system and they produced three very different patterns of results. This was my first experience of studying group reaction to a construct I had designed and implemented. I was very happy at the differentiated response, but less happy about the installation as art form. I really felt that art-based research needed to work with artistically richer materials than what I had used in the project. What I saw as a major success was that the three groups had reacted so differently from one another: between two there was some similarity (though one was much more intense than the other) and the third group was a real outlier. I became especially interested in the third group, in the exception. How could I understand what had happened there? In my sessions the participants had a trial discussion, without the system; and then a second discussion with it. The first group was much more animated in the second run and the second group was (only) more animated. In the third group, the participants went on strike; after a few minutes their use of the feedback system started to diminish



and it dropped to almost non-existent. Also, their conversation followed the same line and was the least animated of the three groups. Were it the different demographics of the groups; age, educational level, gender that made the difference or something else? The young well educated (Masters level) group was the most active and participatory. Is the 'distribution of the sensible' such that the group members have internalised their place in the peck-order of expression in such a way that conversational debate and experimentation is so tightly socially orchestrated? In effect, much more so than I'd anticipated? Was I running into a Bourdieu-like effect of the reproduction of social capital, where the privileged have voice and the ability to have voice drops off as one moved away from the most privileged members of society? Obviously, any conclusions would have been speculative; but via the feedback sessions and interviews I could try and better understand what had happened. I did have some data pointing to some factors influencing the shown behaviour, but my thesis supervisor at Leiden forbid me to explore these themes further. He was a technocrat, interested in the communication technology theme, who was determined to not permit the Rancière or Bourdieu themes to be researched. I had become more interested the response patterns than the installation as such. The social phenomena that the installation produced seemed fascinating to me; but the thesis supervisor insisted that I focus on the set-up and not on the possible significance of the results. So, I completed my Masters feeling that the most interesting things I had encountered were repressed rather than explored. I had discovered the power of art-based research; it really gave an entry into social relations and interaction. But I had also discovered that following that entry to try and understand what it really signifies was an issue. That my three groups had discussed racism and a possible content analysis of their discussions did not seem at all as relevant, as the performativity of their discussions. How they discussed; animated or not, with a dominant group leader or not, falling into anomie or not, ideologically driven or not, (in-)tolerant of other's opinions or not; these were the process themes that seemed important to me, and not their actual argumentation about the selected themes. I was convinced that art-based research is strong in addressing performativity and process; and that was the lesson that I took away from that experience. Thus, I was convinced of the worth of continuing with art-based research; but had my doubts about the practicability. I certainly did not want a repeat of my Leiden experience where the

university forbids me to analyse and explore what seems to me to be the most interesting data.

My first response was to turn to art and artists. If art can work as a powerful feedback loop in the Mairesse installation form, could it also do so in other artistic forms. Could I centre my attention on young artists; their seeing of themselves and their circumstance; i.e. could I put the feedback loop back into the art world? Instead of designing an art-based experiment and studying reactions, could I study artists as an art-based experiment where their situation and reflection works as the feedback loop. After all young artists are struggling to find their artistic language and to become performatively effective. They are in a cycle of self-other-reflection that I could possibly study inspired by my prior experience. I was equipped in a way to make this strategic move because I have a BFA from the Royal Art Academy in The Hague. I know and am at home in the world of young artists, particularly painters, in Holland. I know from experience that they are in a constant intense dialogue with themselves, their visual media, and their context. Art is a problematic way of being in the world. It brings enormous self-doubt and a rather precarious social-economic position. If I could get a group of young artists to open up to me, I could study their relatedness to themselves, others, the society and their materials. Here the feedback loop is more internalised and there was no plan to make use of technology to study it. But the theme of art, feedback loop, and awareness on multiple levels was what was in focus. But I needed to solve my methodological problem: where could I go and not run in to the same limits or restrictions as in Leiden? My decision was to go the Organisation Department at Leicester University UK. This may seem a rather surprising move, but the social psychologist Steve Brown was Professor there and he had written about Michael Serres and quasi-objects as well as parasite (Brown, 2002). My approach to art is similar to the quasi-object argument. I see art as something that performatively is shared, discussed, viewed, reacted to. Serres' illustration was the rugby ball. The argument was that the ball was something around which interaction can organise itself. I see art works as just that; objects around which interaction can organise itself. But how it organises and whether it is stable, desirable, needed, etcetera; there, there are all sorts of issues. Also the Department of Organisation seemed attractive because I knew that 'work' was a

major problem for the artists. 'Work' in all sorts of ways: work as producing paintings, work as earning money, work as 'works' or objects. The danger I saw was that the young artists become 'zombies'; that is, they become so afraid of 'work' in all its demands and aspects that they lose control, stability and identity. At Leicester Simon Lilley and Geoff Lightfoot had both written about zombification. Thus, I thought I could use 'work' as my theme and with quasi-object and zombification as themes I could continue my work. I went to Leicester and indeed Brown lectured the philosophy of research in a way that matched my expectations and my proposed project; but then he left Leicester for another university. Ultimately, I passed all the required coursework for the PhD and learned a lot about research methodology, but discovered that art-based research was not Leicester's forte.

What also played a role in my eventual decision to transfer to IMT:BS is that the young artists refused me access. Especially one contact seemed ideal. He was plummeted onto Dutch national television in a reality TV program called 'The New Rembrandt 2012'. And he made it to the semi-finals. We had been in the same class at the Royal Academy and while there was certainly some rivalry, we were probably the two most committed to art and acknowledged that in one another. He had continued from the BFA to a MFA, while I had gone on to get the Masters in Media Studies. Thus, he had stayed more loyal to painting than I had. But we were in contact and I saw his struggle with 'work' as exemplary for what my research could be. I knew quite a bit about his inner devils and the things that tormented him with anxiety and doubt, as well as the artistic ability that had brought him considerable success. The image he felt he had to project to get galleries to take his work, exhausted him and was a major challenge. Thus, I knew that 'work' was a complex sometimes creative but also sometimes destructive theme in his existence. If he would allow me depth interviews, where I'd just ask him to talk about his 'work', I was pretty sure I could create a very interesting ethnography around the (already mentioned) themes of quasi-object, parasite and zombie. I realised that as interviewer I would absolutely have to stay interested, supportive and non-judgmental. That because otherwise I was sure he would see the whole project as too threatening; and also, because I really wanted to hear his voice and not our dialogue. But the artist refused all access after two meetings. He found

voicing his situation far too threatening; he did not want to hear his own voice in the form I'd hoped for. After asking around to a few other artists of my generation I had to conclude that the project was not realisable. If the first contact, who was much more successful than all the rest, refused I thought that the chance of gaining access would be very difficult, and this was so.

So I had to choose. Either I could do an ethnography of work, but I had no idea how to recreate the link to art or I would have to design an entirely different art-based project. The work by Lilley and Lightfoot (Lilley & Lightfoot, 2004) was all about how work gets divided down into smaller and smaller units until no one really has any idea what they are doing any more; black-boxing. Work design would make zombies of all of us, as specialism gets smaller and smaller in focus and none of us have an overview. Their thesis that the focus on small leads to disorientation wherein purpose, goals or meaning are destroyed matched my experience at Leiden. After all what had happened there was that they had wanted me to look at smaller and smaller bits of my data and to interpret those, and not ask about the big picture. I could identify with the Lilley-Lightfoot analysis; but their data had come from the oil industry and that was a theme very far away from my interests. Their assertion that 'communication' actually 'black boxes' everything important seemed just to me. What one is trying to achieve was not to be discussed; tasks were subdivided in smaller and smaller units until no one had any idea what was really essential or not. If a crisis came or anything unexpected, no one had enough of an overview to know what was essential and what was irrelevant. So-called efficiency was based on having a procedure for everything; which meant in effect that all questions were defined out of existence. The rules, procedures, precedents defined what was to be done; why this choice or that choice was 'black-boxed'; i.e. everyone had to assume that 'what we need to do' is decided, defined and not open for doubt or discussion? Work was, so good as, 'mindless' because everything was defined as 'best practice'; 'work' was the same as follow the procedures and do not question the process. A contributing factor was that the situation became so complex that no one could follow it. All sorts of little decisions seemed to meet cost-benefit analysis; but if they made sense on a macro level was unsure. For instance, the oil company produced oil in the southern hemisphere and sold that oil to a competitor; and bought oil in the

northern hemisphere to supply their gas stations. Was this really logical? What strategic risks or costs were involved? No one knows. Crises and change will occur, and then the systemisation of 'work' cannot handle them. The 'black-boxed' reality ultimately breaks down and becomes dangerous. While I agreed (and agree) with the Lilley-Lightfoot analysis I did not see how I could translate it to an empirical study, nor did I see how I could maintain an art-based methodology (Knowles & Cole, 2008). Also, I saw possible performative contradictions and difficulties with trying to focus on zombie-ism. If the key quality of zombie-ism is that it refers to existence out-of-control, where if there is control it is out of the hands of the actant, then how does one research it? Not simply by interviewing zombies as zombies are assumed to have no will of their own; so, what value exactly would interviews of zombies have? Of course, one can say do not take the zombie-ism so literally; see it as a metaphor. But what is it a metaphor for; and how would I research a metaphor? I have no background in complex semiotics or the study of this sort of social metaphor. Lilley and Lightfoot saw the people 'controlling' the plants and businesses they studied as zombies; that is, people doing things where they have no real understanding of what they are doing. But in my MA thesis my assumption was that the participants might be doing things that they did not (yet) understand, but that was because they were involved in a sort of breaching experiment where the situation was different from the norm. I assumed that in the feedback sessions that the participants could look back at the experimental situation and could together and with myself analyse what had happened. I had assumed that the participants might be somewhat zombies thanks to the experiment design, but that this was a temporary condition that we could evaluate and discuss afterwards. I had no desire to actually define my participants as zombies. Furthermore, my interest in art and art-based research assumed that creative and new circumstances could be part of research, but that this could lead to reflection and insight. I see art as awareness and consciousness creating, not as zombification. Lilley and Lightfoot's oil companies may indeed zombify their employees and managers; but ultimately corporate zombification of its others (employees, customers, stakeholders, whatever) was not what I wanted to focus on. I realised that I see art as awareness creation and not as a record of the lack of awareness and certainly not as propaganda designed to destroy awareness.

Furthermore, I saw from Lilley-Lightfoot that engagement is crucial to research. They clearly cared about corporate abuse of responsibility and consciousness. But corporate destruction of the possibilities of consciousness was not a crucial item of care for me. I saw (and see) the issue, but do not feel passionately connected to it. My engagement was (and is) through art. There is a possibility of awareness, feeling and engagement by transforming experience into art works that make matters at hand visible and increase our contact with circumstance. Art I feel is a product of the artist's engagement or involvement and makes awareness and reflection based on being strongly connected to circumstance possible. Instead of reality television or WhatsApp reality, there can be strong engagement and emotional commitment. Or to put it differently, one can radically feel one's circumstance and translate that into an artefact; and that is what art is all about: showing and sharing strong awareness. Thus, I am not directed to the corporation that manipulates affect and awareness; but to art that also tries to have a big impact, but a positive one of integrity. The corporation influences; the artist influences: but I believe for opposite goals and intentions. Thus, once arrived at Leicester, I realised that the zombification and manipulation of awareness theme so strong in Lilley-Lightfoot was not really one I should follow, modelled on their model.

There was also a research paradigm problem. I was assigned supervisors (not Brown, Lilley or Lightfoot) who assumed that the researcher should be an outsider to the researched object. They wanted the researcher to look in from the outside and be uninvolved. You could be descriptive and in effect follow the Chicago School of sociology, but you were not supposed to research from a position of engagement. And I was becoming ever more convinced that what I had to bring to research that was significant was an art-based perspective. And art, for me, is engagement; it is the creative translation by the artist of circumstance to an artefact to be shared. All the couplings – circumstance to artist; artist to his/her materials; the making of the artefact; the artefact to an audience; the audience back to the artist and to one another; are matters of engagement and involvement. This is not a process of taking or having distance, but of proximity. Art-based research is proximal and I believe has to be radically proximal. That conviction brought me into conflict with my supervisors. 'Conflict' not in the sense of nastiness; they were very kind and civilised people; but

conflict in the sense that they could not really understand or emphasise with my goals. And because they could not understand what drove my research perspective; they could not support me in defining my perspective or bringing it to fruition.

Having decided that art had to play a central role in my methodology, I needed to define my research question(s). Addressing the art world I knew as a graduate from the Royal Academy, I saw that 'success' was defined as sales. Having a gallery that sold your work was a near necessity. And the graduates who got 'sales' and a gallery were the ones that could best sell themselves. They were not necessarily the ones who had made the best art, but they were the ones who could best sell themselves; that is, talk up their work. Making it in art was, at least in part, marketing. Advertisements for one's self were a crucial element. When I looked at the graduates, a few were 'making it' .... most were languishing. I was somewhere in the middle. Because I had gone on for a university Masters (and not an art academy masters) I could gain reasonable employment. For those who had stayed entirely in the art world, it was either sell your art or become a waiter. There was almost nothing in between artistic success and ending up in low paid unskilled work. Communicating your story in the sleekest way was a key success criteria. And I had never been especially good at that; which was a key reason for my decision after art school to get a university Masters. I had sacrificed some artistic freedom or engagement to avoid the possible trap of what Graeber has called 'bull shit jobs'. I felt as a sort of insider/outsider, that is someone coming from the art academy who painted, but was outside the pressures of sell or drown, I could research the theme of artists and work. Because I was not a competitor in a very competitive and nasty struggle for survival, but I understood what it was to come from an art academy, I thought I was very well positioned to investigate the social-economic plight of the beginning artist. At the time I did not define for myself the difference between studying artists and actually doing art-based research. Trying to understand and write an ethnography of the plight of the beginning artist certainly had to do with art, but it, of course, was not art-based research. Thus, my struggle to find the right research question, coupled to the appropriate research methodology, was still unresolved.

It was at this point that I tried to define my research as writing an auto-ethnography of the young artist. In my perspective auto-ethnography involves a

researcher investigating a theme that the researcher is deeply personally involved in. The famous justification is what happens when a twenty-year-old undergraduate male researches breast cancer amongst middle aged women. There is a total mismatch between researcher and researched. It is almost impossible for the researcher to gain the sort of contact and openness with the researched that is needed to do the work. A middle-aged woman who has a cancer history will very likely get much better results. She can know which questions to ask, how, and can create the right rapport with the researched. In my case, I was convinced that I had the artistic background and knew the uncertainties of the profession well enough, that I could act as a successful researcher of the young artist. Thus, my concept of auto-ethnography is not to write a sort of novelesque text or to focus on emotion; nor was I interested in writing an autobiographical ethnography. I wanted to do auto-ethnography in the sense of the insider, who has experienced the research question, interviewing and observing others and writing an informed ethnography. Nonetheless, my supervisors insisted that auto-ethnography was too narcissist.

I approached the most successful graduate from my art class. He had created a persona that resonated very effectively in the art world. In the academy he was the favourite of several of the instructors and they had gotten him into an art Masters program. He had developed a role he could play that made him be seen and got him places. He had made it clear enough in conversations that he knew what he was doing and took pleasure at the success of his strategy. Nonetheless I suspected that he felt strong tensions between his own uncertainties and personal background and the role he had created for himself to get noticed and appreciated. But the rewards of having a gallery take up your work and being sold compensated to a large degree for the price paid in authenticity in giving the public what it wanted. The danger was that you lose contact with yourself and actually at a point no longer know what is 'self' and what is 'role'. In the beginning he defined himself with the duality, but was this sustainable or did identity confusion result? And was being successful actually the destruction of his artistic project, at least as he had defined it as a student. But was it a good or bad thing if he started to make very different, much less personal, art several years after leaving the academy? I had found his younger work much stronger than his later work. I thought



the direct link to his personal devils and issues that had been the source of his earlier work disappeared in later work. And I thought that this loss of the personal was an artistic loss but might very well be a commercial necessity. I wondered how he saw his development and how he evaluated what 'making it' costs. And I was very interested if his 'success' would be self-destructive in the sense that it could so deeply alienate him from himself that it could become a curse and a dead end. Thus, there were a lot of themes that I found passionately important. The man had talked about all these themes in the past with me and had been quite open about his fears and dilemmas. I also saw that the more, in my opinion, personal and powerful work was probably less sellable. But I had somewhat lost contact with him, and had little idea how he was now handling all the contradictions and pressures of his situation. He wanted to have a living from art; but what did that really mean for him? I knew that there was a literature about how difficult it is for art graduates to get along economically, which was all written from the perspective that the art graduate ought to earn money and was intended to give tips on how to get there. Things like 'business plan' for artists had been propagated. But what 'selling yourself' actually did to yourself was not something I found already studied. I contacted him and tried to convince him to let me interview him from time to time and to understand how he interacted with all the external forces. Eventually I contacted five Royal Academy graduates, always with the same research agenda. All five responded fearfully. They all said that they were afraid that my research might somehow hurt their sales. And all of them denied me access to their dealings with the art world. No one was willing to tell what their relations with galleries were like. What pressures, rejections, economic exploitation were they experiencing? Of course, I was interested in their successes; but the life of a young artist is not only made up of successes. They all had the attitude, 'I do not want to make certain things public'. No one wanted to open up. It seemed that trying to earn a living was a taboo theme that they not only were not willing to discuss with me; they all revealed they discussed these themes with no one. Thus, this very stressful aspect of their existence seemed to be bottled up in alcohol, soft drugs and depression. The more I learned the more urgent I felt the theme was, as I discovered that it was not researchable. Sometimes they were willing to talk over a beer; but only as long as I promised to make no research use of what I heard. And if I wanted to use what I heard for research they demanded total control over what I put to paper. If every

case what they would tell me personally and what they were willing to see put into research was so distanced the one from the other that I had no idea how to proceed. I thought of moving on and talking to older artists about their struggles. But then it was no longer auto-ethnography, and I was far from sure that I would be the appropriate researcher. The art world has changed so much that I knew I did not know the world in which they had started their careers. I imagined that how in middle age you reconstruct our first struggling years would be very different from how the situation appeared to you when you were in the middle of it. A past crisis or challenge looks very different once you have successfully come through it than when you are in the middle of it.

I was stymied on two fronts. I could not get the access I wanted from the artists and I could not sell auto-ethnography as an approach to my supervisors. I realised I needed to redefine my project. At Leicester I had met a fellow Dutchman, Jan, who was doing a part-time PhD there. As the only two Dutch in the program, we met for a beer and a meal whenever we were both in Leicester. This led to a new research possibility. Jan worked at the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment. His research theme had to do with the policy researchers within the Ministry. During the rule of government from 2012 to 2017 the Minister of Social Affairs had come from the Labour Party. His number one priority had been to rein in abuses of independent worker contracts. Many workers after 2008 were either encouraged or forced to become independent workers. It was a way to avoid social costs. Independent workers often did not contribute to a pension scheme or pay in to other social services. They were in effect trying to be free riders of the social system. The Minister wanted to reduce this structural form of abuse and introduced and got passed a law to that effect. But the law failed miserably; it just did not work. In the evaluation of what had gone wrong it emerged that the research work within the Ministry had been very weak and that the law was written with far too little insight into the target group. The Ministry's researchers had not gotten out of their offices and had not engaged at all with the target group. The researchers had no first-hand knowledge of the issues or target group. Seemingly they were afraid to leave their desks and get out into the field. Not being independent workers themselves, and seemingly not sharing attitudes or perspective with the group, they had misjudged the target group. Since the independent workers tended to express hatred for bureaucracy

and highly structured work processes, they implicit conflict between the Ministry's researchers and the target group was significant. Jan wanted to research the resistance of the Ministry's policy staff to engage with the world outside the Ministry. Internal reports had pointed to this issue as crucial to the failure of the law and had called for change. Jan saw his theme as relevant and as already enabled by internal ministerial evaluation. But Jan's project got into the same two problems as I had. Firstly, it was auto-ethnographic. Jan was interested in the theme as someone working in the Ministry who had experienced the ministerial inability to deal with the 'world out there'. The theme of getting out into the society and experiencing directly the issues one is dealing with was something he was directly involved in and passionate about. Thus, he was immediately taken to task by his supervisors: 'Are you objective enough?' 'Do you have enough distance?' Crucial to his hypothesis was that the policy researchers acted out of fear. On one level they are not very senior and very focussed on producing whatever their superiors want to hear. Their research results are not ever supposed to contradict policy or the Minister's line. Thus, this is 'research' always under pressure and never quite totally 'objective'. The researchers are quite junior and at best have a Masters (not a PhD); thus their research skills are limited. In effect, they are functioning in very difficult circumstances wherein their careers depend on producing what senior officialdom requires of them. Crucial to the issue is researcher anxiety: what can I say, what can I question, what will boomerang and get me in trouble? These are very subjective issues and the supervisors were methodologically allergic to them. The issues were too emotional, personal and charged. In the supervision Jan was told he had to define one top level 'research question' and support that with three 'sub-questions'. Jan saw his project as explorative, wherein he needed to interview and explore, and then inductively construct a case history. But the university had an ethics committee that had to approve his interviewing before he was allowed to begin. And he had to clearly delimit his research goals to get his project approved by the university's ethics committee. So here he was in a Catch22; he had to have the results of his explorative work, which he was not allowed to do, to get on with his research.

And Jan had misjudged the issues around access. The theme was indeed laid out in several ministerial evaluations but when he finally had an interview with one of

the three highest civil servants in the Ministry, he was told in no uncertain terms that he was not permitted to do the research. That all the official evaluations pointed to this problem did not mean that they had any intention to really address it! He had run into what has been described as the 'Protect the minister at all costs' mentality of the civil service top; which prioritizes repressing all issues far above solving them. Whether this is really a strategy to protect the minister or more one of the top civil servants trying to protect themselves, I will have to leave to your speculation. I do note that when Jan proposed his research that there was a new government and a minister from another political party. Thus, there was no question of 'protecting' the current minister. With this project vetoed by his bosses, Jan withdrew from the PhD program. But since he worked in The Hague and I lived in a suburb of The Hague we kept in touch. There was a sort of solidarity there; both of our PhD projects had run into comparable problems and we were now adrift. Jan proposed that I define an art-based research project to be undertaken in the Ministry and he would use his influence to get me a temporary research post to work on it. Instead of researching work and artists, why don't you use art to research work? I was stuck and this reversal suddenly opened entirely new horizons. I knew of Chris Kuipers' (2007) research where he had interviewed physical therapists, summarised the themes from the interviews and let an artist make a painting per interviewee which was then used in a feedback link to explore the attitudes of the researched. And I had always thought it would be much stronger if the interviewer and artists were one person rather than two where the artist had no direct contact with the researched. Since Steve Linstead (Linstead, 2011, 2018) had repeatedly complimented the Kuipers' project, I felt confident that I was on the good path. Jan was sure that he could arrange 'fly on the wall' research access for me coupled to the making of art works as a product. An art research project would fit the Ministry's policies of supporting sectors where employment was problematic. The biggest problem was that there was a hiring freeze because of the governmental austerity policies. But as a temporary research contract the idea could fly under the radar. Jan liked my analytical way of thinking; in our conversations I had the role of analysing information he provided, which he found helpful. I think in retrospect that he liked having me around also probably to help him with his work. The recent reorganisation of the Ministry had provoked a lot of issues and frustration. I wrote a research proposal using art to give ministry civil servants

the possibility to express themselves and to communicate their concerns. I would observe and interview; draw out themes to paint; organise feedback sessions with the paintings as catalyst. The idea was that the paintings would open up discussion that might either not happen otherwise, or would not happen in the same way. The assumption was the frustration around the reorganisation would be surfaced and get discussed. Hereby my entry to the Ministry was arranged.

As a parallel action I applied to Jean-Luc Moriceau to transfer to IMT:BS. I knew that he had researched artists' squats in Paris and was engaged in art-based research. Discussion proved that he was not negatively prejudiced against the use of art in research or against auto-ethnography. Performativity and self-reflection were now welcomed to the research process instead of thwarted and banned. But the Ministry quickly emerged as a complex object. At my first meeting with the director of my research position, who was not Jan, I was told that the reorganisation was off-limits. It was 'too sensitive' and they did not want anything about it being made public. Anything even intimidating that the reorganisation had been messed up or failed was not to appear in public. The message is: 'People have to get used to the reorganisation' and that was all that was communicable. I was thinking: 'I am going to paint; who pays for the materials and owns the end results?' I quickly decided not to voice my question and to buy my own materials thereby ensuring my ownership of the paintings. I must not lose control of the paintings or my whole project might end up under wraps with me powerless. I agreed to not look at the reorganisation and asked what my focus should be. She told me that the Criminal Investigative Department (Opsporing) was dealing with the theme of modern-day slavery and worker exploitation. Within the Ministry of Social Affairs there is one fairly significant department that investigates misuse or abuse of social laws. It is the Inspectorate, focussing on social rules and regulations. There are controllers who visit organisations to control if they are respecting labour regulations and law; and there is a police-like sub-department that investigates criminal abuse of social legislation leading up to arrests and trials. One focus of activity was on slave labour conditions. This included prostitution and some highly repressive working conditions. Illegal labour abuse is fairly invisible to the public at large, but are often very serious. The workers have to deal quite horrific stories and incidents. I was instructed to

undertake my art-based interviewing and feedback loop with these people. Was this meant to relieve the tremendous psychological pressure that their work entails? She did not specify and I was not about to ask any unnecessary questions. Actually, she rotated out of her manager role back into the organisation fairly quickly. The management functions rotate; they swap positions every few years. There does not seem to be much upwards movement; they do not seem to go higher and higher in jobs very much. One person is head for a year or so and then another. It creates a situation where the boss does not want to rock the boat, since the boss will return to the ranks of the detectives really quite quickly. If you are ambitious you almost have to transfer to elsewhere. The woman who instructed me to not look at the reorganisation actually has totally left the organisation for another part of government. There is no one now left who knows what was agreed to at the time. This seems quite common in the Ministry; the living institutional memory is quite weak. Too many people shift around in government or leave altogether for it often to be clear what was decided, when and where or why.

I was happy to have access. The proposed setting certainly sounded interesting and the theme of researching work experience in an art-based manner was confirmed. She gave me a list of persons to contact who she had, in effect, volunteered for the project. I later discovered this was very valuable indeed as the detectives in the Criminal Investigative Department are really doing police officer like work. They are investigating criminal behaviour mostly done by criminals. There is a lot of secrecy and security issues around their work. The people being investigated are not supposed to know that they are being investigated. No leaks of information to the criminal underworld or the press are acceptable. The detectives are not loose lipped and will not just talk to you. I really needed that official list of participants' granted by a senior official. With it, I could make the necessary contacts and execute my plan. Not only do the detectives have lots of reasons security reasons to be very careful with who they talk to and what they say; they were also very suspicious of anyone from the outside. They hated the reorganisation and saw outsiders as potential enemies sent to enforce more unwanted change. I was able to convince them that I was not a spy from some organisation consulting firm charged with implementing the next plan. While I had accepted to not pose any

questions about the reorganisation I did not have to. Everyone began spontaneously to talk about it.

## ON ART-BASED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Art-Based Research Methodology

There are three major issues I will address in this chapter: (i) How and why I am committed to art-based research; (ii) How I position myself in relationship to the varied practices of art-based research; and (iii) Why and how I am closest to Shaun McNiff's approach to art-based research (McNiff, 1998, 2013).

#### Commitment

I begin my reflection on my commitment to art-based research and its methods inspired by Marcelo Diversi and Claudio Moreira's *Between Talk* (Diversi & Moreira, 2016). It should seem like a very unlikely starting point. There are very few methodological similarities between their book and my research. They built their book based upon two well or not parallel comparisons. The first comparison is between the researcher and the researched in the context of the street children of Brazil. Here, issues of solidarity and identification are paramount. Can two Brazilians who have escaped to academic life in America really relate to the street children of Brazil? At enormous (excessive?) length the researchers try and convince us (the reader) of their solidarity and commitment to the researched. But the researched are always what is seen and heard, what is and remains 'Other' and perhaps is othered. It remains researcher awareness, researcher vision, researcher politics that are crucial. The second comparison is between the Brazilian researchers and the academic norms and values of American (USA) ethnography and especially academe's resistance to (auto-)ethnography. The American professors refuse to understand the commitment of self to other, whereby ethnography is grounded in a position of self and cannot be transparent without admitting to researcher engagement; even if that engagement takes the form of control over the research project, distancing from the researched, and the ultimately the rejection of the Other.



The first theme is that of the researcher's relationship to the researched. In my case it is a highly paradoxical relationship. As someone who had a stroke just before my birth causing brain damage, I have a limp, suffer from epilepsy and am officially an 'invalid'. The 'invalidity' of my being would be something that Diversi and Moreira would want to campaign against. They would stress the injustice and brutality of disrespect and marginalisation contained in the phrase. They might even compare me to other oppressed minorities who are labelled and thereby shunt aside. But I want to address a somewhat different perspective. I have done research in the ministry that supposedly takes charge of addressing my position. It is the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs that is responsible for the provision of support social, educational and economic, to someone like myself. And I have ended up trying to treat their problem of 'anomie'. It is a very ironic reversal that I became a researcher trying to address (however, modestly) the social issues of the Ministry, while they have not really ever addressed my own issues. And to make the strangeness of the reversal even more pronounced, the task I had after I completed the research was recruitment, selection and coaching of 'persons of disability' for jobs in the Ministry. The Dutch government has a quota for the hiring of persons of disability and the Ministry had fallen well below the legal quota, whereby it was urgent for it to take on new hires. I discovered that the problem was not so much in finding qualified candidates but in finding managers who would be and remain supportive. There were many tasks requiring hours on end of controlling data on computer screens, which autists often proved to be especially suited for; but managers, for instance, have to arrange for fixed workplaces for the autists to feel secure, while the Ministry is characterized by flex-work. Thus, I could and did achieve the quota, but how many of my hires survived is unclear.

How do I characterize my relationship to the researched? At first, I was an adjunct researcher and later I became a colleague. My position evolved from a temporary research contract to a permanent one. But was I ever, or did I become, "One of them"? Firstly, the question assumes that 'they' are a 'them'; that is, that the people working in the Ministry form some sort of homogeneous group. I have neither ever felt that as a researcher I belonged to some sort of identifiable collective or cohesive group, or that as an employee of the Ministry I did so. Diversi and Moreira's structure of

identifications and conflicts between identities just does not resonate with me. I will examine the self/other relationship in terms of academe below. As for the relationship to the Ministry, I see it as a complex field of unstable relationships. But paradoxically it is very stable in its instability. The Ministry by design is characterised by shifting tasks and responsibilities. Most employees work a few months on a theme and then are recast into other teams with other persons and other tasks. Impermanence is planned and is by design. The civil servants are not supposed to become specialists strongly attached to particular themes or interests. The constant redefining of focus, task and colleague relations has been self-consciously implemented grounded in a political ideology wherein the Ministry is supposed to serve neo-liberal political goals and not to defend the rights or demands of the social-economically weakest. An organizational model has been chosen that hinders social idealism and minimalizes strong collegial relationships. The civil servants are not to function as an independent force on policy formulation of implementation. The effect on the Ministry is that 'esprit de corps' is weak and identification with the Ministry is absent. For the most part, the 'we' is not a strong positive identifier. The inspection, because of the security issues, has been protected somewhat from the organizational culture, but certainly not entirely.

Diversi and Moreira studied street children in Brazil and portray the children as the oppressed Other. The researched are identified with the politics of class, gender and race; the researchers see their research as polarized between repression and privilege, exploiters and the exploited. My research had no such self-evident polarization. My relationship to my colleagues and sometimes researchees, was ambivalent. Even when I was in the beginning just an external adjunct researcher, they assumed that I was one of them. The work relations are so fluid, structurally ambiguous and networked, that if you had security clearance, as I did, it was just assumed you worked there. The paradox is that identity as deconstructed or flaccid was omnipresent; but this is the presence as a sort of nothingness. The world of sharply defined identities, with strong social and political significance, was utterly absent. The culture of the Ministry has been 'individualized' to the point that positive collective identity is minimalized and that has become a very strong organizational culture in the sense that everyone sees it as self-evident, impossible to question, and here to stay.

What did I as researcher bring to the table? Like my 'colleagues' I am university trained but unlike any of them (as far as I know) I have a BFA (Bachelors of Fine Arts) and thereafter an MSc in Media Studies. Almost everyone around me had either studied Public Policy or Business Studies (either at a Polytechnic or University). Thus, I was academically Other; othered by having made very different study choices. Having attended an Art Academy, my privileged way of observing and of giving feedback is visual. I do not think in business plans or policy nota's, but in visual impressions and ways of seeing. I fairly quickly realized that I see 'them' very differently than they see themselves. I was much more self-conscious about the significance of dress codes, forms of self-presentation and the display of social tokens, than 'they' seemed to be. The dominant aesthetic of sameness, or of 'just blending in', I believe was more apparent to me than to others. I was very aware of being a chameleon and of the necessity of being un-seeable. It is a culture where you do not want to stand out. As long as you stay invisible you have no problems with your higher ups or colleagues. It is a world of the 'invisible man', wherein invisibility is valued and rewarded. For a visual artist and painter 'invisibility' is problematic. What you see is that 'seeing' and/or 'being seen' is not what is expected of you. While my training as an artist was all about 'seeing', 'looking' and 'visualizing'. I had entered into a sensory conflict wherein my dominant visual perspective had to be kept in check and not put too much on display.

My entry to the Ministry was as an adjunct researcher. Just because the visual is repressed and not in evidence it was decided to define my research as 'art-based'. On the one hand, that met with my background and predilections. But on the other, it made me so alien that no one would really try to relate to me. As researcher, that had advantages and disadvantages. Positive was that I could wander about fairly freely without being seen as a threat. The negative side is that it made it problematic to be taken seriously and, later, to get a permanent position. If I had been introduced more as an organizational or sociological researcher, I would have been denied access. Research into the organizational culture was taboo for the leadership. Even I was instructed that in my interviews that I was not allowed to ask any questions about the 're-organization', i.e. about the organizational culture. My 'brief' was to interview staff and feedback my impressions via art works. The goal was to allow more room for

expression or awareness by encouraging the researchees to reflect on their own sentiments. My position was paradoxical. There was an acknowledgement of anomie and I was charged with giving support to awareness and reflexivity. ( Ashmore, 1989) But there was clearly no change agenda. I was not to channel the discontent or in any way force senior management to acknowledge the organizational issues. Art was considered to be a fortuitous embellishment and not dangerous; which brings me to the relationship between academe and my project.

I now turn to my second theme concerning Diversi and Moreira; the relationship between methodology and academe. They have framed this as a defence of (auto-)ethnography, under intolerant attack by the university establishment. At issue are the role of the body, affect and engagement in research. Diversi and Moreira claim to defend the principle of relatedness in research. The researcher needs to be emotionally and physically present; researchers are moved by researchees and have direct bodily experience of circumstance. The writing needs to do justice to the circumstance. Poetic and literary forms are needed tools to represent the situation and condition of other. Objectification is suspect; any impression of not being involved or not caring is unacceptable. Diversi and Moreira have taken their methodological clues from Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner (Ellis & Bouchner, 1996). In Ellis's book *Ethnographic I* (Ellis, 2004), she makes use a fictionalised rendition of a methodology course. The students described are not real people but her synthesis of students she has known. The course and its development, again, are all fictionalised accounts. Methodologically, for me, the problem with Ellis and Bochner has to do with the practice of fictionalization. When I say there were two teams of five participants that made up 'green' and 'red' I think it is crucial that this was really so and that the reader can have confidence that it was so. I do not subscribe to the claim that engagement demands fictionalization. Experiments in representation are fine with me and certainly I see their value. But I do not see fictionalization as in any way necessary to striving for forms of representation that do better justice to one's subject matter.

**Intermezzo**

*My methodological position is complex. On the one hand I am a sort of realist; I would insist that the texts on display here from the members of both the Green and Red groups accurately display their feedback. I feel that I have evidenced their reactions and some of their attitudes. But there has been no study here of behaviour. From the data we have no way of knowing who does what, who is more or less effective, or who is really more or less committed. The data only displays what these persons say about themselves. The data is all about these person's self-representations. What is apart is that the cycle of interviewing-painting-feedback did bring forth other texts than the participant's everyday speech. Reacting to the paintings prompted more reflexive and extensive self-representation than I ever experienced otherwise in the Ministry.*

*Was it autoethnography? My research started on an autoethnographic note. I wanted to investigate artists' struggle with work. My motivation to do that certainly had to do with my struggles to find employment and to 'fit in'. As a painter I would have to sell myself to galleries and at best would eke out a very low income. Though the quality of art education in the Netherlands is very high, the career prospective for artists is pretty miserable. I wanted to create a work-life identity for myself that was more than less viable. And I wondered how my co-art school graduates faced the same dilemma. Thus I started with the idea of taking my question and investigating it by studying others; in other words, autoethnography. But the American methodology of doing autoethnography that emphasizes the researcher's emotions did not appeal to me. I neither wanted to fictionalize my data, nor present it as drama. And the emphasis on emotion that I find characteristic of Ellis' work did not appeal to me. Affect when it is grounded in circumstance belongs, I feel, inside the research; but over-stressing affect way beyond how it is actually experienced in the field seems to me profoundly unwanted.*

*The people eventually studied are not artists and none of them have attended an art academy. The artists refused to work with me to explore our (common) struggle with work. My feeling was that they saw economic survival as entirely individual and not as a shared problem, and that they did not want to reveal their struggle to anyone else (perhaps also not even to themselves). I had to redefine how artist and work could be combined in a research project. Instead of focusing on how the artist does or does not*

*economically survive; I was faced with the challenge of creating a survival strategy for myself. But the results of that strategy are what is revealed here and not the strategy itself. What I did is combine being an artist with being a researcher. Normally these are seen as two different worlds: art and social studies. My project was to integrate them in a single activity. I am here both a creative artist and a practitioner of social studies. This project is meant as living proof that the divide between the two realms is not a necessity and that art can integrate successfully with social studies research. But as evidencing this integrative research proposal became my goal; the self-reflective dimension of me and work got replaced by intra-disciplinary researching.*

*This is not an interdisciplinary project. I do not remake art as social studies or social studies as art. They remain two elements that are combined in a single research project but retain each their own identity. When I painted I was not doing social studies research. I approached the painting very much as an artist. And when I interviewed, I was not painting. As an interviewer, I had one intention: to hear the other. The project creates a working intra-disciplinarity between the two elements and one that has social resonance. Both qua art and qua social studies, the project succeeded to produce the desired deliverables. I believe in the paintings and I am convinced that the reflective data was of superior quality to what prevailed on the work floor. This the project, I am convinced, met two success criteria: the visual criteria of producing worthwhile paintings and the social studies criteria of generating valuable insights.*

*Autoethnography not only has the disadvantage, already stated, of (what I see as) its forced emotionality, it also strives for interdisciplinarity. That will say, that it merges observation, interviewing, writing and the drawing of conclusions into a single meshwork without separable elements. This has the disadvantage that the Other is just as integrated into the text as is the authorial 'I'; the difference between self and Other is abolished in the one singular text. I do not see this as a valid strategy. I want the two groups (Red and Green), as well as myself as artist and social studies researcher to retain their separateness. One identity should not possess another, one person should not dominate another. A further identity factor remains undeveloped in the project; I am also an employee of the Ministry. I found the two groups I studied, and my two roles in the research, a complex enough structure, not to want to include yet another dimension. Yes,*

*I am a civil servant. Yes, I also exist in the complex world of loyalties, insecurities, pressures and denials all of which are present in the Ministry. But I feared that if I put my coming to identity as a civil servant into the project that I would lose sight of the Others whose stories I wanted to hear as sensitively as I could. I did not want to get in the way of the Other by asserting my identity or feelings. In qualitative research defining the research task is often difficult: exactly what do I want to study? And if the task is defined, maintaining successful and respectful relatedness is a major challenge. Herein, 'Self' factors are more a danger than a help. I was not there to discuss, debate, agree or disagree with the others, but to listen, hear and try to understand. In the art I had more than an adequate space of expression; one that I hoped would not endanger or dominate the Other but be complementary to Other. I am convinced that the strategy worked: as artist I maintained and expressed myself in the context in a way that engendered awareness and openness and did not dominate or repress communication.*

*Monika Kostera (Ericsson & Kostera, 2020) has suggested that I could adopt her label and call this 'alterethnography'. The term has been developed to stress the intra-relatedness of research wherein differing persons and texts retain their individuality and integrity. Obviously, the project was grounded in relatedness: the paintings could only work insofar as I succeeded in listening and translating what I heard into visual material. There was my relatedness as interviewer to the interviewees; there was my relatedness to visual art as a painter translated what I felt I had heard into another medium, and there was the final interview round where the interviewees became reflexive respondents to the art works. And all of this was related to the work situation. Work was and remained the theme. But it was work as a civil servant, work as in the interviewing, and works as in art works.*

*Kostera stresses the not-patriarchal quality of alterethnography. But the Ministry is hyper-patriarchal. Showing subservience to superiors (whether man or woman) is the norm. Thus I admit to feeling a certain uneasiness about claiming alterethnography in such a contained and controlled setting. On the one hand, criminal investigation is not something you can do any old way. There are necessary structures that are required to protect the legal rights of everyone involved. The task was not something for 'cowboys' and the abuse of power had to be prevented. The ethical*

*tensions of working on a daily basis with sexual abuse, human slavery, exploitive labour practices, were obviously present. Though for the policy staff their distance from the field made it hard for them to really relate to the task at hand. One group was overwhelmed by the field and the other was (I feel) too detached from it. There are many potential organizational issues implied by my research. Could policy and implementation be brought closer to one another whereby the work of all would be more balanced and effective? But these themes were not a part of my research question. My goal was to do art-based research to pioneer a more revelatory relationship to the group(s) studied wherein more rich expression and awareness could (would) be revealed.*

*I am now much less an outsider looking in than I was when I started. I am now engaged in policy work and have slowly become part of the organization. I still have work wherein the expressive impact of visual media is important to what I am doing. But I also have work that is more traditionally policy directed. I have had the opportunity to do this intra-disciplinary work and its role as alterethnography I submit is methodologically significant.*

Qua the use of language, Diversi and Moreira identify poetic language with (auto-)ethnography and the suppression of active acknowledgement of and experimentation with poesis as forms of repressive academe. Diversi and Moreira: "Then, I heard about Norman Denzin . . . Then, my love affair with performance autoethnography started ..." and "I learned from you [Denzin] that 'writing creates the worlds we inhabit' (Denzin, 2003, pp. 243-268);" and "Similar to Denzin, I see performance as sensuous and contingent." The claim here is that research writing should be 'performative'. For the writing to match its subject matter it needs to be able to experiment with vocabulary and syntax. In effect, what makes the difference between an ethnography or case study, and a novel or play? In the novel or play I expect character development and plot; in an ethnography or case study I expect a relevant exploration of a theme. In my research I examine whether the ten researchees will acknowledge their own sentiments and realities in the art works provided as a feedback mechanism. Whether their love lives are tragic or fulfilling, their beliefs static or developing, their sense of purpose stable or threatened, is not explored. The 'drama' of their existence



which would be crucial in a play or novel is not explored. I ask, in effect, a single methodological question: can the cycle 'interview: artwork: feedback' be productive. Research for me entails a focussed exploration of a circumstance and is not trying to imitate 'life itself'. It is not clear to me that in Diversi and Moreira's portrayal of Brazilian 'street children' that there is a conceptual theme which is defined, clarified and developed.

Diversi and Moreira claim that intolerance for (auto-)ethnography has played a crucial role in their work not being accepted by academe. I would define (auto-)ethnography as ethnographic research wherein the theme or research question is grounded in the experience and identity of the researcher. The researcher identifies a crucial theme in her or his existence and works in dialogue with others (the researchees) to clarify that theme. A well-known claim is: 'If you want to study breast cancer do not send a 18 year old male to do interviews but a woman who has experienced the illness, if you want to get authentic, rich data.' A researcher who intimately knows a subject is much better equipped to be able to relate to the researchees than someone who has no such background. Of course, the researcher has to be genuinely open to the researchee and not just out to project her or his opinions; but this is a universal issue in interview technique. (Auto-)ethnography, here, entails a committed researcher with direct knowledge of a theme, who explores that theme with others through observer-participation and interview. But this is not what Diversi and Moreira are claiming. For them (auto-)ethnography prioritizes researcher commitment and political engagement. In effect, Diversi and Moreira identify (auto-)ethnography with post-colonial and gender studies. For them, social-political commitment comes first and ethnography is a means to confirm their assumption. I would have to counter that the research is hereby reduced to an illustration of the researcher's political commitment.

I have no qualms about experimentation in representation. The Other can be texted in a poetic or literary manner without the research interest being lost. And the subjective position of the researcher can be a very relevant theme to an ethnographic project. An ethnography can gain in quality by exploring the researcher's assumptions and subjective responses. Thus, as far as I am concerned, Diversi and Moreira were right in claiming language experimentation and self-reflexive investigation as appropriate to

research. But I feel they were wrong in not thematizing their material and critically questioning their thematic assumptions or principles.

In my research path, I started planning to do (auto-)ethnography and ran into two difficulties: access and academic resistance. As a graduate from the Royal Academy of Art (The Hague) I knew a whole cohort of young artists. One of us was a year after graduation featured on Dutch national TV. I knew that it was hard to earn one's income as an artist; the theme of the 'work of artist' appealed to me. 'M of art' and the 'work of being an artist' stand in complex relationships to one another. Does one have to become what galleries and the market demand to survive? What happens to one's being when one leaves the hot house of the Academy and has to survive in one's own studio? This was an (auto-)ethnographic theme for me; I was wrestling with my identity in art and knew that my ex-fellow students were in similar positions. I applied to do my methodological research training in the PhD program at Leicester University based on the described ideas. But once enrolled I discovered that my fellow artists were not willing to participate in my projected research. They found their struggles with their 'work identities' too threatening and dangerous to talk about and/or to share. At the same time my assigned supervisors voiced their resistance to (auto-)ethnography. They found it too subjective and potentially narcissist. These criticisms ones that Diversi and Moreira also encountered. In this same period a fellow student in Leicester offered me the possibility to propose a research project to the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs.

It was a moment of change and seemingly of openness at the ministry. There had been a change of government. The old Minister's signature legislation was widely seen as a failure. It had been a Labour Party (PvdA) minister who had tried to legislate to slow the growth of independent contracting, replacing permanent employment contracts. Increasingly workers had in effect been forced by their employers to become 'independent contractors' whereby the 'employer' could avoid paying social security taxes. The economic base for social services was weakened and the social position of the workers was made more fragile. But the law had not had the desired effect. Within the ministry there was a call to evaluate the process of drafting the law, asking if the civil servants had adequately connected with the target groups involved and collected the critical background information that was needed. Had inadequate research been co-

responsible for the failure of the legislation? In this context, I was invited to do art-based research into the mindset of the civil servants. My brief was to help clarify how the civil servants saw themselves and their work context. But quickly the leadership of the ministry stopped the move to self-criticism and the internal research project into the information lacunae co-responsible for the failure of the legislation was abandoned. I think that my subproject was not seen to be important enough to be forbidden and it was defended to top brass as 'art-based' and thus 'interesting' and 'not threatening'. But it is clear that my project was not meant by senior management to change the organizational culture or to provoke innovation. That was clearly communicated to me when I was told that in my interviews with civil servants that I was not to ask any questions about the reorganization that had occurred a couple of years before. It was fine to support reflexivity and employee awareness of themselves and their situation, but it was not allowed to question organizational leadership or decisions. In effect, issues of the organizational culture and how the organization was being run and/or structured were not supposed to be addressed. In the interview phase I discovered that many interviewees began from her- or himself to talk about the 'forbidden' themes even though I never asked about them. I never saw my research as an organizational change project. Research that claims that art-based research can produce originality, creativity and innovation in organizations (Antal, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2015),(Antal, Meusbürger & Suarsana, 2013,),(Antal, Debucquet & Frémeaux, 2018,),(Antal & Strauß, 2013, 2014, 2015),(Strauß, 2009, 2018),(de Monthoux, 2004),(Lee, Fillis & Lehman, 2018),(Linstead & Höpfl, 2000) has always seemed overwrought to me. If I could support just a little growth in awareness, a few moments of increased reflexivity and an instant of lessened alienation I would be satisfied. The idea that (my) art could change an organization's identity or redefine a researchee's perspective on her or his work-life always seemed like excessive hubris to me. Who am I to (re-)define another's awareness or her or his situation? And what arrogance does it assume that I should want to do any such thing? I am principally committed to a modest ethics of intervention. I want to respect and honour the Other and not master or change her or him.

I never wanted my (auto-)ethnography to become a self-confirming exercise in my own political commitments. I fully endorse the phenomenological position that one

has to bracket as far as possible one's own ideas when doing research and try to problematise one's own ideas. I do not see research as self-confirmation but as rigorous doubt and questioning. Diversi and Moreira are not a methodological model for me. I entirely agree with their position that representational experimentation is good for research and that the body and affect are relevant elements to researching. But I believe that a researcher needs to define a research question/theme and to attempt a (probably) qualified effort at 'realism'.

I am convinced that art-based research can meet both of these demands. I am sufficiently close to (auto-)ethnography that I believe that I should make use of art in doing research. It is the form of investigation wherein I am the most developed and have the richest experience. For me to research with artistic means matches my background, personal history and talents. It makes good sense for me to use art, or to be specific painting, in my research strategy. This is the way of relating to others and circumstances wherein I am the best trained and most proficient. But when I commit to use art in research, I retain the objective of doing research. I during this project never thought I was back at art school doing free painting. I always kept the research goals clearly before me and was focused on doing art-based research. Artistic resources, I am convinced, have their role to play in research; but that does not mean that I think that they should overwhelm the research intent and take over.

### **Positioning: Art-Based Research**

'Art-based research' is the label that Shaun McNiff (McNiff, 1998), Arianne Berthoin Antal (Antal, 2013) and Phillippe Mairesse (Mairesse, 2019) have given to the sort of project that I have undertaken. David Barry and Stefan Meisek (Meisiek & Barry, 2010, 2018) write about 'workarts' and Chris Kuiper (Kuiper, 2007) coined the phrase 'The Eventmaker'. I conceived of the project inspired by Kuiper and Mairesse; 'workarts' covers the full extent of the research history and 'art-based research' (Bardon, et al., 2020),(Barone & Eisner, 2011),(Chilton & Leavy, 2014) is, I believe, the best descriptor and platform for my work.

My plan for this research was based on Chris Kuiper's work. What exactly did Kuiper do that was art-based? He interviewed physical therapists in a commercially run organization to understand how they saw their clients, themselves, their work and the institutional setting. Kuiper then fed the results of the interviews back to a painter, Ronald Hillemans, who made five abstract paintings based on the stories of the five researchees. Kuiper then fed those paintings back to the researchees, who then, on the basis of the art experience, reflected further on the stated themes. In each case, the researchee recognized her or his painting; thus the paintings successfully caught the feeling, expression or subjective sphere of their subjects. And as planned, the painting-based or art-based dialogue, was much richer than the initial round of interviews. Stephen Linstead has repeatedly (2018a, 2018b) cited Kuiper's research:

Chris Kuiper (2007) ... explicitly focus(es) on two moments, the aesthetic and poetic; he incorporates the visual into his methodology, and more radically disrupts textual perspective, drawing on a wider range of aesthetic theory to better suit the material with which he is engaged, as Bergson recommends. ... Kuiper blends with a visit to a modern gallery, where abstract paintings and fragments of textual perspective are presented simultaneously – and bodily experience is rethought. For it is bodily experience – the experience of damaged bodies – that is at the heart of Kuiper's (2007) inquiry. With a background in physical occupational therapy, he was becoming increasingly frustrated that the way that the work was being represented, through standardized managerial report forms and summaries, in the name of quality assurance, was distorting the subtleties of interaction and the skills needed to ensure positive therapeutic outcomes for patients. It was pandering to control needs of administrative bodies, a political issue, rather than expressing what happens when consultation encounters are successful in a relational and ethical experience. He eventually adopted the position that relations change and successful outcomes become possible through emergent poetic moments within the therapeutic interaction. However, the parties involved have not been trained to identify and respond to these moments, and reports are conditioned to ignore them, or treat them as inconsequential if recorded. Kuiper chose to incorporate a radical methodology, but not in isolation. On the back of extensive qualitative research to produce 'thick description' and key issue analysis, he videotaped specific therapeutic encounters:

I identified between eight and twelve poetic moments – fragments of between ten and thirty seconds – in each interview, and showed them to Ronald (Hillemans) an artist. Together we chose one 'meaningful' poetic moment per interview. Our discussions were recorded. Ronald made a two-dimensional artwork based on the poetic moment selected. He made five paintings. The professional was asked to read and reflect on the painting referring to her/his practice. (Kuiper, 2007, p. 9)

Kuiper's brief discussion here might suggest a reductiveness to his approach, but this is misleading. His discussion of theory and method is nuanced and extensive, fine-tuned and fine-grained, and incorporates reflection by the artist on the nature of the co-production that this essentially comprises. .... there is much more of a sense of mutual discovery than expertism about the project. Drawing on a thorough pursuit of the concept in his literature review, Kuiper is initially applying the 'weak' sense of the everyday poetic in Cunliffe (2002) and Katz and Shotter (1996) and then focusing on the stronger and more *eventful* sense that we have taken here (Linstead, 2000). The feedback sessions, in which various interpretations of the poetic moment and the artist's rendering were shared, were also recorded. This facilitated the surfacing of points where the routine representation in language of the work of the therapeutic encounter was disrupted (Kuiper, 2007, pp. 13–14). The mode of presentation of the data was also an aesthetic intervention, in that three sets of accounts – the formal written requirements for therapeutic encounters, the researcher's observation of the encounter, and the therapist's comment on the event and the painting – were included together by splitting each page in three, so they were immediately both connected and set into play with each other (Kuiper, 2007, p. 15), each chapter also including the full-colour painting. What emerged was both highly personal, ethical in its engagement with the other, and inevitably political as it showed dramatically how the system was failing to do any kind of justice to therapists, patients and the 'mysterious' elements of their encounters, whilst opening out to something that powerfully but inexpressibly linked all the participants. Kuiper was also able to mount a robust critique of policy arising from his creative and 'playful' research. (Linstead, 2018a, pp 337-338)

What I find so important in Kuiper's research is how he made creative use of art works to set up a feedback loop. Kuiper extensively interviewed the physical therapists in his sample, who insisted that their sense of well-being had not been interfered with by the encroachment of 'best-practices' and 'protocolization'. Kuiper believes that his research cycle strengthened the therapists' awareness of their 'personal action styles' and hereby strengthened their professional identities. While the use of art to strengthen work awareness stood as my model for drafting this project, I need to point to the differences between the two projects. Kuiper had an evaluative research question, which I would summarize as: 'Has the standardization and commercialization of physical therapy produced anomie, dissatisfaction and stress?' He expected to find dissatisfaction, alienation and anger. The project was framed as critique of 'new public management' and how managerialism was eliminating care from healthcare. But the data did not support the hypothesis. The therapists replied in effect: 'We're doing just fine, thank you'. Kuiper at that point had two possibilities; to conclude that: (i) the expected negative effects of protocolization just are not there; or to claim that (ii) the organization had succeeded in redefining the therapist as 'terrorist'. The

latter idea was inspired by Baudrillard's reflection on 9/11. There is a level whereupon everyone has dreamed of destroying the 'power hegemonic' which oppresses themselves and others. But it is a violent and mostly immoral dream. Physical therapy was being remade into 'zapping dehumanization'; the exact opposite from its stated goals and ethics. But to 'destroy' this development would require that the researcher become a 'terrorist'. The therapists claimed, in effect, that they were part of the 'system world' and had internalized its practices and values. If Kuiper was to become the instrument of change, he would have to (somehow) 'blow up' the organization; i.e. accept becoming a 'terrorist'. Kuiper was willing to embrace the status of 'eventmaker' for the researcher and researchees; but not 'terrorist'. His goal was to make interaction visible and embrace the value of process. He was not politically or ethically about to embrace Diversi and Moreira's radical positions.

However, the story had a sequel. In the ensuing two to three years the majority of Kuiper's researchees had a 'change of heart'. Dissatisfied, they left the organization he had studied, they suffered 'burn outs' and/or made fairly radical career changes.<sup>3</sup> Kuiper's research remains for me a significant model for how art can be used in a feedback situation; but also, a warning. With art you can set-up an enriched feedback loop and make contact with your researchees. But art inspired reflexivity has no special 'truth value'. What the researchees reveal is just as situational, timebound and circumstantial as is any other research data. I do not want to claim that art-based research is more truthful than other options. It did in my study invite more reflexivity than occurred in the interviews. But researchee reflexivity is not some sort of superior truth. It merely reveals aspects of the situation and thought attachable to that situation that may not be revealed otherwise. Art-based research reveals thoughts and attitudes of the researched; it is complementary to observation and other forms of attentiveness, and it can broaden the scope of the known. But I oppose the claim that it is more truthful or somehow qualitatively superior to other forms of knowing.

From Chris Kuiper I took on the plan of creating an art-based feedback loop. In terms of David Barry and Stefan Meisiek (Barry & Meisiek, 2010) I have undertaken an

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<sup>3</sup> Oral communication from Chris Kuiper.

‘artist led intervention’ (Styhre & Eriksson, 2008). In their typology there are three forms of art-based research: (i) art collection, (ii) artist-led intervention, and (iii) artistic experimentation. In the first, the organization collects art works in a strategy of sensory stimulation. For instance, British police were encouraged to ‘see more and to see differently’ by studying 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings. Encouraging improved visual awareness was a way of strengthening their work at crime scenes. At first the officers observed very little in the paintings, but as their visual skills improved, they learned to see more and more. Some corporate art collections were products of investment strategies and/or ways of displaying power, savvy and status. The third form identified by Barry and Meisek is ‘Artistic Experimentation’ wherein project participants are encouraged and perhaps supported to make art themselves. The Imagination Lab’s ‘Lego serious play’ is often cited as a leading example (Roos, Victor & Statler, 2004). During my research for my Master’s thesis, Barry Kopenburg arranged a demonstration run-through for me of Lego Serious Play.<sup>4</sup> The basic idea was that managers were conceptually and visually cued but not tactilely. Thus, if they had to imagine a problem solution by constructing a three-dimensional object that represented the issue at hand, they would be forced out of their comfort zone and pushed to be creative. Furthermore, established power structures would very likely be interfered with, as tactile skills would probably not be distributed in the same way as verbal or rational ones. While almost everyone would have some familiarity with Lego, most participants would not have done much of anything with Lego since childhood. The material was known and foreign at the same time. Indeed, trying to visualize an idea or problem three dimensionally with Lego blocks was at first a strange and unknown activity. But quite soon one gains proficiency and routine in one’s use of the Lego. Lego serious play seemed to me to be a one-off activity that would quickly lose its creative strangeness. I thought that the claims to experimentation and creativity were overwrought. Organizations are hardy structures and power differences are not easily dislodged. The power of ‘artistic experimentation’ to facilitate organizational change is little evidenced and I think needs to be questioned.

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<sup>4</sup> At the time he was facilitating Lego Serious Play sessions in Holland.



The most common form of 'artist-led intervention' has been artist-in-residence projects:

Regardless of their form ... the artistic media used brings organizational members away from their usual instrumental orientation and lets them edge closer to an artistic way of seeing. The media provide sensory feedback on the stakeholders' conceptual frameworks, which in turn may lead to mindfulness. Second, the work within artist-led interventions is usually pleasurable. As the pleasure of asking in one's work replaces the fear of asking, an emotional and cognitive buffer is formed. Third, with artist-led interventions people are asked to find unusual interpretations and meanings, ones that are normally not attached to what is being studied. This might help organizational members to break away from the categories that something belongs to and discover the meanings that something potentially attracts or allows. (Barry & Meisiek 2010)

Mari Brellochs and Henrik Schrat have produced a carefully researched account of an artist-in-residence experiment (Brellochs & Schrat, 2005). Ank Strauß subsequently wrote a PhD thesis wherein she compared the Brellochs/Schrat German (educational publishing house) case with a contrasting French (Eurogroup consulting) case (Antal, 2011),(Antal & Strauß, 2013). It is exemplary of some of the issues involved that the 'art' is not reproduced in the articles. In Appendix 1 have reproduced art work from the French project and one of the artists who co-supervised the German project. The German project involved putting flags on the roof of the company, making videos of everyday work routines and cutting up corporate material (brochures, books, leaflets) and rearranging them in a collage. The German project was not a success and that may be why I cannot find reproductions of anything that was made during the project. When Strauß interviewed ex-participants, they could not in the first instance remember anything about the project. It does not seem to have had any creative or innovative effect on the organization. There was a pretty clear mis-match between the conservative culture of the schoolbook publisher and the artists. The conceptual art that was produced was not tailored to the publisher's culture. In the case of Eurogroup consulting the organization was much more 'hip' and seems to have embraced the idea of artistic playfulness. To be 'in-sync' with the consulting culture you really needed to embrace the project. In neither case is it clear that the artists really delivered effective feedback to the organization. In the German case there was clear resistance and in the French case the corporate culture seems to have prescribed that the 'trendy', 'different' and 'stylish' be embraced; but without much clear carry-through or real effect. In the

artist-in-residence projects the artists were supposed to offer feedback leading to new insights. But the evidence is very thin on the ground that the click ever really occurred between the artists and the organizations. Insofar as the projects were effective it seems to have been on the individual level where a particular employee was jolted out of her or his routines and began to question some aspect of her/his work-life (Antal & Strauß, 2014).

Barry and Meisiek (Barry & Meisiek 2010) introduced the term 'workarts' which I think points to the most positive aspect of the artist interventions. The word was created by reversing 'art works' to become 'workarts'. The artist interventions seem to be able to be effective insofar as they address work experience. When, as in Kuiper, the art is a catalyst to examining work circumstances it at least can produce rich narratives. But as I have indicated the narratives are very time and place bound; you can tap into current consciousness and evoke fairly spontaneous and unedited stories. But I suspect just because you are evoking less or not reflected upon narratives the stories feel authentic and very real, but can be very time-bound and fleeting. Kuiper I believe got closer to what the therapists were feeling at that moment and the narratives he recorded were more personal and alive than the more traditional interview data he collected; but the material turned out to not be lasting or stable. The art-based project tapped into more spontaneous and unedited awareness, but that awareness proved to not really be more 'true' or 'fundamental' than what was elicited otherwise. Art-based research thus can give you access to a more spontaneous and unreflected level of consciousness, but I believe that one should not simply prioritize any such results.

Phillippe Mairesse has written an excellent chapter on art-based research in the book edited by Jean-Luc Moriceau and Richard Soparnot (Moriceau & Soparnot, 2019). He begins with a quote from Antonio Strati (Strati, 1999): "Aesthetic understanding of organizational life ... is an epistemological metaphor which problematizes the rational and analytical analysis of organizations." (p. 101) It should be clear by now that I feel next to no link to this statement. Art-based research I think is a very valuable possible method for researchers. I have no ambition to 'aestheticize' organizational studies (Springborg, 2012). The philosophical debates that would prioritize ethics as the first philosophy, as inspired by Levinas, are much closer to me

than any assertion of aestheticization. My choice for Rosa as a key theoretical inspiration affirms the priority of resonance or relatedness as a key concept to my research. Art-based research is, for me, a pragmatics; that is, a concrete way to do investigation. I am 'art-based' because it provides a way of being related to the researchee that I find valuable and potentially revelatory. Art-basedness is certainly an epistemological choice for me: it supports a language of relatedness that I value and wish to practice. Painting can support a fundamental openness to Other and circumstance; it is a potential form demonstrating of relatedness and creating resonance. Painting is a communicative language, which I wish to tie as closely to dialogue as possible. I am not a conceptual artist because I do not see the Other flourishing in such art. I experience conceptual art as unidirectional from the artist's concepts to the world. The dialogue between the painter and the painted, between. I do not see an embrace of the artist and her (his) materials, the painting and the viewer, in conceptual art. I see a monologue of ideation and an assertion of a singular truth or statement as antithetical to the relatedness that I see as the source of my art.

Mairesse goes on to state three goals for art-based research: (i) an augmentation in what research can reveal, (ii) to inspire movement among the researchees, and (iii) to increase reflexivity. These goals I can embrace; though I would stress that 'movement' can too easily become managerial; that is, the artist making the researched do this or that, or be aware of this or that; and I do not think that the artist should take on any such management of the subject as her (his) role. Mairesse makes the link quickly to managers and art-based research via Vincent Degot's "Portrait of the manager as an artist." I subscribe to a more radical 'workart' position; for me art-based research tries to reveal awareness of self and of one's situation, in relationship to work, via the art that it produces. 'Workart' is for me not management art. I have not studied managers but investigative officers and research staff. I do not so much want to embrace Eve Chiapello's 'Artistes versus managers' (Chiapello, 1998) as to understand Others in via a workart approach. Those Others are studied here in terms of their work-lives and work-identities. My art-based research has been work-related. I admit that I did not really have much access to the managers; and that the few I did get to know tended to be very critical of the managerial caste within the Ministry. My 'workart' was not

undertaken to optimize managerial control or strengthen efficiency; I tried via the art-based feedback loop to better know and understand persons in their work identities and perspective.

Mairesse, as devotee of Jacques Rancière, has far more ambitious goals for art-based research than I do. Rancière's theory of the 'Partage du sensible' (Rancière, 2013) did not enter in to my research. Admittedly there is always a way of seeing, and the structuring of awareness in the Ministry was not liberatory. As I have indicated, there was an unsettling paradox in the mindset of the Ministry. On the one hand our task was to defend the rights and give support to the situation of the weakest members of society. And the Inspection had a police function of finding, stopping and see punished labour abuse, exploitation and slavery. Especially the 'Inspection' where my research was housed exists to fight wrongs and to protect the (potentially) exploited. And in my interviews, there was ample evidence of these goals. But at the same time, it was A government bureaucracy where initiative, creativity and personal passion were taboo. The 'sensitivity' or structure of assumptions and awareness was anything but democratic. Civil servants are supposed to carry out orders and not to talk back. This was work without voice or any right of initiative. Dedicated to the defence of the weakest and organised in strict bureaucratic rationality; it is an episteme of contradictions. But the structural paradoxes of the organization were not the material of my research. My goal was with art-based methods to achieve a more truthful contact with the 'workers' and their stories. Of course, my eyes were open and thus I reflected upon the context and made some organizational analyses for my own illumination. But my research goal was never to do organizational analysis.

Mairesse continues his chapter by outlining a five step procedure for doing art-based research: (i) observation (immersive reconnoitring of the research object); (ii) focus on the research object (participative-observation and ethnography to delimitate the research object and goals); (iii) analysis (descriptive interpretative synthesis of the research object and experience); (iv) elaboration (abductive understanding, create a narrative); and (v) dissemination (publication). In the first phase the researcher allows her- himself to freely experience the research site in pursuit of immersion in the circumstance and context. In the second, information is collected in a structured and

conscious way. A steering research plays a major role. In the third, what has been seen is reflected upon and investigated. Interpretation makes use of assumptions and theories, but doing justice to the researched is prioritized. Stage four is that of writing. The goal is to create a narrative genuinely true to the researched. And the fifth is that of closure; the research project and text reach completion. While there is no contradiction between Mairesse's model and my experience; I would have to add the process was often iterative. Several times I thought I was in phases 3 and 4, only to be thrown back into phase 2 to redefine my focus and control my assumptions.

Mairesse continues by examining the specific characteristics of an art-based methodology. He lists nine alternative approaches, which I name and comment on:

- The study of organizational aesthetics.(de Monthoux, 2000),(de Monthoux & Statler, 2008),(Strati, 2007),(Taylor, 2002),(Taylor & Hansen, 2005),(Taylor & Ladkin, 2009) The basic idea here is to transpose aesthetics concepts such as of beauty or 'schwung' to the examination of organization. Applying thinkers like Artaud or Nietzsche to the examination of organization produces starkly different observations from standard more functionalist approaches. Researcher based; artist can participate as 'expert'. As 'organization' was never my focus but the awareness of work situation, I did not find this approach relevant to my research object. Furthermore, as Mairesse states, it is an approach undertaken by a theoretician at distance from the object of research; my goal was to approach my researchees proximally.

- A naturalist empirical aesthetic examination of a research site with emphasis on criteria of belonging, that is, what does a 'member to be' entail. The goal is to understand the link between experiential and sense-making levels. This is an empathetic approach but clearly from the outside in. The researcher observes and describes making use of aesthetic tools of description. Researcher based; artist can participate as 'expert'. I was very aware of the 'membership' issue in my research context; but that was a sociological background issue for me and not the focus of my research.

- A naturalist empirical aesthetic examination of a research site with emphasis on a critical incident or some variety of exceptional event or circumstance. The researcher is in an external position, making use of aesthetic tools of description

and judgement. Researcher grounded; artist a potential expert source on aesthetics. I did not study the reorganization; this is much more 'change management' focussed than what I did.

- The study of 'objects'; the researcher collects materials (such as logos, office design, brochures, presentations, etcetera) and studies them using aesthetic criteria appropriate for the study of for applied art(s). Researcher based; artist is observed. I was focussed on the persons and their stories and not on institutional 'objects'. The researcher/researched divide here is far too pronounced for my intentions.

- The study of organizations or institutions as aesthetic objects. This entails the application of criteria coming from art studies and analysis, to organizations. Researcher based; artist is observer/observed. The researcher/researched divide here is far too pronounced for my intentions.

- Studies based on art works (objects) produced as encouraged and/or activated by the researcher. Use aesthetic criteria of description and judgement to study the objects. Here the artist is supposed to be a possible inspirator, but not directly engaged in the research process. Role of artist too distanced from the researchees for me.

- Studies based on art works (objects) produced in co-operation between the researcher and the researchees. Researcher is both investigator and artist. Art works are critically studied (for instance, with use of Bourdieu). The roles of researcher and artist are here the closest to my approach. While Mairesse proposes Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital as foci, I chose Rosa's theory of resonance for mine. Here art-based research is participative and examined or evaluated from a philosophical-sociological perspective.

- Action research making use of art production and possibly performance. Artist is participant in a collective organizational change process. I certainly did not have a remit to facilitate change; in fact, quite the opposite, I was forbidden to do so.

- Art production and dissemination; researcher and artist work together to make artwork for (gallery) display. While there was a brief exhibiting of my paintings in the Ministry, this was not the primary focus or part of the project.

Mairesse makes the point that each of these follows the five-step research pattern already described.

Mairesse concludes his article with three assertions positioning art-based research in regards to social studies research methods; and three principles of methodological research rigor. In regards to the positioning:

- Social science can be described via two different metaphors that of ‘mining’ and that of ‘gardening’. In ‘mining’ the task is to extract the key bits of truth and meaning out of a plethora of possibilities. The researcher has her or his pick or dynamite to explore the rich veins and to refine the raw material. But the research field is ‘mined’ or characterized by risks and dangers. Contrastingly, research requires the skills of a gardener who cares for her (his) plants, weeds her (his) fields and harvests her (his) results. Mairesse claims that art-based research is gardener-like. It involves care and attention for research and respect for ones’ materials and Others.

- Social studies research involves affect. It is research that entails movement and being moved; it requires processes of resonance and responsiveness. It is research that demands the ability to feel, make answers to other, and discover ways to develop openness to circumstance.

- Social studies research appeals to reflexivity. This research is a call to reflect, consider, question and wonder. It is research that addresses its audiences as an appeal to think, contemplate, extrapolate and make use of ideas and insights. The research process demands the same fore-mentioned qualities of its practitioners, in doing their fieldwork and writing-up their findings.

- And the concluding three general principles:

- Every circumstance of social construction involves participation and organization, which can be studied and analysed aesthetically;

- The (co-)construction of social existence inherently entails symbols and symbolization whose relations (including their dis-engagement and deconstruction) are potential objects of aesthetic regard.

- Research quality demands researcher engagement and the taking of distance, including awareness of construction and the possibilities of deconstruction.

Applying these two lists of criteria to myself:

- I gardened, trying to develop rapport with the researchees, and never saw them or the research setting as a source of 'data mining'. I did not deal in 'bits of information' but in gestalts of feeling and reaction.

- I was often moved by the sense of 'blocked existence' conveyed to me by the organizational culture of the ministry. In my painting I strive to convey the emotions and affects that the interviews and observation of the circumstance conveyed to me.

- The theme of resonance emerged, I believe, as an appropriate way to reflect upon what was witnessed.

- My research was grounded in my relatedness to 'Green' and 'Red'. Resonance became my principal conceptual tool of reflection. In my discussion of 'painting' I expounded on my conviction that painting is necessarily relatedness. As I have already argued, if art becomes 'theatre' or ideational assertion, it in my opinion loses its fundamental social and ethical dimension or qualities.

- Engagement is necessary to the making of art but so is a certain distance. When I retreated to my studio to make the paintings I needed strong impressions from the Ministry but also the ability to lose myself in the canvas. It was a situation of engagement and being at a distance, of involvement but also of disengaging myself from the interviews in order to render them in art. The paintings are not literal translations of the interviews; they are creative acts of interpretation that require an ability to look from an aesthetic distance. In addition, in my writing another level of distance-taking was necessary. The thesis is written about the Ministry, about the interviewees, about the paintings, and about being about. There are, thus, a series of acts of distancing wherein each brings me (paradoxically) closer to a more complete or broader consideration of the research and researched.

### **Inspired by McNiff**



Shaun McNiff is a (if not the) founding father of art-based research (McNiff, 1998, 2013). I feel myself closer to his and his recommendations than to all other sources (Barton, et al., 2020),(Denzin, 2003),(Nelson, 2013),(Savin-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014),(Rolling, 2013). His insights came from being an art therapist. His ideation of art-based research methods were developed to facilitate research into art therapy. In all his work, there is an artist as initiator and/or facilitator, there is another who is a source of art work, and there are the objects of artistic endeavour. The research is about self and other as realised or mirrored in artwork. McNiff feels that he has to defend art-based research from the demands of objectivity, generalisability and behaviourism. Because reflexivity is crucial to art-based research it cannot be studied if one banishes introspection from one's field of study. Art-based research for McNiff is all about rendering something significant in an artistic image and then being able to reflect upon the reflection. If reflection is methodologically banned from research there is no way to understand the working of art-based investigation as the reflective loop is absolutely crucial to its very existence.

For McNiff (1998) art-based research is about using artistic inquiry to achieve the creation of new knowledge. He sees art-based research as a new type of research "which resonates with the artistic process" (1998: 11):

... the plan for inquiry [needs to pass] the researcher's personal test for truthfulness: will the study be of use to others and to ourselves? Will the process of inquiry help people in any way? And most important, does the study resonate with the researcher's experience of creative arts ... [intervention]. (1998: 14)

McNiff's work originated in art therapy; originally, his research made use of artwork created by clients; later he focussed on his own art production; and even later than that he made the move from art therapy to art-based research as a form of organizational study and intervention. But before I trace the process of his development, let me pause and respond to his research criteria just stated:

- New knowledge: in my research the uncertain factor was whether the art-work would gain researchee recognition and offer convincing support to the claim that an art-based feedback loop has revelatory potential when applied to work-life investigation.

- Resonates: on the one hand I interviewed the researchees and on the other I painted. I experienced the painting as a genuine creative process. I was not didactic, the art was not 'theatre' (or even worse propaganda); the artistic process was totally in line with what I consider to be artistic integrity and genuineness. The research and the art-making dialogued with one another in a manner with which I am entirely satisfied.

- My personal test of truthfulness: in the Ministry I was always guarded about what I said. On the one hand, I wanted to be 'low profile' qua my ideas, so as not to have the researchees repeating what they thought I wanted to hear to me. And on the other hand, the Ministry was an organizational culture where one was not supposed to voice criticism or dissatisfaction. It was clear that your superiors would not value critique. And I was part of the organization; I have a permanent post there. I am a part of the culture and I am expected to respect its rules. In the paintings I felt entirely free to 'speak out'. The art is more honest and open than anything I ever said. I think that the researchees felt that 'truthfulness' and responded to it in the feedback sessions.

- Research is to be of use or useful: the method gave space for reflexivity to myself and the researchees, without bringing us into the organizational danger-zone. Radical art-based researchers such as Diversi and Moreira would be very critical of my strategy. Organizational banishment or even worse exclusion from your job I do not think is 'useful'. The margins of self-awareness and individuality that are accepted in the contemporary bureaucratic organization are limited. A cry to out your emotions, frustrations and claims to necessary change, is not institutionally accepted. The appropriate dosage of emotivity or invitation to affectivity is at issue. If I had triggered a 'burn out' or 'dismissal' I believe I would have failed ethically. As shown in the data, one of my ten researchees did in fact (later) reach a 'burn out'. His interview data was indeed extreme and seemed 'forced' to me; or in the vernacular "over the top." I did not see it as my role to confront him with the commentary that his outings sounded so exaggerated as to be suspect. My credo was 'softly, softly'. I feel that the ten researchees were just a little bit more in contact with themselves thanks to the project, and that was a realistic and valid result.

- Creative arts intervention: I see art-based research as a modest contribution to potential (self-)awareness. I know there are research traditions that claim that art-

based intervention can and should make change, innovation and creativity possible in organizations (de Monthoux, 2004). I believe that these are unrealistic claims. Human change is rarely so dramatic or absolute as some seem to claim. I see art-based research as modest, careful and respectful; I do not want to 'change' Other or remake their identity. I do not subscribe to an arrogant agenda for art-based research or intervention. Herein I find support in McNiff who sees art-based activity as an offering of space for expression and reflection, but not as instant massive change.

To conclude: the art I produced functioned both as 'objects of inquiry and as modes of investigation'. The researchees questioned what the artwork meant and I have tried to address their possible significance in this writing. And, obviously, the art works were catalysts to question how the researchees saw themselves and their work lives. Art-based research as McNiff understands it is a self-selecting activity, which is not suitable for every researcher or artist; but I (with him) hope that it can be made more and more available as a possibility.

Art-based research as inspired by McNiff is 're-search' or a way to search again. My interviews became a means to paint and the paintings became a platform for reflection. Each move was re-searched (that is, searched again on another level) as the project developed. McNiff in his early research wrote about facilitation and other people's art. He concluded that this made his research feel 'second-hand' (Ibis.: 22). McNiff concluded that if art-making is central to the research process and to its illumination, then one needs to know and reflect upon one's art-making. Also, McNiff was troubled by the issue of ownership. If one's research is based on other people's artworks, is your use of their work ethical? What you claim and argue is not their's, but your's as researcher. If you use their artwork to make your points, does that do justice to the Other? McNiff concluded that he really needed to use his own artwork and artistic process as his source of art-based research. In this project I took on that position from the start.

McNiff struggled with efforts to impose positivism on him; asserting: "We do not have to legitimize ourselves according to another group's values and criteria. The need to use these external measures actually reveals a lack of confidence in artistic inquiry as well as an acceptance of a secondary or adjunctive role within the research

community" (ibid.:31). An advantage to setting out to do research in 2016-2020 within the research tradition of Institut Mines: TBS has been that I have not felt that I have to defend myself against demands for 'objectivity', 'justification' or of positivism. As McNiff claims:

Research in the area of human experience has become a mode of social justification and control ... [while] research activity can be pursued in order to inspire and stimulate others to perform with increased conviction and creativity ... this objective resonates closely with my experience of the creative process. My personal creativity and my commitment to the artistic process are fuelled by the expressions of others. (Ibid.:35)

Or

Art-based research grows from a trust in the intelligence of the creative process and a desire for relationships with the images that emerge from it. These two focal points are the basis for a new tradition of inquiry. (Ibid.:37)

Art-based research escapes the terror of rational reductionism by resonating with the researcher's and researchees' being.

McNiff methodologically questions what he sees as the issue of heuristic versus phenomenological research. With heuristic he points to:

The Greek word 'heuriskein' means to discover and find. Today heurism connotes a method of learning through which knowledge is discovered through an inquiry based upon the examination of personal experience. 'In heuristics ... an unshakeable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality, and what is within me in reflective thought, feeling, and awareness' (Moustakas, 1990, p12) (Ibid:53).

Heuristic knowing demands 'sustained immersion' and 'direct personal encounter'. Heuristic research is described as highly reflective, affirming of the personal

perspective and focused on the examination of the self. There are evident echoes of depth psychology here in McNiff's position. My art-based research is much more situational than is his work. I am asking how the researchees experience a more or less common situation; I am not asking them about their personal identity development. But McNiff acknowledges that in art-based research "the emphasis is on a partnership between the materials of expression and the researcher. In art, the self is a major participant but there is always the goal of making expressions that are able to speak for themselves" (Ibid.:54). In art-based research there are always co-participants and partners in research: people, places, artworks, circumstances. The art saves art-based research from becoming one-sidedly or exclusively heuristic. Limited to first person presentations of the artist's emotions, such as are to be found in some forms of auto-ethnography, is not an option for art-based research.

McNiff proposes a more heuristic approach to writing about painting than I have embraced:

In an art-based study ... I might examine my personal art motives as I make a painting, describing my initial feelings and inclinations as I stand before the canvas. I might identify familiar and recurring motives as well as new sensations, all the while linking these with aspects of the immediate experience of a particular environment. As I work on the painting, I can identify how these initial feelings are sustained; the ways in which they change and how I respond to particular things that emerge through the process of painting ... I anticipate being influenced by the emergence of thoughts as I work. The concrete qualities of the painting, compositional problems, and accidental occurrences will probably have a large influence on what I do. (ibid.:56)

I wanted the voice of the researchees to be the dominant voice in my research. I wanted their voices to speak out, but as openly or restrained, muffled or direct, expressive or repressed, lively or otherwise, as was authentically their's. I thought of videoing and analysing my process of painting and tried to do so. But it distracted me from painting and made me hopelessly self-conscious. I quickly concluded that such a heuristic focus was not in tune with my research goals. My artistic processes were just not the research object. Art-based research, for me in this research, was focussed via

artistic activity on Other; it was workart directed to a particular setting and circumstance. In the balance between an introspective and empirical focus, I have tilted to the empirical. I do not claim to have been phenomenological in my study because I have not assumed intentionality or tried to define in any way the essence to the persons or circumstances studied. Nor have I rigorously bracketed my assumptions about work in a contemporary bureaucratic setting or the problems of individuation in or era. But I have striven to let the voice of the researchees emerge authentically. I did not have a change agenda or a normative social conviction that I was out to defend. My goal was to let the emotional presence of the researchees take the lead. I was not trying to prove anything except that an art-based feedback loop could be illuminatory. The paintings were the 'third'; the force 'inbetween' that made the research possible.

McNiff's call ultimately is: "Get thee to a studio"; "Go there and learn about how to generate artistic energy; how to gauge its effects on you and others; how to discover your personal style of artistic expression and how to integrate it with [art-based research] practice" (Ibid.:132). Research will then connect to your own experience and evoke something from you (Ibid.:172). This project had those qualities for me; I hope also for the reader.

## RESONANCE

This research project has been grounded in a highly normative, you could even say social ethical, set of assumptions. I have assumed that the people who work in the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs would (should) desire relatedness to the subject matter of their work and to one another. In other words, total indifference, alienation and aloneness if not loneliness, were not assumed to be the basic and/or inevitable characteristics of contemporary society and work. I assumed that organization without reciprocity, tasks without respect, colleagues without recognition, were neither desirable, nor sustainable. In effect, resonance as a social-ethical necessity was supposed.

Hartmut Rosa in his 450 page (550 with notes, bibliography etc.) book *Resonance* (Rosa, 2019) defines and defends this choice. Before examining Rosa's *Resonance* book in some detail; let me introduce him and his work. Rosa positions himself in three traditions; the first tradition that he places himself in is that of the Frankfurter-school of sociology; the second is communitarian/humanist ethics (from Charles Taylor to Honneth Axel) (Bohman, Keding & Rosa, 2018), and the third is descriptive social phenomenology (Honneth, 1996).

The Frankfurter school of Sociology had the nickname of the 'Marx club'(Gordon, Hammer & Honneth, 2020),(Jay, 1973); famous members included Adorno, Horkheimer, Habermas, with Marcuse floating about, and some links to Walter Benjamin. The context was that of the extremely politicised sphere of conflict of the Weimar Republic in the 1920s. The project was to link leftist political Marxist action with philosophical and sociological analysis; they were trying to be academically serious as well as politically engaged. Ultimately the question for them became: "Why in a country that probably had the strongest and biggest leftist movement in Europe, did ultra-nationalist reactionary "Nazi" politics succeed? Their project entailed finding convergence between philosophy, psychology and sociology, and in particular between Freud and Marx. Rosa, while clearly a philosophical sociologist(Freitas & Bolda, 2019), refers of often to psychology; especially to social neuroses caused by a lack of relatedness or positive interaction.

The problem has always been that Marxists often claim that human history and identity are economically and class structure determined, with 'psychology' reduced to the subjective factor. Causality for (many) Marxists was materialist and economic. There is a definite tension between wanting to have attention for psychological factors, such as: identity, awareness and the way people understand themselves, and stressing the economic and political dimensions. Rosa constantly tries to balance blind social causality and individual agency. Some dimensions of the consumer society and neo-liberal capitalism seem thoroughly out of control in Rosa's opinion; but personal awareness and self-interpretation are crucial in his thought.

For the Frankfurters, after Hitler had taken over, Adorno's analysis of the authoritarian personality became a crucial insight. Hereby fascism and the psychological model of the authoritarian personality were linked. It was asserted that authoritarian communism was in some crucial senses very comparable or similar to authoritarian Nazism. With the ideological concept of the authoritarian personality the Frankfurter sociologists attacked communist Marxism and ultra-right-wing Fascism. Rosa continues in this tradition of trying to link psychological structures (or perversions) to social and political causes. Sociology and psychology, or political regimes and individual psychological and health problems, are cast as a two-way street of interaction and causality.

After World War Two Habermas emerged as the crucial figure in the post-war Frankfurter tradition. He developed his concept of discourse, which is a highly political concept of discourse. His basic idea is, that if there is no repression, then (and only then) there is the possibility for genuine dialog. If there is political and social repression; no dialog can occur because the person who is under pressure cannot make contact with themselves or communicate with the other, who is in the position of power. Habermas created a phenomenological analysis of: 'What does it would it take to have a genuine honest and democratic conversation?' Here we see psychology and sociology merged. Habermas developed his system world / life world polarity as dialogue enabling and dialogue repressing models. Rosa works, in his analyses, in a way very influenced by Habermas. In Rosa, you see constantly the resonance enabling and the resonance blocked modus. But Rosa does not introduce, as Habermas does, a political model; but



a social-cultural one. Rosa's favoured aggregation level is that of the person and group, linked to the economy and society, linked to the transcendent (meaning, belief, purpose). Rosa's approach is tripart; he sketches three levels of existence or interaction. Echoes of Habermas have to do with speech, relatedness, openness, and the quality of self-other interaction.

Intended is the analysis of positive feedback loops (i.e. relationships that strengthen one another) between the more phenomenological or individual level, and the socially structured and (even) determined level, and some sort of transcendent or ontological level. While Habermas invested heavily in the political as a zone of possible freedom, and in democracy as a 'good', Rosa is rather ambiguous about politics. In how much politics is the striving of ambitious leaders is unresolved. Rosa certainly does not see the political as a favoured zone of resonance.

Habermas described the modern society as one where bureaucratisation, standardisation and depersonalisation were constantly more and more invading the social world. The possibility for genuine conversation was under threat. Rosa sees a very similar threat, but does not have the same focus on deliberation, decision-making or democracy as the crucial theatre of relatedness. For Rosa resonant relationship is and remains fairly intimate or private; the group or society is much less positively empowered in Rosa than in Habermas. There is far more communitarian ethics in Rosa, where the individual perspective is crucial, than there is in Habermas.

The leading thinker in the post-Habermas or (if you will) next to Habermas in the 1970s — 80s is Axel Honneth. Honneth goes very strongly to the psychological and personal side of analysis with the individual need for recognition as his key concept. In Habermas you can still hear echoes of Marxism in the repressive force of capitalism invading the sphere of genuine personal awareness. The Marxist insight that workers lost all their freedom, because they lost their ability to determine how they worked, as they lost their expertise and were locked up in factories and reduced to objects of capitalist dehumanization, is all present in Habermas, but not in Honneth. Habermas does not focus so much on factories but he repeated the logic, with his idea that all private human and genuine space is being invaded by corporate bureaucratic structures. It is a softer Marxism, if you wish, but it is Marxist. Honneth on the other hand creates

his concept of recognition where the key idea is that people existentially and ontologically require or need acknowledgment or recognition from others. In a society where people cannot find relatedness in the form of support, recognition, acknowledgment; society will disintegrate into conflict, hysterics and violence. Recognition is a social human necessity; people need recognition and acknowledgement and will ontologically seek it and if it is frustrated that will then cause personal and social strife. Rosa did his PhD with Honneth. There is much of recognition theory in resonance, but Rosa stresses that there is also a key difference. Recognition is a purely ontological or existential concept operating on an ontic or interactional level; Rosa insists that there is more than that. As sociologist he is convinced that there are structural causes that go beyond the purely relational. Things relate that are not people, but industries, social classes, institutions and structures. Rosa finds a purely horizontal, ontic-philosophical / even personalist, analysis inadequate.

Rosa at a certain point went to Canada to work with Charles Taylor (Taylor, 2002),(Taylor & Hansen, 2005),(Taylor & Ladkin, 2009). Taylor is a Canadian social philosopher, where the existential elements of quality of relatedness are crucial, but where the Marxism (if it even is there) is minimal. Taylor has more social process (or room for sociology) in his thinking, but the theorization of social-economic conflict (the crux to Marxism) is absent. Honneth's recognition is still social analysis; Taylor's critique of naturalism led him to reject the prioritization of positivist science as a model for social studies. Taylor's communitarianism was just what Rosa was looking for to oppose Honneth's emphasis on the individual quality of recognition. Rosa with communitarianism regained the interactional and social dimension; but lost the German (post-)Marxist awareness of exploitation and conflict.

Rosa returned to Europe and his studies of accelerationism ensued.(Lijster, 2018),(Lijster & Celikates, 2019),(Rosa, 2014, 2015),(Rosa & Laitinen, 2002),(Rosa & Scheureman),(Rosa, Lessenich & Dorre, 2015) Rosa tries to re-equilibrate the more structural Marxist dimension of Frankfurter school thought with the later more phenomenological / psychological quality of life and more individualised humanist ethical tradition, of Honneth and Taylor. Resonance has a lot of acknowledgment and recognition (Honneth) in it, but also has a lot of Charles Taylor's communitarian ethics.

But his acceleration books were much more influenced by sociology and are more in the Marxist tradition of Frankfurter school. In the acceleration books, the key idea is that the capitalist economic system is driving us to speed-up. In the society of capitalism, the social-economic order is stable in its instability. Capitalism knows an enormous strong stability and that form of stability is instability of constant growth, constant change, constant propulsion forms the paradox of acceleration (Zaretsky, 2017).

Rosa in his intellectual history (Schiermer, 2020) and how he has to be positioned is as a complicated figure balanced between the more humanist traditions of social ethics, where democracy and respect are not based on an analysis of capital or economics or social structure, and the perspective where capitalism, social structure and sociology play a very strong role. In his descriptions and analysis of accelerationism Rosa got himself into a position where the humanism was dying, as capitalism in its constant speedup, acceleration of the (i) Technical, of the (ii) Social Change and of the (iii) Pace of Life, took over. This trinity formed a system where the one flows into the other, in a never-ending loop that only accelerates faster and faster. Perhaps in a Marxist sense this could only lead to revolution. It can be interpreted as a 'verelendung' theory, and in fact the acceleration books came extremely close to this. It means that things will get worse and worse until human identity would cease to exist and the whole social system explodes. In a sense, Rosa had worked himself into a corner where there seemed to be no constructive alternative. It is at that point that he wrote the Resonance book, which functions, in a way as his escape from acceleration. Resonance could thus have the subtitle: "Escape from Acceleration." (D'Ambrosio, (2019))

Rosa reverts in Resonance to Charles Taylor and the more ethical tradition, and in effect, to ontological humanism, where it is essential to what human being is that humans seek and need relatedness. What rescues us from the 'verelendung' of increasingly acceleration is human existential ontology. The very being of the human requires resonance, and because it requires resonance, it has to and will create relatedness. Rosa in Resonance, in effect, follows two lines of argument: the first, is an acceding exploration working its way up from the body to the self, to relatedness to the world; and the second divides resonance into horizontal, diagonal and vertical forms of relationship. In effect the first argument is ontological; it asserts that resonance is a

characteristic of human physical being, and the second argument is sociological, claiming that various social activities are characterized by different forms or aspects of resonance.

For Rosa, thus, resonance is an existential necessity; it is a characteristic of 'being' itself. But resonance has different forms, options and results depending on social – historical – economic arrangements. Rosa's study of resonance is grounded entirely in secondary sources; with every once and a while, hypothetical descriptions of prototypical persons. There is no direct empirical descriptive field work or self-reflexive (auto)ethnography (Keohame & Haugaard, 2020). The book is Rosa's exploration of how resonance can be understood or defined, and not Rosa's autobiographical investigation of affect, relatedness or muteness. Thus, *Resonance* provides theory, leaving the road totally open for application, such as in my research.

In the first forty some pages of the book, Rosa introduces his theme. He does this making use of three 'couples' wherein one member of each couple is much more resonating than the other. Since one of the two couples is formed by two artists, the structure of these contrasts will be our starting point:

- Gustav and Vincent, are two talented artists who have got two weeks to complete a painting for a competition. Gustav spends 13 days buying paint, brushes, canvas, lights, etc.; leaving one day over to paint. Vincent starts immediately grabs his materials, puts on his favourite album and gets started. Gustav, Rosa claims, is resource driven; by day 13 he has everything you could want to paint, but he has not set brush to canvas. 'Being well equipped' is portrayed as a fixation that does not lead to 'the good life' (Rosa, 2019), (Rosa & Hemming, 2019). Supposedly modern society follows the path of Gustav: focusing on prerequisites – health, money, popularity and not on 'the real thing'.
- Anna and Hannah, are two working women. At breakfast Anna is all light and enthusiasm, Hannah is dark and morose. Anna is delighted with her partner and children; Hannah is bored and despondent. After work Anna goes with pleasure to the gym; Hannah has to go for her health but hates it: "At the phenomenal level, Anna's life is probably characterized by laughing and singing, and perhaps also dancing, while

Hannah's is marked by mistrust, resistance, and even an aspect of rigidity (7) ... Anna's wire to the world vibrates because she believes in her own *self-efficacy*. She feels she has a *connection* with her family, co-workers and volleyball teammates, and that she can *attain* or *affect* something in each of these spheres ... whereas Hannah's relationship to the world appears mute, rigid, even cold (9).

- Adrian and Dorian came from the same small town and attended the same secondary school. After graduation Adrian went to the university and studied law. He has become a government prosecutor. Dorian drifted after secondary school, eventually studying art, history and literature; and became a teacher. Adrian is an atheist, follows the stock market, orders his books from Amazon and vacations in cities. Dorian is a Catholic, goes hiking in the mountains for his vacations and frequents the local bookstore. Adrian and Dorian 'appropriate the world' differently; Adrian practices *expanding his reach* and *mastering the world* while Dorian seeks out 'creative, reciprocal interactions and the establishment of social as well as extra social connections' (11). Supposedly Adrian's relationship to the world is shaped by *Logos* and Dorian's by *Eros*.

Rosa's conclusions:

.... there does undeniably seem to be a kind of elective affinity between Gustav, Hannah, and Adrian, on the one hand, and Vincent, Anna, and Dorian on the other .... Gustav here embodies the principle of resource maximization; Vincent, the figure of the process-oriented artist and connoisseur of life. Anna stands for the establishment of intensive, enduring axes of resonance, while Hannah serves as the epitome of an alienated experience of (and thus a failed relationship to) the world. Finally, Adrian symbolizes a strategy of appropriating world by mastering it and expanding his range of options; Dorian, a strategy of appropriating world through mimetic adaption (15).

The story of couple two supposedly focuses on *experiencing the world*; and couple three *on appropriating world*. While these introductory portraits are very individualized, Rosa asserts:

... our relations and relationships to the world are to a large extent collective social relationships, evolving in the context of various social practices and institutions deeply rooted in prevailing modes of being (14).

Rosa quickly leaves doing individual portraits behind him and focuses on broad social-historical characterizations. We will see that couple one is to be characterized in terms of horizontal relatedness; two, diagonal relatedness; and three, vertical relatedness.

In this chapter I will:

- Define resonance as understood by Rosa
  - As bodily, self, world;
  - As horizontal, diagonal, vertical.
- Discuss Resonance in art
  - From the perspective of the artist
  - From the perspective of the art's audience
- Explore researching Resonance

### **(1) Defining Resonance**

Resonance is a kind of relationship to the world formed through affect and emotion, intrinsic interest, and perceived self-efficacy, in which subject and world are mutually affected and transformed. Resonance is not an echo, but a responsive relationship requiring that both sides *speak with their own voice*. ... Resonance is not an emotional state, but a mode of relation ... (174)

Resonance (2019) is a book in four sections. It starts with an Introduction wherein Rosa describes six ideal types in terms of their (sometimes lack of) resonating qualities. Then, in the first section to the book (+/- 200 pages) he defines 'resonance', starting with an ontological discussion of bodily being and how that leads to resonance, and then continuing from there with an increasingly social analysis. After defining the basic categories of his concept, he continues in the second section (+/- 100pages) to the

book with descriptions of the horizontal, diagonal and vertical expressions of resonance. The Third section is an analysis of Modernism, which I will not discuss as it is little applicable to my research. The Fourth section forms his conclusions and commentary on current society.

Rosa begins his exploration of resonance with a description of bodily being before there is a 'self' as such. The new born is in relationship to its surroundings via its skin, mouth, ears, et cetera long before it has gained any sense of 'self' or identity. The baby is situated in the world from birth and seeks ontological security. The baby wants warmth, cuddling, nutriture, long before it self-identifies. These basics of relatedness continue throughout life. Ontological security means that the living being feels safe and assured that its basic bodily existence is affirmed, supported, made safe. The need is not to have to be concerned if one can breath or eat. There needs to be trust that the air and nutriture are safe and supportive. Our skin forms a tactile boundary between our existence and the world; again, the living being needs to feel secure of its existing in a supportive context. Bodily resonance needs to be preconscious; something the living being can just assume. Hereby a physical base for more complex forms of resonance is assured. From we can breathe freely, we develop to we can take in substances and experiences. Pathologies of bodily existence, such as obesity or irritated skin (rashes), are all too common forms of unsuccessful resonance. The needed positive bodily relatedness to the world has not succeeded, has been disrupted, or is under attack. While the very first moments of resonance are very much 'in us' as experience of world, as we develop resonance becomes more and more 'between us'. The child develops a voice or a particular sound that is hers; and a gaze or a look that is characteristically hers. The body increasingly takes on social qualities and becomes more and more relational. Its *being-in-the-world* if assured and socially successful supports walking, standing and sleeping. Bodily presence and activity are supported by the initial assurance of a physical righteousness of being and existing. As the child matures laughing, crying and loving all develop as physical resonances; but if the basic foundational bodily self-assurance is not there, all these more complex and social resonances will suffer. More and more social and complex behaviours get built on the initial sense of bodily assurance. If that initial bodily match between the new born's physical situatedness and its surroundings fail,

and continue to fail stage after stage, increasingly social problems or deviances emerge. The ability to be touched is fundamental to human integrity and development; it is grounded in the sense of trust and well-being of bodily existence that is grounded in the youngest reception of the new born into life. Intercorporeality starts at birth and lays the foundation for interworld relatedness. One sees in the analysis a characteristic of Rosa's investigation: he sees things such as eating disorders, speech impediments and pornography enslavement as potentially caused by a lack of successful resonance between the newly born and its world. From the very start, the skin grants the possibility of relatedness and of gaining (or not gaining) a positive ontological sense of being.

### **Intermezzo**

*I got to page 83 of Resonance (Chapter III) and after reading the chapter (pp 83-109) more than twenty times I felt only anger and despair. Either I could not understand or I could not see as coherent what I read. Rosa denies dualism, stating that he does not wish to imply "any acceptance of Cartesian mind-body dualism" (83). While the whole text, to my understanding, is doing nothing else than construct just such a dualism between 'appropriating' (the strategy of rational control over existence) and 'experiencing' (i.e. openness to being and existence). Eventually, distraught, I appealed to one of my supervisors. I cannot separate what Rosa claims and denies.*

*Even his examples of what: (i) 'life on the screen', and (ii) 'the contemporary experience of homosexuality' signify, seem contradictory to me. Why is perception mitigated via the screen, qualitatively different than perception via older media such as telephones, film or books? What exactly about the media and the reception of the media makes for the difference? Is bodily relatedness to a screen really fundamentally phenomenally different than bodily relatedness to content via other media? Of course, I recall McLuhan (I wrote a paper on him during my Masters study in Leiden); but what about the medium of the screen, differentiates it from other media? And why so? McLuhan claimed that new media negate aspects of the older ones that they replace. Is Rosa's attack on screen mitigation merely a defence of older ways of reception? There is more 'art' on the screen; it is visually richer than the book. But is this an alienating or just an enriching quality? Is the problem one of the 'screen' or of 'newness'? What causes the quality of use of the screen? Could it be that screens are more accessible than printed*



*pages, that is, a more democratic medium and that Rosa is opposed to the democratization of thought? Democratizing ideation may indeed lead to populism and excess; but is that an issue about the screen or about contemporary politics?*

*Rosa on homosexuality made me deeply uncomfortable. It seems that he is claiming that homo eroticism comes from the body and that intolerance comes from social-cultural arrangements. But are not cultural arrangements imprinted on the body as well as (to some degree) originating there? Rosa, when he discusses tattoos I see the same dynamic, seems to assume that there is the 'real' or 'pure' body and the muddied or impure body. But who decides what is what and with what justification? Rosa's voice on homosexuality upsets me. He seems to judge causal relatedness from afar; that is, play the role of the god-like author. But what grants him that authority and why does he even want to have it?*

*The pages that so confused me are about the relationship between the self and the body; that is, on to be a body (phenomenal / existential) and to have a body (world / objecthood). But how can Rosa claim that he is writing in the phenomenological tradition of Merleau-Ponty and insist upon this (seems to me) dualism? And, again, what do I make of his authorial 'I'. What 'body' is defining that there are two bodies? My first act of 'despair' was to go to the screen. I looked for and found online several Rosa lectures. I thought maybe when he orally explains himself it all becomes accessible and clear. But Rosa on the screen confused me all the more. When Rosa lectures he repeats himself almost word for word from occasion to occasion. Where is his resonance with his audience, with the circumstance, with daily existence? And his authorial 'I' seems flat, unemotional and impersonal. If this is the spokesperson for relatedness and resonance, why what I felt to be an enormous performative contradiction?*

*I was getting into more and more trouble, so (finally) I addressed myself to me supervisors. I just do not understand the theoretical 'moves' being made in Chapter 3, though it ends hopefully (for me): "this book presents itself not as a philosophy or psychology of our relationship to the world, but rather as a kind of sociology of relations of resonance (109). Thus Rosa remains an important source for me, but (perhaps) at the cost that I refuse to engage with Chapter Three's philosophical-psychology. Thus, supervisor, "How am I supposed to understand Chapter 3?"*

*The reply was startling: “Ah ha, you’ve understood Chapter Three; it is un-understandable! Indeed it is full of performative contradictions, with Rosa claiming to not be a dualist as he works to impose a dualist structure between resonant and mute. Existence only exists for Rosa insofar as he can think of it as a psycho-social phenomena. There are no phenomenal descriptions or investigations in his work. He comments on the phenomenal but never shows us himself entering into it. The phenomenal is something commented on in Rosa, mostly in generalized terms. That is, his phenomenal is never individual but always on the level of persons could feel, an imagined example might be, et cetera. Thus, the six portraits at the beginning are not real people actually situated in concrete circumstances, but hypothetical models for conceptual positions to be developed in the book. Rosa talks about, analyses and studies resonance; he does not resonate. To ‘resonate’ he would have to do ethnography; that is, to actually engage in relationships to persons and situations. But his assumptions about himself as sociologist and about sociology make that impossible. He constructs sociology as social analysis, not on the experiential level. He sociologically analyses ideal types and cultural circumstances, but never relates to them bodily or directly himself. He writes about resonance, sticking to aboutness as essential to his perspective.*

*In Chapter 3 he is abandoning the holism of the prior chapters: “I refrained in the preceding chapters from drawing a systematic dividing line between the phenomenal/lived body and the objective/physical body” (83). Since the rest of the book is to be based on that dividing line, and the dualism of resonance / non-resonance, he has to square the circle and claim the dualism crucial to his book and deny that he is a dualist.*

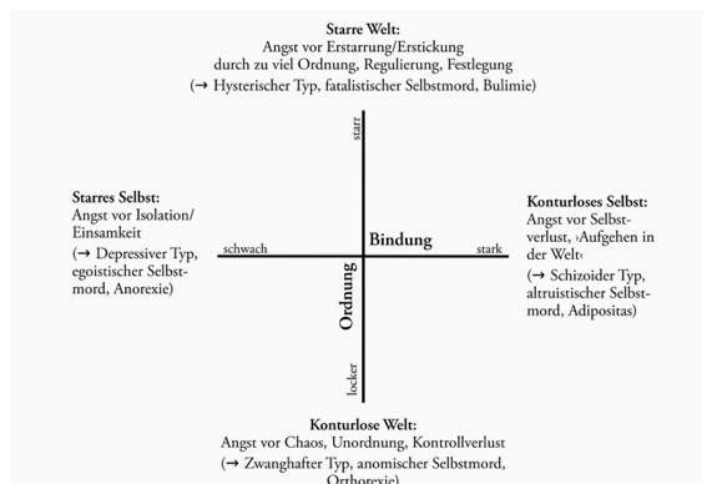
*My advice: stick to the sociology and park the philosophy and the performative questions for your discussion and conclusion section to this chapter. Since you have introduced the appropriate / experience dichotomy (at least implicitly) in the discussion of ‘Adrian’ pick up that line of exposition and then continue on to chapter Four.*

The next step in Rosa’s analysis examines the difference between appropriating and experiencing the world. While Ch 1 and 2 followed a diachronic / developmental logic (from foetus to baby, to young child), in Chapter Three this is abandoned for

synchronic or structuralist analysis. The theme is appropriating versus experiencing or, ultimately, resonance versus non-resonance. To bridge from the prior (Ch 1 -2) analysis of bodily relatedness and self <> world interaction, Rosa introduces *to be body* versus *to have a body*. The first is immediate and experiential, the second concerns an 'object in the world'. In the six introductory profiles (in the book's Introduction) one person described was the lawyer Adrian. Rosa typified him as the archetype of *appropriation*: he had made the most of all opportunities society offered in terms of his university study, his job, his purchasing patterns, his (stoic?) realism, and his use of his free time to learn. He was contrasted to Dorian who was described as much less purposeful or directed in his life, but supposedly more sociable and directed to experiencing. Neo-liberal consumer society champions appropriation; openness to experiencing and to non-competitive or sympathetic relatedness suffer. Everyone is supposed to be sportive, success-driven, enthusiastic and a 'winner'. If we identify 'appropriation' with hyper-consumerism, wherein the self is not in dialogue with itself, others or its context; then, we have a model of 'mute' appropriation and non-resonance. But charging Adrian with this position because he is atheist, a lawyer (public prosecutor), buys things online (instead of at the local store) and prefers cities to mountains for his vacations, seems to me at best haphazard. He is not even a tax lawyer or someone who for career advancement never goes on vacation. Rosa asserts that the resonant body is open to experience, expressive and comes easily in interaction; while the mute body is trained to look sportive, is constituted as an information receptor and is understood instrumentally as a way to get things done that one wants done (as a 'tool'). The polarities between resonant and mute and appropriation and experiential are recognizable, but the comparison between Adrian and Dorian makes the problem of application evident. Dorian may just be very alienated, purposeless and boring. Linking a limited number of an individual's qualities to determining whether they are a case of resonance or non-resonance, is a difficult to defend reductionist simplification. On a sociological level, neo-liberal hyper-capitalism can be characterised to champion a mechanistic, manipulative and ego-centric attitude to existence. But this is an conceptual typification, at a very high level of abstraction, which is highly generalizing. Talking about 'persistent compulsive reification' (98) may indeed be a way of seeing contemporary social and professional life, but no one probably is only 'planning and

discipline'. I enjoy some of Rosa's rants; for instance, that the popularity of running the marathon has to do with having the body under wilful control by asserting mind over body in reified alienation; but there only seems to be a 'shot gun' logic behind what he chooses to analyse. And all examples amount, over and over again, to the same thing: openness to experience versus wilful appropriation.

In Chapter Four the discussion focuses all the more on the mind. In effect, the body is left behind and resonance is redefined in terms of mental states or qualities of mindfulness. Resonance may have an ontological ground in the body, but Rosa abandons the theme for a social-psychological perspective. Rosa now introduces *fear of alienation* and *desire for resonance* as the "fundamental driving forces and existential modes of being" (114). While Rosa had been concerned with resonance as an ontological principle basic to human bodily being, he now limits himself to emotional, evaluative and cognitive relationships. Thus, different characteristics and qualities of mindfulness now take centre stage. The basic conceptual strategy is to cross two factors, such as world and self in terms of two qualities such as rigid versus shapeless, producing a force field:



'Angst' or anxiety is portrayed here as essential to all four factors. Resonance is supposedly best served at the cross point, at the centre of all the elements. The basic duality is between 'world' and 'self'. The second factor is 'rigid' versus 'shapeless'. Resonance is how 'self' deals with and/or apprehends 'world'. Fearful for isolation and depressive, the person will not be able to relate to world and other. But too engaged

and even lost in context, others and world, there will be no resonance because the 'self' will have become too weak to form relatedness. Perception or experience of an excessively rigid, regulated or ordered world, leaves no space for relationship; while a shapeless and chaotic context destroys the stability and order needed to understand and relate to anything at all. Thus, resonance can be threatened by too much control, order and authority and too little. It disappears if there is too much attachment (the 'self' is overwhelmed) or too little (there is no 'other' to be attached to). Resonance, thus, is a question of balances; relationship is not possible at the extremes of order or disorder, rigidity or fluidity. The *fear of alienation* is a fear for applies to all the extremes and the countervailing *desire for resonance* demands that the subject attempt to be situated in the middle position (in the 'bulls eye') where relatedness is most possible. The distinction between fear and desire is between the world "becoming hostile or mute [causing] ... loss of relation" (114) and the opposing *desire for resonance*. Thus, the existential 'fear' and 'desire' are really close to being the same thing.

The 'fear' pole seemingly is more passive and the desire pole more active:

	Aktives Weltverhältnis	Passives Weltverhältnis
Weltbejahung	Weltanpassung	Weltbetrachtung (Kontemplation)
Weltverneinung	Weltbeherrschung	Weltflucht

Tabelle 2: Vier kulturelle Grundformen der Weltbeziehung<sup>[40]</sup>

This leads Rosa to an analysis of affirmation versus renunciation, and active versus passive relatedness. The affirmative/active position leads to the strongest mutual relatedness or resonance; the active/renunciatory position is characteristic of Modernism. Modernism, by asserting progress and growth as key factors, rejects the status quo and demands change. Whether the change takes the form of political-economic revolution (Marx), industrialization and increased GNP (capitalism), or fermenting new ways of seeing and feeling (from Freud to Picasso), all of these concepts of change find the present undesirable and call for (demand) change. Passive / affirmation is an aesthetic/religious position wherein acceptance of and openness to the world is embraced. Its resonance is strong, but not change directed. Finally, renunciation

bound to withdrawal brings us to the hermit. Rosa's thought is to be seen as a protest against the renunciation/domination position, which dominates our world. He sees its wilfulness as incapable of social, economic or environmental resonance. It is a logic of pride and imbalance. It fosters a society defined by not listening, by not really being open to Other and of being incapable of balanced growth or awareness.

Rosa continues by examining strong evaluations versus weak ones. He believes that persons have them both. Strong evaluations are 'musts'; ethical positions that are assumed as unquestionably true in nature. Weak evaluations are 'desires'; likes and preferences which are admittedly relative and partial. Rosa believes that our strong and weak evaluations are not always consistent. Self<>world relatedness is not consistent or homogeneous. No one will be entirely active/affirmative (or whatever) in all their interactions. We all are somewhat world-anchored; that is, in the world and subject to its possibilities and limits. There is some 'thrownness' to any existence. And we are all self-anchored, aware, conscious and desiring. If awareness of either anchor breaks loose and dominates our social-psychological wellbeing will be compromised. Resonance requires self<>world relatedness, and that demands that both factors are present. We need our 'strong evaluations' as a compass insuring that the needed double exposure or openness is achieved and maintained. 'Strong evaluations' are ethical principles that safeguard the quality of relatedness; and hereby resonance is always implicitly an ethical concept.

In Chapter Five, Rosa completes the first section to the book by defining resonance and alienation as the basic categories in the relationship to the world. He clarifies that the two terms are not just thesis / antithesis, but form a complex form of relatedness. Basically, there is the differentiation between appropriation and adaptive transformation (190). Appropriation, we recall, is the dominant relational mode of the contemporary society wherein the world is addressed in terms of its use value. The subject takes from the physical and social environment what the subject desires. The mode of obtaining, grasping and commanding dominates. The will for wealth, prosperity and success dominates. Appropriation is not resonance; the voice of the other is silenced, one's own will dominates. Alienation results from appropriation. In situations of appropriation the other, whether situation, environment or persons, is made use of

and not related to. For there to be resonance there has to be difference. If the subject dominates there is no other and only the will of the subject. Resonance is all about the relating of the one and the other; and prerequisite to that is difference. But difference points to tension and probable conflict. Resonance is not some sort of Pollyanna. It is relatedness between more than one voice and that means there will be interaction but also (probably) conflict. The lack of relatedness or resonance leads to alienation, but the two terms are not simple opposites. There has to be difference and tension for resonance to succeed: "without a phase of alienation ... the process of adaptive transformation, of *making resonant* or *making speak* cannot succeed (189). The difference has to be established and experienced for the resonance to be possible: *at the root of resonant experience lies the shout of the unreconciled and the pain of the alienated. At its centre is not the denial or repression of that which resists us ...* (188). Alienation is a condition; one can be alienated as depressed, passive, uninvolved, unreachable. Resonance is not (in this sense) a condition; it is a momentary connection, an experienced transitory reverberation of relatedness. Because resonance is an event and occurrence, something that happens or takes place, it can not be permanent or atemporal. Something or someone speaks to one; an "other" constitutes the spark of resonance: *Resonance is the momentary appearance, the flash of a connection to a source of strong evaluations in a predominantly silent and often repulsive world* (185). The connection to 'strong evaluations' has to be noted. Desires were individual and fairly momentary; strong evaluations were fundamental elements of ethical truth whose validity had a transcendental aspect. Thus, with this statement, Rosa is asserting a transcendental or vertical dimension to resonance. It is not just any strong sentiment of connectedness; it is relationality with some sort of fundamental appeal to a zone of fundamental valuation. Up to now, the dynamic between resonance as relatedness and alienation as rigidity and the inability to connect has been the driving force to the analysis. But Rosa hints here at a deeper ethical underlying necessity to resonance. In the second part of the book he addresses this theme. But he is already here differentiating resonance from emotion. In fact, resonance or profound relatedness can have all sorts of emotional dimensions. Resonance can be painful, ugly, confronting, as well as profound and uplifting. Resonance is not the same thing as emotional. One can be alienated and very emotional and one can be in resonance and have profoundly

distressful emotions. Resonance has to do with the principle of relatedness-to-the world. But that relatedness can bring all sorts of emotions and circumstances to one. Resonance, following the Latin is 're-sonare' or to resound (165). In resonance there is affect and emotion alright, but they are not the determining factors. In resonance affect moves towards us, we are affected by an Other (af←fect) and emotion moves away from us towards the Other (e→motion).

"...a resonant relationship as a relation between two bodies that are at once open enough for a relationship while at the same time remaining sufficient stable and closed so as to "sound" at their own frequency or "speak with their own voice" (112 Rosa).

"According to its Latin etymology, "re-so are" meaning to resound, resonance describes a relationship between two vibratory bodies" (165).

"Resonance is produced only when the vibration of the one body stimulates the other to produce its own frequency" (165).

For a successful resonance relationship every body has to speak its own voice and that the "voices" have to reinforce each other. A relationship where the one body is literally or figuratively echoing the other body is not a resonance relationship because one of the two bodies does not speak with it's own voice.

## **(ii) Spheres of Resonance**

In Part Two of the book Rosa defines three different kinds of resonant relationships. In Part One Rosa 'defined' resonance both descriptively and normatively; claiming that resonance is both. Now he turns to describing axes or spheres of resonance; answering: 'Where does what sort of resonance take place?' He distinguishes between a horizontal, diagonal and vertical axe of resonance; devoting a chapter to each. Resonance is "a specific mode of relating to the world' (195) which occurs in different contexts or circumstances. Rosa is at pains to distinguish resonance from (Honneth's) recognition. Recognition can be gained, competed for and entail struggle. Resonance is a 'vibrant responsive relationship ... between two or more subjects' (196-7). Recognition is something I can gain; resonance can only be *between*



us (197). Resonance can be collective, shared and involve many people; but it is always relational. In Modern society there are places and situations where resonance is expected to exist (or at least to be possible) and circumstances or contexts where it is not expected to occur. In Part Two Rosa examines forms (horizontal, diagonal and vertical) of resonant relatedness, and specific contexts (family, work, art, etc.) of resonance.

(i) Horizontal Resonance

There are three contexts explored of horizontal resonance: (a) the family: the couple and children, (b) friendship, and (c) politics. Rosa asserts that a key characteristic of Modern society is that the couple and family have taken on the normative significance of resonance. The place of true affection and real relatedness is the family. The only social structure that has not been instrumentalised and become competitive supposedly is the family. Children and childhood represent happiness and emotional safety. 'I – Thou' relatedness is reserved for inside the family as all the rest is hyper-individualized and impersonal. Love in the couple and family are the last remaining sources of 'existential transcendence' (205). Hereby, Rosa asserts, the couple and family relations are 'hopelessly overburdened ... as the sole harbour of resonance in an otherwise competitive or indifferent world' (208). Families, especially when there are children involved, are defined normatively as supposed to constitute a harbor of resonance. This is the general contemporary conviction. In the past, children were seen as small adults, potential labourers, needed to pay for the retirement of the parents. Nowadays children are seen as pure, fundamental good and innocent creatures to be loved and protected. This often demands too much of those involved.

Friendship is "...a relationship of elective affinity and spiritual kinship ... friendship has been based on the idea of a certain agreement or harmony between two 'souls' I.e. on a notion of resonance ... : *Two people are friends when a resonant wire of sympathy and trust vibrates between them*" (210). Friendship is not a legal or political institution; its purpose entails relieving the burdens of everyday life. Friends have no physical love relation. Friendships do not imply obligations of caregiving, they are non-exclusive, one can have more friendships at the same time. Friendships can create

“pure” interpersonal resonance, and this resonance can emerge between two people who belong to two completely different social worlds. Couples supposedly need friends in order to survive the overburdened demands of the contemporary family. The need for forgiveness can be co-created in friendship: “Forgiveness means breaking through the perspective of moral, legal, or economic calculation that is concerned only with determining who is right or who owes what to whom” (214). For Rosa, the eyes play an important role by forgiving someone: “the forgiving look,” can re-establish a resonance relationship between two people. By forgiving someone you can initiate resonance and you leave muteness behind.<sup>5</sup>

In late modern societies with their hyper-competitive make-up, making a mistake means falling behind and being left with nothing. Modern people try to blame their mistakes on someone else, and try to make others feel guilty. A big danger for societies who reinforce their subjects to use “guilt and blame” strategies, without establishing a practice of forgiveness, is that these societies produce systematically more and more guilty subjects, which undermines society’s capacity for resonance.

Lastly there is a possibility for resonance in politics. Politics can be constituted as the field of negotiation of economic and social conflict. Such a conceptualization has no room for resonance; politics is then a realm of (fairly narrow) self-interest. The populace concludes that the politicians have no interest in them and often then see politicians as ‘carpet baggers’. Politics becomes associated with the impossibility to be heard and becomes a realm of frustration. Democracy is based on the assumption that elected representatives re-present the voice of their constituencies. But in the contemporary (neo-)liberal individualistic culture no one re-presents anyone else. Voters do not hear their voice back in the speech of their representatives. Politics instead of creating relatedness and confirming responsiveness becomes mute. Politicians show up at election time, make lots of promises, and disappear again afterwards. Instead of defining communitarian relatedness, politics defines exploitation and the sense of being-used. Rosa stresses that politics needs to provide response and

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<sup>5</sup> The nod to Levinas is evident; but the ‘gaze’ becomes here an accessory to resonance and is not an ethical principle.

not just echo. Rosa argues that in Nazi Germany politics echoed the populace's fears and crowd psychology. One can amplify intolerance and the will to hegemony; a crowd can be whipped up to take violent and intolerant action. Resonance entails diverse voices and respect for multiplicity. Nazism "...understood how to appeal to the pervasive and deeply rooted human longing for resonance" (219). With songs, parades, flags, ceremonious incantations and uniforms a tremendous resonance spectacle was staged. But Nazi-ism was a pathology of resonance: "The longed-for resonant community of the Volk rested on the merciless exclusion and 'eradication' of anything and anyone non-identical or other" (220). Resonance in politics has to address mutism and the lack of relationship on the one side, and perverse hyper-resonance of irrationality and violence on the other. But without resonance, the necessary link between the populace and its representatives collapses and democracy becomes untenable.

### **Intermezzo**

*For me, as an employee of the Ministry of Social Affairs, the issue of 'politics' from inside-out is crucial. Rosa looks at politics from outside-in. His concern is with the populace's deception in politicians and the political process. My concern is with how the politicians and civil servants do or do not achieve resonance with the civil society about them. Rosa does not even consider the dilemmas of a politician who is in 'good faith'. Can such a Minister successfully reach out to the populace and (re-)establish trust and dialogue? And what is the role of the Ministry? After all Ministers come and go ; - in principle in terms of four years; but the Ministry stays. Are we, the employees of the Ministry, crucial to the possibility of resonance? Are our contacts to the fields we 'serve' adequate and substantial? Do we listen? And must our internal culture be resonant if our interaction to the society is to be so? Can a mute, cold and competitive organizational culture sustain democracy or would it de facto be an on-going attack on democracy? Have the consultants who have produced neo-liberal mutism as the principle of government organization actually acted to destroy democracy? And while I did not frame my research that way, is my project really an attempt at democratization?*

(ii) Diagonal Resonance

Rosa promises that diagonal resonance has to do with relations to 'things'. He cites Latour's critique of modernist alienation wherein only humans have 'existence' and all other life is reduced to objects to be exploited and used. Resonance between humanity and 'nature' can be conceived of as a prerequisite to a sustainable environmental politics. Rosa adds the correction that a resonant humanity <> environment relationship may not always be positive: disgust, nausea and pain are possible results. The post-Enlightenment rationalistic understanding of the world prescribes a causal and instrumental perspective on relations with inanimate objects. Modern science has made the universe into a mute universe: "... modernity is the division between the living (human beings and animals) and the dead (namely things). [...] A modern adult human being is thus ultimately defined by his or her belief in natural laws and not in ensouled things. [...] There is no thing in our world that possesses intelligence, wit, or volition, that can suffer or be glad. Things function according to the laws of science. By contrast, only human beings have identity, individuality, and volition and act intentionally. This decision is in a way the first commandment of modernity" (126).

The reign of the laws of science has caused severe problems. It has reduced the number of different possible ways of relating to the world and to nature, co-constituting the ecological crisis. The radical reification of the non-human world manifests itself in the destruction of nature. Latour's giving nature its own voice proposes a new form of democracy: "...that not only gives a voice to human beings as citizens, but also allows natural objects and technological artifacts (as well as "hybrids" of the two) to speak and be heard in a parliament of things" (228). Or inspired by Serres: "Earth speaks to us in terms of forces, bonds and interactions, and that's enough to make a contract" (228). In late modernity we perceive a fluctuation of boundaries between the living and the inanimate and a renewed attention to the resonant qualities of things: "We are justified in assigning things their own dimension of resonance" (232).

When we transform things, when we make material speak than we form diagonal axes of resonance. These are processes that emerge especially in and through work and education. In work material begin to respond; the relation between man and nature is mediated by the material. Working by grappling with material, such as

kneading dough in a bakery and planting flowers in a garden, generates resonance with things. And the more we work with material goods, the more we reach a standard of excellence, and the more we experience self-efficacy. The labouring subject by interacting and working with the material transforms the material and the worker is transformed as well, in the sense that self-efficacy grows.

When work becomes pure routine, then one does not speak of a resonant relationship anymore. When workers sell their labour for wages, the wageworkers are all too often forced to have an instrumental relation to their work. The workers merely carry out the demands of the boss and have to repress their own will and voice. For workers the so-called signs of recognition are all too often only strategic, expressed to put the workers under still more pressure to produce, and then the diagonal axe of resonance falls silent. Rosa thinks that most workers see their work as resonant; they are happy to have a job, a source of income and the possibility to construct resonant relationships. Fear of unemployment does not only mean fear of income, but also fear of loss of world and loss of self-efficacy.

Resonance between the material world and humanity quickly evokes the theme of transformation. Humanity often resonates by making, doing and changing the material world. Hereby the theme of work and labour is evoked. Rosa sees work as resonant or at least as potentially resonant. But, following Marx, labour is all too often cut off from the possibility of resonance. Work fulfils existential needs for resonance; it offers opportunities for relatedness to other persons (colleagues, customers, suppliers, whatever) and to objects (as tools, products, buildings, whatever). People need work in their identity construction and in their possibilities for agency. But labour can be alienated, deadening and destructive. All too often in work there is no possibility for resonance. Work is world granting and gives opportunities to create a world for oneself. Labour all too often submits one to a hostile world which is mute and dead to our existential needs.

The last two sections to the chapter address schooling and sports. The discussion of schooling centres on positive feedback circles of engagement, fulfilment and intellectual activity and negative feedback loops of disinterest, boredom and repressive routine. The sports discussion is about 'purchasing'; when sports become a

consumer article, they lose their resonant quality and become more a form of advertising than of participation. These themes really seem more 'horizontal' to me than diagonal.

(iii) Vertical Resonance

The theme, here, is one of "...vertical relationships to life, existence, or the world as a whole or totality perceived as existing above or beyond the individual, in which the world itself in a way maintains its own voice" (195). There is always a promise involved, a promise within the categories of love and meaning. This promise is a sort of guarantee of recognition and resonance. The chapter commences with religion, continues with nature, and concludes with art. Rosa claims that a true religious experience is a dynamic and singular encounter, entailing mutual contact between the subject and the universe. The mind, as inner motion of activity of the spirit, absorbs and relates to the universe in a new relationship. The religious experience triggers an adaptive transformative relationship to the world. Self-efficacy is achieved "through internal movements of taking in, synthesising, and apprehending" (259). Religious persons, Rosa claims, have a primal trust in the world's ability and willingness to respond: "There is one who hears you, who understands you, who can find ways and means of reaching you and responding to you" (261). We are dealing here with 'deep resonance' established in prayer, wherein the relationship between the self and the world is fluid. During worship, such as Christmas celebrations, vertical resonance is developed, but at the same time, horizontal axes of resonance are established between the faithful of the parish or community, and diagonal axes are established insofar as things and artifacts, such as wine, bread, relics, altars, are charged with resonance. Living sinfully means living in a state of relationlessness. The subject is not willing or not able to achieve resonance. Such a subject is resistant to resonance; it only hears its own voice. The subject feels cut off from the world.

Since the Enlightenment the concept of 'voice of the universe' has been doubted. Many think it is merely an illusion. The responsive world cannot be proven by the laws of nature. Writers, such as Camus, say that the world is absurd, meaning that the world is inherently meaningless. But Rosa claims that Camus acknowledged that the

desire for resonance or for relationship with nature and human beings, remains essential. But religious systems of belief have not succeeded in Modern times in fulfilling the need for resonance. Other “institutions” focussed on nature and on art try now to bring resonance to people.

In the second section to this chapter Rosa introduces ‘nature’ as something that speaks or even sings to us. Religious, mythical and premodern people have believed that the cosmos ‘sings’ for instance via the Pythagorean concept of the ‘music of the spheres’ whereby the cosmos can be ‘read’ as resonances and harmonies. Resonance with nature, can be read into the changes of seasons, the climatic rhythms, and the vegetative and geological cycles. But this requires seeing nature and humans as separate entities, independent from one another, each having its own voice and language, and thus potentially able to contradict one another. Humanity can approach nature in an instrumental, mute and reifying way; as is done in the Modernist paradigm.

Entities who have their own voice have an evaluative potential. For Rosa, this counts also for nature. He argues that human existence needs a strong resonance-capable counterpart in order to define a strong identity for itself. That necessary counterpart is nature. If we ‘go into nature in order to find ourselves’; we are seeking to undergo a resonance relationship that overcomes our identity crises. In nature resonance with nature, humanity can discover the voice of its inner self, instead of the noise of the social world. Social life in late modernity often brings us in an instrumental and manipulative relationship with the world. Rosa asserts that trying to live in resonance with the world is healthier. Research he claims shows that children are healthier, more creative and have a higher expectation of self-efficacy, if they often have contact with animals and spend time in natural spaces.

Resonance with nature in this sense is experienced or conceptualised as something that takes place entirely behind the backs of the actors involved. It grows out of the conviction that there is something ‘deep within us’, at the root of our existence and thus prior to all socialisation and civilisation (our inner nature), that is connected with and thus reacts and responds to external nature or ‘the elements’-beyond our conscious thought and perhaps even our sensations and perceptions ... (272).

Thus, resonant relationships with nature are not the outcome of cognitive learning processes and good insights in rationalistic processes, but of emotionally, active and meaningful experiences. In the late modernity of the Anthropocene, nature is being technologically exploited from the perspective of productivity. Nature is seen as a source of raw materials that can be designed and shaped. The mirror image of human beings, seen as objects that can be shaped and designed, grows stronger and stronger. The idea that humanity ought to be able to determine how and what it wants to be and what nature should be destroys nature as an independent factor, whereby resonance becomes impossible. Human inner and external nature are then being “made” and are no longer “given,” whereby both man and nature will no longer function as a source of resonance.

Rosa thinks that the loss of nature as a source of resonance probably forms the root of the current fundamental anxiety with respect to the environment. Nature is retained as a source of raw materials, but nature is falling mute, has ceased to be a sphere of resonance, and is no longer an independent responding counterpart. Nature is no longer a source of orientation. Fear for hurricanes, tsunamis, floods and drought, and also of genetically modified food, result from a chain of causes that possibly cannot be made to stop. Should we conclude that nature is striking back or taking revenge? There is overwhelming evidence that humanity has contributed significantly to the crisis and that it is humanity itself that is on its way to breaking down its resonant relationships with nature.

The third and last subsection to this chapter is about art. Rosa shows a certain ambivalence to art as vertical resonance because art appeals less to the need to make sense of life, for instance than did religion. Art has penetrated in almost all aspects of modern life, but unlike religion, it does not really stretch out a helping hand to humanity. Art, Rosa claims, is not capable of providing a cohesive horizon of meaning, which religion does try to provide.

Art has a voice of its own and has a constitutive ability to form a vertical axis of resonance, but its form of ‘relatedness’ is fairly horizontal. Resonance triggered by art is between two ‘voices’; that provided by the artwork itself and that of a perceiving



counterpart or we as subjects. We need to have a voice of our own in order to establish a resonant relationship with art:

Art touches and moves the inmost souls of modern human beings as recipients like nothing else and commands us as producers, i.e. as artists or creators of art, by asserting and enforcing its own law against all instrumental, political, or economic reason. (280)

Art demands creativity and originality from the viewer; it demands that one does not just follow the instrumental laws of society but on the contrary that we develop our capacity for creating aesthetic resonance: "In the process of creating art, artists draw on or are inspired by sources that exceed their own creative power ...the influence of the gods or the muse" (281). Art demands something from the artist that the artist does not naturally possess, namely aspirations and intentions that can even be foreign to the artist or against the artist's desires. Art can bring with its demands, the artist into an uncanny position, where the artist has to wrestle with demands that exceed or transcend the normal self. This wrestling is rooted in the essential element of artistry, which is its inaccessibility. The artist can be trained for years to enlarge her or his technical abilities and skills, but if she or he is not possessed by the spirit or the soul of art, she or he will not create aesthetic resonance. Inaccessibility is not only crucial when one produces art, but also when one is on the receptive side, looking at art. In order to be able to appreciate art; that is, to be able to establish a resonance relation with it; one has to grasp an element of its inaccessibility. Art can unexpectedly, suddenly, touch us, and thereby make a demand upon us. This force or power that emerges in and from art, drives the subject outside of itself; it is a unconscious force that can also be a dark power. Art emerges from a conflict and/or a conversation between the artist and an authority that speaks to the artist. That authority or power can be within the artist, but it can be the voice of a demon or of an extra-subjective force. This independent source confronts the artist, and in a less pronounced way the spectator, and is often seen and experienced as a struggle and as a play of forces creating a vertical axis of resonance.

The event of art is nothing other than an event of resonance: a precarious responsive relationship between two independent voices that are constantly

contradicting, often diverging from, and transforming each other in creative struggle, meeting all the criteria of a resonant relationship... (283)

When one visits a museum and looks at a painting, at that moment one has created the possibility to start talking with the painting. We can express what we think about the painting, what it tells us. The painting reacts, it does not immediately agree with our interpretation, it shows more of itself. The more we are open to looking, the more we are willing to be transformed by the painting, the more the painting can change in our mind. In short, we experience vertical resonance.

An aesthetic encounter, being addressed or spoken to by a work of art, is the privileged, predominantly institutionalised, ritualised form in which modern subjects experience vertical resonance in the sense of the inaccessible but meaningful voice of the Other (284).

On a passive level, the spectator can explore different possible modes of relating to the world and thereby change or modify their own relation to the world: "Aesthetic resonance is thus an experimental field for adaptively transforming different models of relating to the world" (286).

The theme of art is frequently born out of feelings and experiences of alienation. In art, experiences of extreme alienation are often being shown. The longing for resonant relationship Rosa believes is the driving force behind these aesthetic practices, triggered by the need to process horrible feelings of experienced alienation. Rosa examines Edvard Munch's *The Scream* as such an example. In the painting fear and alienation are the themes which the observer experiences. Beside that, the observer is also moved and touched by the aesthetic way the theme is expressed: "One thus experiences both resonance and alienation, not blended into some hybrid form, but in a relation of mutual escalation. The deeper, more "authentic," more believable, and more compelling is the alienation here depicted -- or, better yet, modelled -- the greater is the resonant effect (287). Intense vertical resonance emerges because a real experience of alienation is juxtaposed with a promise of aesthetic resonance. We see here that art offers a simultaneous experience of pleasure and pain; the theme expresses pain, the painting expresses pleasure. As Adorno articulated it:

Although artworks offer themselves to observation, they at the same time disorient the observer who is held at the distance of a mere spectator; to him is revealed the truth of the work as if it must also be his own. The instant of this transition is art's highest. It rescues subjectivity, even subjective aesthetics, by the negation of subjectivity (289).

Looking at art nourishes human subjectivity, but the process can only take place when the spectator negates her/his own subjectivity for a moment by being open to the world and the art. For aesthetic experiences to occur, it is necessary to keep the senses open to possible, different ways of relating to the world. The artists and the observers of art have to acknowledge the commands of "the arts" and respond to those commands with their own voice.

### **Discussion and Conclusions**

Resonance as a complex horizontal process is my key take away. Crucial to resonance is the inter-relationality of the process: there has to be a plurality (at least two) voices. The differentiation between resonance and recognition is important. Resonance, because it is multiple, cannot be willed by any single party or factor. As a dialogical principle, resonance, remains indeterminant, in motion, active and a 'movable feast'. For me, in his philosophy of art Rosa destroys resonance. The principle of 'inaccessibility' wherein the art, the artist and the viewer all become less important than transcendence repels me. Likewise, Rosa (in my opinion) reifies 'nature'; I believe that 'nature' is not some sort of 'god' or absolute but should be understood as a term of inclusion. I (we) are nature. Rosa's insistence on dialogue between the one and the other: i.e. I / other, humanity / nature, the visible / the inaccessible; makes his relationship to the horizontal problematic. Resonance is always defined in terms of duality, of the one voice in respect to the other voice; but hereby I feel Rosa falls into the subject/object dualism he claims to reject. His fault I also see performatively. His authorial 'I' is never interactive. He amasses an enormous number of sources in support of his assertions, but never interacts with the Other. There is no ethnography, not to say autoethnography, not to say reflexivity. Rosa produces a complex sophisticated argument for resonance but he does not resonate.

I embrace Rosa's insight into politics. Indeed, politics needs to be multi-voiced relatedness or it destroys democracy rather than serving it. Strangled in epistemes of one-dimensional monologue, the person dries up and falls into alienated muteness. Awareness of the dyad and of relatedness as an existential necessity has been demeaned in the performativity directed hyper-capitalism of the present. But relatedness is horizontal; it demands openness to other. I experience making art (as a painter) as relational; when I paint I respond to my surroundings by listening and answering, observing and asserting. I never paint purely abstractly because, for me, the relationship between myself and my other is made too vague and unrecognizable thereby. I reject flight into 'inaccessibility' and endorse accessibility. Art for me exists to increase accessibility and to witness relatedness. It affirms the horizontal in a cultural moment that wants one best practice, optimal efficiency, etcetera; that is, oneness, determinant causality and authority. I see horizontal resonance as a demand for openness to other, multiplicity and a plurality of voices that have to work to reach one another. Art, for me, is a means of striving for relatedness; part and parcel of a difficult, complex process without guarantees. Thus, I conclude that I take resonance forward as a unfulfilled problematic task, which is very important but fragile and indeterminant.

To conclude, let us return to the three couples with which Rosa began. His portrait of the two artists angered me from the first moment. The one dilly-dallied buying materials and waiting about. The day before the deadline he sat down and painted. That sounded to me exactly like how it really is. At a moment you have to say to yourself, now it must happen. With some sort of floating consciousness, with luck, an idea or vague awareness builds up, until you give yourself over to actually setting brush to canvas. The 'preparation' period is full of unimportant activity. Painting is improvisation, which means taking action on some theme or awareness that you have built up. You need skill, knowledge of technique and awareness of art history to improvise; one improvises based on themes, structures, patterns that require knowledge, background and experience. Rosa embraces the other painter who gives, in my opinion, little awareness of what making art is really like. Likewise, with the other two couples. The one man was directed, studied law, became a public prosecutor, buys his books on-line and visits cities and museums for his vacation; the other has a much

less structured profile, buys locally, hikes in the mountains and is a teacher. Rosa seems to decide that the first is too rational and that his atheism signifies that he is a repressive rationalist. Granted that the ideal types are caricatures and Rosa admits as much; but still a lawyer who chooses for the public prosecutors role and not the big money, already has the benefit of doubt with me. Why hiking is spiritually superior to museum visits I do not know. But most important, why assume such a judgmental position? Rosa does not seem to be able to just let others be; people here are presented as points of judgment rather than as bundles of idiosyncrasies. Finally, the one woman flourishes and the other languishes. Rosa's moralism upsets me. He seems to attribute responsibility where I would prefer to hold back and wait and see. Resonance demands patience and letting the Other emerge from multiple descriptors and interactions. The care for the other that I think is a hallmark of resonance is just too little present in how Rosa portrays Other.

In this thesis I am writing about Resonance, however the project is not to create Resonance with the reader of my text. My critique on Rosa is not that he does not create resonance with the reader of his book, but that in my opinion he does not show resonance in what he describes and thus when he speaks of artists and artistic work it feels flat to me. He is not writing a novel and thus I do not expect him to be in Resonance with the reader through (the poetry of the) text, but I did expect his descriptions to feel layered and relatable, showing me where resonance occurred. This doesn't happen. And thus, this is precisely what I will attempt to do with my text grounded in the interview data from the feedback sessions with the paintings, showing relatedness between the interviewees and their work lives by way of the art-based project (the paintings).

My overall impression of Rosa's texts is that in the Acceleration writings, his analysis was convincing; with Resonance he opened an avenue of constructive response to the phenomenon and processes he had identified. In my project, I take the principles of horizontal resonance and apply them. By mirroring self and Other back to the ten project participants, via artworks grounded in the shared circumstance, I strive to increase relatedness, and awareness or reflexivity of relatedness.

### ***Intermezzo***

*Rosa has written a new major book after Resonance wherein he changes his position once again: Making the world unavailable (translated from the French title). The book reverts to social analysis of acceleration. But he defies acceleration less as a system (as he had done in the past) and more in terms of a polarity between 'available' and 'unavailable'. In Resonance he had, of course, defined art as joined to the 'inaccessible', but the similar polarity available/unavailable now takes over. Modernism supposedly strives for ever more 'availability'. Travel, information, healthcare, whatever, champion availability of any place on earth, of any fact, of bodily wellness. To illustrate, Rosa proposes that if you asked 50 years ago in what year was Konrad Adenauer born, or when was the first use of a tank in warfare, you could in principle find the answers; but it would have taken some hours of having to go to the library, find the right books, etc. But nowadays, all you need is Google, and you can have the answers within a couple of minutes: K. Adenauer was born 5th of January 1876 and Little Willie was used in the battle of Flers-Courcelette on 15 September 1916 ... it took me about 5 minutes.*

*The Making the world unavailable argues that modernism promised the availability of health, food, shelter, education ... the classical social democratic promises of society to the individual. The promise of availability is existentially dangerous because all real relationship is based on unavailability, as genuine relatedness has to include elements of Other. If someone or something is totally available to you, there is no relationship; for there is no other. It would seem that Rosa is letting Levinas hit up against Fordism or the social political compromise of post WW II Europe. If ethics is the most basic level of philosophy and ethics is based upon the relationship to the Other, then if difference is destroyed ethics is destroyed. As Levinas argued, if you control and possess the other, no other left is left; you destroyed the Other and are unethical. Ethics is based on an acknowledgment that one has to recognise the being of the Other and the otherness of the Other; otherwise the Other is no longer Other. Rosa argues that modernism is based on the principle of availability and on creating availability to health, travel, etcetera. The welfare and social wellbeing that 'acceleration' supposedly produces are recast in terms of availability. It is the same story as in the analysis of acceleration but without the speed-up. Modernism's ideology of progress towards social, personal and economic welfare is inherently flawed because it destroys the lived*

*relationship to other and replaces it with a logic of sameness. Standardization, uniformity and regulation dominate as difference becomes intolerable.*

*For my work situation, 'availability' translates into best practices, protocols and bureaucracy. Every citizen is to be treated the same. Social services must be designed to foster and defend uniformity. Individualization of service or prerogatives for tailor-made solutions disappear. 'Availability' is really absolute uniformity, destroying all relatedness. There is no Other, social services are social machinery. Resonance requires an acknowledgment of the unavailability of the other as real difference. Because the other is not (an)other if the other is totally available, unavailability has to be present for an authentic relationship to be possible. The Ministry of Social Affaires intends to ban otherness; there is to be one rule, one regime, one possible decision. Internal organization follows suit. We are charged to speak with one voice, to 'coordinate' our policies and to display no internal divisiveness. The Minister has to answer every question posed in parliament and remain consistent at all times; our job entails making that appearance of unity possible.*

*If the society, as Rosa claims, is based on the principle of availability, and acknowledgement of difference is essential to human existential identity, you end up with the claim that society is destroying everything that is human. We are back in the accelerationist impasse and perhaps even worse off than we were before the Resonance book. At least in Rosa's description of acceleration there were three semi-independent elements of technology, economy, and identity. Having reduced the analysis to available versus unavailable there seems to be no escape. Rosa concludes that the bigger the stretch of availability, the less contact possible with unavailability. Tourism is one of Rosa's examples: you can relatively easily get to exotic places with different and strange cultures, but what is really different, that is, what actually defines their unavailability, remains hidden. Travel, hotels, meals will all be the way the tourists want them to be; that is, similar to what they are accustomed to. The world is expected to conform to our norms. Without unavailability there is insufficient difference; sameness does not create identity. Paradoxically enough there is no difference in Rosa's difference. He never describes an experience of unavailability in detail. Rosa's analysis is far too available. Rosa's characterization of modern society is typified by sweeping statements. The nitty-*

*gritty of relatedness and difference are lacking. Rosa calls for phenomenal relatedness but fails himself to supply it.*



## DURING

### THE RESEARCH SITE

I was tipped to ask the researchees in the Inspection Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs what had recently gone well in their work and not to begin by asking them what had gone wrong. The negatively posed question, I was told, could easily create resistance and mistrust. There had been quite a bit of discussion of 'positive inquiry' floating about. I quickly discovered that it made no difference what question I began with; the interviewees quickly started to protest vociferously about what they felt had been done to them by the reorganisation. I was tipped to learn from the refusal of access that I'd experienced with the young artists; approach the researchees gently and do not be threatening in your questions. If the researched have issues they cannot help themselves, they will start to talk about it. So, I plastered 'positive inquiry' on my communications with the Ministry and the researchees. As long as I did not have to use it to achieve work intensification, which of course is what consultants do, I had no problems with using the lingo.

The stories told seemed very strange to me. It sounded as if the organisation was constantly making the work more difficult, inefficient and complicated. I could see no logic really in what I was told. For instance, one of the researchees was a younger woman who was at that moment the second in command. As already noted, the positions shifted so often and quickly that this detail in no way endangers her anonymity! She was very motivated and liked her work. She felt very connected to the theme of her work. She wanted to help the victims of slave labour conditions and to liberate them from their bondage. But she hated how she was forced to work in the Ministry; she felt needlessly restricted. She told that the organisation had been shifted into the Ministry of Social Affairs some five years ago; before that it operated as a semi-independent police organisation. In the old set-up she could address target organisations as police; walk in and demand answers. Now as from the Ministry of Social Affairs she would get from target suspects a reaction of 'Why should I listen to you? I don't have to answer your questions. Get out of here.'" The investigated were now much more arrogant and the

inspectors felt they had lost a lot of their authority. Though she believed that the work was very important and was very committed to the cause of fighting crime in social services, she was looking around outside for a new job. The fact that everyone seemed to be leaving had soured the atmosphere. She had started to study law part-time as her private solution to needing and getting legal advice to do her work. She had been group coordinator but had rotated back into front line detective work. She was highly committed and motivated, but also profoundly unhappy with the organisation.

As part of a big organisation plagued by over-capacity they suffered. The Inspectorate had too few inspectors and detectives, but the Ministry as a whole had too much personnel. There were personnel enough to transfer from elsewhere within the Ministry to another position; but they were not suited to the work of the Inspectorate. The Inspectorate basically had two major tasks: (i) inspectors who went unannounced to companies to control that they respected minimum wage and workplace regulations and (ii) the detective branch that investigated and prepared for trials evidence of criminal abuse of social legislation. At the time of this research they mainly focused on slave labour (especially sexual labour) and welfare fraud. My initial five researchees came from the Criminal Investigative/Detective department of the Inspectorate of the Ministry. Most of the personnel were ex-police officers. The over-capacity was mainly from the core activity of the Ministry: social scientists, especially economists, whose task was to prepare social legislation and analyse its impact for the economy. There was obviously no skill match between the core ministry and the Criminal Investigative/Detective department of the Inspectorate. The result was that the Inspectorate was understaffed and was not allowed to appoint anyone new. The Criminal Investigative/Detective department was organised to work with three teams, wherein each team took a segment of the cases. But in reality the department was working with only two teams because they were so extremely understaffed. Unsurprisingly, knowledge and experience of criminal investigation techniques was nowhere outside of the Inspectorate to be found in the Ministry. They in effect needed people who had been trained as a police officer. The frustration and anger at being so heavily understaffed led more and more people to leave; increasing the understaffing problem and the frustration. To make matters even worse, in the name of austerity

economics, the Ministry had cut down on support staff. Drastically undermanned and also with far less support in the past; the researchees were understandably very unhappy.

To add insult to injury, the government had been hit by a scandal where there had been civil service abuse of power and funds. Thus, there was a general move to more control and a culture of mistrust. Increasing demands were made to justify what you did, when, where and how. Individual prerogative was under attack. Tasks were being more and more split up and rigidly defined. A culture of mistrust, segmentation and control was on the increase. To stop the potential mis-use of confidential data Chinese walls were created everywhere possible. The effect was that the one researcher might not know what the other was doing, leading to duplication and inefficiency. In addition, the old link between the researchers and lawyers was broken. The researchers often needed advice as to whether a certain action was or was not legal. In preparing evidence for a court case they needed to know what the prosecutors needed and what was found irrelevant. Therefore there had always been a legal staff in the Criminal Investigative/Detective department that the researchers could consult, but since the lawyers were not exclusive to that department and also worked within other parts of the Ministry they were removed from the department and placed elsewhere in the Ministry. With the results that the communication was made far more formal and rigid. The effect on the detectives was that they often were unsure if their work was still relevant or not. The hyper compartmentalising of tasks broke up the work flow and led to increased frustration and inefficiency. The proclaimed goal was to make the mis-use of data impossible. A rogue detective could so-called no longer tip off a criminal or blackmail someone. But no such abuses had ever taken place; while the inefficiencies were piling up massively. When doing criminal investigation, the detectives were dealing with classified files. The information was only available to the particular detectives involved and no one else could gain access. There were a lot of security measures to protect the unit from being electronically attacked by outside criminals. You needed a security clearance to see data and had to be on a particular case to have access to that case's information. But in the new structure the lawyers did not have security clearance for every case. If you needed legal advice you were not allowed to get it because the

lawyers did not have the security clearance needed to examine the case! Otherwise the lawyer had to apply and get clearance; the files would have to be redacted before being transferred to the lawyer; and when returned again with security control the advice had to be patched back together for the detectives to be able to make use it. It was a cumbersome process and led to the detectives simply not communicating any more with the lawyers and trying to work without the expert legal advice. In the old regime they were all on the same floor of the same building and you just walked over to whom you needed and asked your question. But the lawyers were now in another department and often even in another building and thus the ease and benefit of informal contact was broken. A key problem was that if you did it the formal way, often the lawyers did not really understand the detectives 'question(s) and the detectives were baffled by the lawyers responses. In addition, the Ministry had been transformed into Flex working, whereby you never knew where anyone was. The detectives still had a delegated space because of the security issues; but the rest of the Ministry (including the lawyers) did not. So, you never really know where someone is, or even if they are presently at work. The Flex work was crucial to the reorganisation. Its 'benefit 'was to reduce the amount of office space and fixed costs of the Ministry. But the reality was that informal contact was made difficult and the number of meeting spaces was inadequate so setting up a meeting of a multi-skilled group was difficult.

The Criminal Investigative detectives worked under high security measures. I did not have the higher security clearance; so, either I had to meet the detectives outside of their office spaces (low security areas) or I had to enter their space in the company of a detective. My 'fly on the wall 'status was doomed. I could interview but I could not really observe. Even the rest of the Ministry had no access to the 'Criminal Investigative Department'. I was told that misuse of social security, especially unemployment benefits, was the hot item at the time. Their most famous recent case was that of the Bulgarian gang who organised false claims of unemployment by bringing Bulgarians to Holland, letting them make false declarations and register for unemployment benefits and then returning them to Bulgaria. The benefits were all paid out in reality to the gang members. The gang was eventually arrested, tried and convicted. But such frauds are repeatedly revealed. For instance, when far too many people are registered at a single

address than physically is liveable and it is discovered then it is the task of the Inspectorate to investigate. The investigation group is divided into three groups; named by colours. There is green information that is in principle open to all those in the Ministry that have any need for it. Then there is red information that is restricted to the Criminal Investigative/Detective department and access is limited to the cases the particular detective is working on. Red is restricted information and you have to justify your access to any red information. The Criminal Investigation department is entirely red. Since I only had a green clearance, I was not allowed access to anything red. That meant, as already mentioned, that I could not enter into the workspace of the detectives as their offices were entirely coded red. In principle everything that had to do with red was related to criminal activity. And still more secret and restricted than red, there was purple. Most people do not even seem to know that purple existed. Purple has to do with government officials, the royal family or anything that had to be called a 'state secret'. At any one time there supposedly are two members of the department who have a so-called 'key 'to purple. That is, they could access purple. Outsiders like myself are never supposed to know who has the purple key at any one time. It is thought that the key owners could be subject to blackmail or worse and for that reason the secrecy and the rotating role of the key holders exists. I was not screened for red because it took quite a bit of time to do so and it costs the Ministry quite a bit of money. The consensus was that I could do my research without red permission. But it meant that I was not allowed to enter their workspace. I could ring the door bell and if someone I knew was inclined I could come (briefly) into their work space. But I quickly learned that I could gain occasional admittance but that I was not really welcome to hang around. I was green working for red. My official research assignment was in red, even though I did not have red clearance myself. Therefor I had to work on another floor as the Criminal Investigation department. Thus, I never really could get a first-hand impression of how the detectives worked or what the atmosphere was in their department. I could listen to their stories about their work, but I could not observe matters for myself. It seemed the most logical for me to work amongst the Inspectorate's research staff as their work most resembled my own. As it was all flex work, with the exception of the detectives, work space was a relative concept. In principle the researcher staff all worked from the

same floor; but if there was no space, they might hunt for a work place elsewhere in the green areas of the building.

In the end I got to know the researchers much better than I ever really got to know the detectives. When I got to the phase of my project that I wanted to do a second round of observation, painting and feedback sessions; it seemed logical to base it in the analysis and research department. I knew the people much better; had a real feel for their work situation and had ample informal connections and thereby access. Thus, I was taken in to do an art-based research project in red, but ended up with two cycles of research; the first with red and the second with green. Since the woman director who had given me the initial assignment and made the contacts for me, had shown no interest in my project while she was there; appointments were regularly cancelled and a new appointment never seemed to work out. And by the time I started with the second cycle of research she had long left the job. Thereby, there was really no one who had any idea what I was or was not allowed or supposed to be doing.

Eventually the ban on hiring was lifted. But things did not get better, in fact they got worse. What no one had anticipated, adding new people increased the work load. One had one's cases to work on and one had new people who had to be worked in. Training new people, even if they had a police background, to work in the department took quite a bit of time and energy. The complaints about being overworked did not abate despite being budgeted around ten million extra euros. The training process of getting a new person up to speed so they could work independently took around six months per person. For that half year they often cost more energy than they actually contributed to the work process. Working with red data had a lot of rules and procedures that had to be exactly followed. The extra money meant that a whole new team had to be created; back from two teams to three as it had been in the past. The current leadership is really concerned about the work circumstances; in my opinion much more so than a few years ago. But it remains a difficult situation.

The work is psychologically hard to take. It is indicative that one of the subgroups is made up of autistic personnel. They examine video material coming from security cameras for hours and hours, looking to spot a sought-after criminal activity and persons of interest. What also plays a role is that many of the cases really are gruesome. Highly

violent and centring on despicable behaviour of sexual abuse and of pedophile groups. This work is psychologically draining. Everyone has to be trained because they have to understand the legal framework within which they are operating. Personnel in principle are all trained in interrogation skills. However, the autistic personnel are generally exempted from that training for they are not seen to be fit to withstand the high stress level past of interrogative work for they are generally incapable of doing high confrontational work, besides their work would in fact never entail interrogative work, this did cause an HR problem due to training requirements for red clearance and the Ministry is not designed to deal with exceptions. As soon as something different has to be arranged it is very hard to find someone able to take a decision.

Red really is a very special world. They are mainly ex-police officers and their way of expressing themselves is quite special. They certainly had a very different subculture to what I was used to either in Leiden or Leicester. The way they interact is quite abrasive and harsh. It is a no bullshit culture; just give me the data and shut up. They are used to having to deal with high stress unsafe situations. They approach everyone extremely directly and without niceties. HR suggested putting them through a sensitivity training but it has not happened. In a way I am happy that I was not Red. The stories they have to deal with are so violent and full of human evil that I am unsure how well I could have taken it. Things like people being burned and dropped half dead off at a hospital were daily fare. In the world they had to confront human life has little value and are easily dispensable. Their stories tell the tale of how it is we can buy strawberries or tomatoes extremely cheaply at the supermarket. Somewhere people are really being abused to produce the produce. There is an element of not wanting to know so one can go to the supermarket and just get on with one's groceries. The detectives, for instance, told me they would not go to Primark, which is the cheapest way of buying a T-shirt, because they knew what sort of labour conditions you were then complicit with. Some well-known and popular brands were held in total ill repute. But going out to lunch with them destabilised my sense of my daily existence. We'd be walking through the centre of The Hague and one of the detectives would comment: "Like last night, wasn't there that guy lying dead there in that corner?" They worked closely with the police and thereby knew about another world to my own, one which unsettled my sense of order and security.

The general public is living in bliss and I must admit I would prefer to continue to live in bliss. Some detectives get into this work and after a little while they just have to give up because they take the work home with them and cannot turn it off. They have to leave. Some of the people who get hired don't stay there very long. Some just get totally overworked; but also it is really hard to have to deal with the worst of the sort of worst stories, every day, all day long. It warps people's perspective; it is really a very dangerous career route.

Generally, I found the detectives quite nice to work with because they're very direct and in their way, very open. They are extremely goal orientated; they want to put criminals behind bars. They are not at all slick or out to play silly power games with you. Unlike the rest of the Ministry they are not focussed on saying the right thing or pleasing the higher ups. The rest of the Ministry is much more 'political' in the sense of pleasing the boss and cost what cost keeping the minister out of danger. The detectives really were hardened police officers. One of them told me that the only difference between a police officer and a criminal is that the police officers carry a badge, but that for most part they think and handle the same way. It is a choice of doing things legally instead of illegally. They told (boasted?) about how they would 'play around' when they were police officers. Supposedly, when it was quiet, they on occasion drove their police cars back and forth to Paris, taking a photo for instance in front of the Eiffel Tower. Of course, their cars can travel at enormous speed, still I do not understand how they wouldn't get caught because I assume the cars have transponders and things like that in them. The shifts are six or eight hours; if they had a night shift, they would bet on which car could get to Paris and back first with the needed photo. It is six hundred kilometres with seven hours to do it. I wondered if it was true; a car travelling at that speed is going to get flashed. And when someone saw that it was a Dutch police car you would think there would be questions. But I was told the story several times. I kept wondering is this true; could this actually be true. If the French or Belgians spotted a Dutch police car driving at that speed wouldn't there be questions? Another ubiquitous story had to do with the brooms and broomsticks that the police evidently always have with them in their patrol cars. I was told they jousting with them. The jousting was on motor cycle or with the cars. Jousting was a sort of hazing or initiation ritual. One man told me that



when he entered a new team as a senior officer a joust was arranged as an initiation ritual. But there was a mishap and he accidentally smashed the front windshield of the opposing car. Everyone said "OK, you are now part of the team." He claimed he just wrote it down, "Windshield smashed while jousting" and sent it in for repairs. There were no questions posed or reprimand. Detective work is very high tension and trust sensitive work and evidently there is a world of group bonding and release from the tension that most of us are not privy to. I understand that there is a real need to let off steam; but the stories were fairly extreme. All the stories made it clear to me that the gulf between myself and my world, and that of the people I was interviewing, really was enormous. As interviewer my best bet was just to let them talk, realising how little I really knew about their work conditions. I heard the same stories several times, but I never had the ability (or probably really the need) to try and confirm them. This was their storytelling and it told me a lot about their world, whether it was fantasy really lived-out or only imagined. Furthermore, my research focus was on their experience of work and was not really focused on the organisation culture of Red. I realised all too well that I was not part of the group. I had access to interview five members of Red as indicated by the group director. That was it. I was not initiated; they did not know me. And they are necessarily quite secretive about who is working on what theme or issue. I could have returned to the head to ask for a longer list of names to interview, but she was never available to talk to. I had two meetings with her and thereafter she in effect stopped answering my emails. If she was in Red I could not come to her workspace and if she was elsewhere in the building I had no way to know where. Essentially, she had arranged my initial access and then left me to my own devices. For a first round of interviews-paintings-feedback sessions the five persons were fine. I did not really want a bigger target group all at once. Interviewing, analysing five stories and then producing five paintings was a big enough first task. I had decided to listen to all five interviews and to make five paintings, but not to try to match one painting to one person. I thought that by holding feedback sessions with five paintings and asking for reactions to all five that I could get richer feedback sessions and less individualised ones, more focussing on my theme, 'How do you experience your work?'. I did not want to individualise in the sense

of: 'Who are you?', but to focus more broadly of what the participants had to say about their work situation.

When it came to doing a second round of interviewing, painting and holding of feedback sessions, I decided to focus on the people right around me who I saw more or less daily; namely the Inspectorate's research staff. They were Green so I had no security issues and I knew many of them already so I had little problem arranging interviews. Furthermore, I could observe their work culture first hand without difficulties. So the first cycle of research was Red and the second Green. The researchers investigate issues pertinent to social legislation and the abuse of social services. They are there to support the policy makers in their choices. In reality the interview-paint-feedback session cycle could be applied to any work organisation. There was nothing in my basic methodology that was especially Red, Green, or any other colour. I was not limited to just the Criminal Investigation Department. For me it did not matter who I looked at as long as they were working, and it was all to the better that I could actually see them at work. I was allowed to participate (in fact welcomed) in their social gatherings and could attend their monthly department meetings. Really, they had no idea that I didn't actually work there in their department. After a month or two of hanging around they just assumed I was one of them. In fact, the head of the research department came to me very puzzled: "You've been here a lot, you do work for me right?". I explained to him that I did not work for him but was on a temporary research contract that was paid for by Red. The confusion was somewhat logical: I had the security clearance and access pass to take up a work spot in the building; I had a computer and telephone from the Ministry; so I certainly appeared to be 'one of them'. And I had dined with them sometimes, and even (on invitation) attended their team building and training sessions. With Green I was a fly on the wall; and since I was not actually hierarchically linked to them my freedom to observe was unhampered. They know that I had no reason to report back to their bosses and that I was not a 'spy' of some sort, which facilitated openness. I was experienced as extremely safe. They really opened up to me, which made the interview sessions easy to plan and to let succeed. I asked, they answered; it all seemed very relaxed and natural.

The two groups I investigated had little or no contact with one another. The Red did police investigative work to catch, try and punish criminal use of social services

and/or crimes committed against the labour laws. The Green group did background research on issues having to do with social services and labour law. If Green ran into anything really criminal, they had to 'kick it upstairs' to Red. Red was enforcement and criminal investigation; it was not involved in the creation of new laws. Perhaps incorrectly, there did not seem to be any feedback link from Red to the policy side of the Ministry. If you go all the way up the hierarchy both of these units fall under the Inspection and under the same Director General. But Red, behind its locked doors, functioned as a totally separate object. The policy preparation group were much more exposed to other aspects of the Ministry. If questions were posed in parliament about social laws and their effects, the researchers had to prepare background papers to be processed higher up and prepared for the minister to use, to answer. It was seen as a great achievement when one saw a statement from the policy researchers used more or less literally by the minister in parliament. The Inspectorate altogether is some 1,200 people; it is a fairly large organisation. It has three dimensions: (i) criminal investigation; (ii) organisation inspectors and (iii) research. In addition, it has its own staff people: HRM, book keeping, that sort of thing. The inspectors are scattered all over the country and work primarily from their homes. They visit organisations and companies to control that the social legislation and labour law is being respected. But if they encounter abuses they have to transfer the investigation immediately to Red. I would see inspectors, on and off, in our flex working spaces; but their visits to The Hague were irregular and I never got to know any of them. There did not seem to be any contact either between the inspectors and the research staff. The job of the inspectors is to arrive unannounced at a company/organisation and to inspect their operations. They control that health insurance payments are in order; minimum wages are respected, workers get the free time required, etcetera. The inspectors have meetings, but they are just as often in the offices in Utrecht or Amsterdam as in The Hague. The entire Inspectorate side to the Ministry is reactive. Its task is to react to problems, mistakes, crimes, abuses in the atmosphere of governmental social services. The proactive part of the Ministry that drafts new legislation and makes plans for the future is in the other portion of the Ministry that falls under the other Director General. We reacted to signs coming in from the outside. The Ministry would get emails and telephone calls: 'I think my boss is doing

something wrong 'and then investigation would follow. First inspectors, then if there was an issue the detectives, and finally if the problem seemed to be endemic the researchers would be put to work.

Researchers normally were four times a week in the building and were expected to work one day a week at home. Otherwise, there was not enough space in the building for everyone. Greens could log in and work from home; Reds could not. They had to always work from the building. I was told that things that were purple were kept in a safe; but where the safe was, was even a secret.

Sometimes you would see extra coming and going at Red. You could feel that something big was about to break. And in a few days inevitably there would be front pages news that a big police raid had cracked down on a major social fraud network or some such thing. The organisation of the big raids had to be so 'hush hush 'that you could feel that something extraordinary was afoot. The tension was palpable. When the tension started to rise you knew that within about five hours a big raid was on. You'd see they were arranging cars and things like that. Especially Friday afternoon was the time for major raids. Friday afternoon is the most inconvenient time of the week. People are least expecting police action. Red wants to catch its suspects off guard. They do not want the companies or organisations to be raided to get wind ahead of time of what's about to happen. Immediately they seize all the computers and paperwork found in the offices. They are very organised and very well prepared. Before a raid takes place, they have thoroughly prepared their case. A local inspector has tipped Red that there is an issue; it has been researched and the raid has been prepared. They raid with inspectors from other regions and not the one who has been involved in the case. This to protect the inspector from later blackmail and violence. No one who is connected in any way with the object to be raided is included. A case that was described to me involved Bulgarian workers who were being mistreated in greenhouses where tomatoes were grown. They used plastic bags of hot water and steam to keep the green house warm. A worker had fallen into one of the steam bags and had suffered third degree burns over his whole body. The farmer dropped the man at the hospital without any information and he was told not to talk to anyone about what had happened. Thankfully the person decided to talk and in the end, he was 'rewarded 'with a residency visa.

We were in a very paradoxical position that the more crime that was recorded the better it was for us. Criminal misuse of social services had become big business; especially with Bulgarian and Polish gangs out to exploit the Dutch system. Breaking up those gangs and arresting their leaders was high priority. Especially because misuse of social services was a theme of right-wing politicians and media in their effort to reduce benefits and attack social services in general. The numbers were getting worse and the demand for investigation and criminal investigation was growing. In that sense, Red was in the lift. And that could benefit Green insofar as it had the task of investigating trends and defining legal loopholes and how to plug them. In reality the crime rates were probably more or less stable. But more cases were being cracked and publicised. The more publicity Red's raids, investigations and arrests got, the stronger its position was in the fight for budget. The sensationalist press was out to attack the Ministry, but it was also our friend as it was all too eager to publicise crackdowns of fraud. Paradoxically the Inspectorate is seen as apolitical. The rest of the Ministry of Social Affairs has to do with policy issues that are politically very powerful; such as retirement policies, benefits and retirement age. The prior Minister had failed to get agreement on new retirement policies and his successor was in the time I was doing my research succeeded in doing so. That was the political focus to the Ministry. After getting an agreement for new retirement policies the minister went on to redefine the law(s) on independent workers that had failed so badly under his predecessor. The minister was very successful; possibly the most so of the entire government. But all of that was literally housed in other buildings than the Inspectorate and was seen as the political side to the Ministry. In fact, the Inspectorate department does not even directly answer to the minister. Political appointees, like a minister, are never supposed in the Dutch state to have direct control over criminal investigation or prosecution. It is seen as part of the division of responsibilities between the political judicial branches of government. Of course, there is a link to the Minister as the Minister is responsible if the Inspectorate makes a mess of things. But it is control very much at a distance and totally loss from any case by case oversight. Where the Minister does come in is in priority setting. It was on the basis of Ministerial responsibility that the focus had been put on modern slavery and slave

labour. If there is internal corruption within the government, Purple is the most likely place for the case to land. But then none of us would know anything about it.

Investigation of the Bulgarian social service fraud gang was Red. In those cases the detectives do and can do a lot. They need court permission, but they wiretap as they think needed; and mobile phones are all an open book for them. The biggest problem for the detectives, I think, is how unhealthy it is being confronted with evil acts and people on a daily basis. And the hours are killing. The investigations are not nine to five; often there is work 24 hours a day to be done.

The culture of Green is much more 'political' than that of Red. For instance, at one point they announced that all the management positions were going to be rotated. Everyone paid lip service to the policy; but in reality, some people behind the scenes managed to stay where they were. In public they claimed that it was total rotation, but really, they had hidden agendas and got their own way. What is announced and is formally 'true' often is not reality. What people say in public is happening or they are doing is not necessarily what is really going on. In my experience it is the worst micro-managers who are also the most double-faced. I was with the man who first told me the jousting story, and had broken the windscreen, when a conversation occurred with one of the senior Green managers. The manager (she) had been in the police with the storyteller (him). She seemed to spend all her time throwing up barriers, making and policing rules. He spent his time disrupting procedures and trying to force change. But, unknown to me, they had been colleagues in the distant past and he started to disrupt her story by recalling past events. He began with "Remember when you jousted ....." obviously embarrassing her no end. She had to confirm as it evidently had really happened; but oh was she uncomfortable. Her straight-laced control image was under attack. Perhaps because she was so flustered, she continued to tell that she was really planning to hold onto her present position and not to rotate as we had been told would happen.

There was a tendency for everyone in Green to be assigned a colour: "You are yellow." The colours came from the Dutch organisation consultant and professor Caluwé. It was very common to hear someone identified by their colour. How the system had gotten into the parlance of the Inspectorate I never found out; but it was almost

omnipresent. The favoured colour was Blue. Blue's are focussed on structure; they are rigid and rule following. My colleague PhD student from the Ministry in Leicester was White. White's are stubborn and very attached to their own choices. Their change model is to blow up the status quo and make things happen. I found the constant reduction of people to labels unnecessary and unpleasant. I noticed that I was allergic for Blue; it denied creativity, affect and the importance of relationships. Reducing people to a colour was a way of not having to address their unicity or individuality. It seemed that controlling the other was all too important and the colour coding seemed to lead to control. It created false predictability and a text where everyone was in their pigeon hole and expected to stay there. The colour coding appeared to me to be a rather futile effort to pretend that the organisational environment was under control, was predictable and could be managed. In reality, I had the impression that the organisation was more out of control than in control. No one really seemed to know how we related to policy or to a strategy. The work in Red got done as best as possible while so understaffed, and in Green there seemed to be no direction other than routine. The policy researchers would get themes every few weeks to work on; they'd check the second-hand data available and write up something. Just why they were asked to check this or that was never told. At any one time they would be working on two or three tasks. Any one theme would last up to three weeks and then be replaced by something else. How what you did fit into some bigger picture was totally unclear. Without any idea of the 'big picture' the work was totally fragmented and a bit absurd. Your control over your work or context was minimal. With such a fragmented situation it is not surprising that anything that seemed to provide order was latched onto. And that seemed to be the role of the colours.

## WHO DID THE RESEARCH & HOW SO PAINTING

In this chapter, I reflect on the process of painting. What is it to paint? That is a question I have addressed often to myself and I find very double to answer because one thing painting is for me is NOT writing. I experience writing and painting as incompatible things. It is not that the one actually negates the other; I do not normally see the two as enemies or two forces in conflict. But I do perceive them as forces that cannot coexist; they are not to be held simultaneously. I can do the one (painting) but certainly not the other (writing), at the same time. I have been trained to do both. I completed my BFA at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, and continued my art training at the Chinese European Art Center, Xiamen University Art College, in China. That led to an exhibit in Xiamen in July 2009. For the catalogue of that exhibit I wrote:

I paint myself, my others, the intimacy of my existence. I paint how it is to feel being 'there': an affective someplace in which I find myself. This painting is not about objects, about commonplaces, about the mass produced material world. I do not sms images as if such tokens could create common space. Space is individual, complex, divided and difficult to communicate. A painting has to be looked at: not just electronically shared as a token. Electronic markers may establish a rational, sign posted way of being together: but this is abstract contact and very impersonal. The painting requires time, to make and to look at. It does not have an automatic sense and is not easily and simply shared. The painting makes demands on time and seeing. I have to puzzle often weeks to find the painting in me and to be able to start to paint. And it is my intention that the viewer puzzle a moment to find a perspective and sense of meaning in what has been painted. We have images all around us as visual throwaways: moments of visual stimulation to be forgotten as quickly as they are displayed. The painting tries to slow down time – to demand a moment of attention in a world of images that fly about our heads unattended to. Do I have the right to demand the observer's attention? Is this arrogant? In the visual chaos that we live in, asking someone to really look at something is making an extraordinary demand. And I want the viewer to really look – I want to make that exceptional demand. It is not that I want to



claim that what I have to say (paint) is so extraordinarily important. But I do want to claim that people who never look, never see: when they do not look they don't live relationships for they won't see what they have. Therefore it is, I believe, crucially important to see: and painting is the art of seeing. It has been popular (for instance in postmodernism) to berate 'seeing'. Seeing was supposedly too intellectual, too male, too aggressive. I wish to counter this critique. Not seeing is too blind, unfeeling and emotionless. Seeing is a key dimension to knowing one is alive. As long as one sees, one knows one exists: I see, therefore I am. But in the monotony of garish consumerism one cannot see. I paint that there is to be seen – firstly by myself, as the painter; and thereafter, by whomever is willing to look at my paintings.

Returning to Europe from Xiamen, I had to find my response to an art market that had collapsed. Post-2008 there seemed to be no economic future for artists or galleries. I decided to get a Masters in Media Studies. Some of my art projects at the Royal Academy had resembled installations and I had an interest in computer supported visualization. I enrolled at the University of Leiden, studied there and graduated. Media studies was meant to combine art and communication; to address how artistic solutions could answer to concrete questions or information needs. It was supposed to provide a meeting ground for students with art backgrounds, those with IT studies and social scientists. I graduated convinced that art-based projects could complement other avenues of knowing. Indeed, the artistic can inform, investigate and support richer awareness. But in Leiden my artistic development had to pursue the installation side of art. There was no room for painting in the program's concept of media. Painting, just was not a legitimate media for the Masters. I wanted to get my degree, and I enjoyed my stint as installation maker/researcher; so, I accepted that painting was (temporarily) abject. But as must be evident to the reader, I did not and could not accept the refusal of painting. I am fundamentally committed to painting as a medium of research, knowledge, communication and awareness.

Thus, in this chapter I want to return to painting as a phenomenon. Indeed, what is it (for me) to paint. But to give the chapter theoretical substance I want to compare my position with that of art criticism. The issues I wish to introduce have been

debated, even fiercely debated, in art criticism. The debate was set off by Micheal Fried (Fried, 1987, 1988, 1998),(Ross, 2012),(Wakefield, 2019) in his denunciation of 'theatricality' in art and assertion of a key difference between presence and presencing. Answering Fried, I find Donald Kuspit (Kuspit, 1976, 1979, 1983, 1984, 1989, 1991, 1993, 2000, 2004, 2011),(Craven, 2009),(van Proyen, 2000) whose Adorno based position feels much more comfortable to me; and his reflections on art school students and their (my) world is very relevant. Thus, this chapter is constructed as a double dialogue: me and painting, and my thoughts on painting juxtaposed with the Fried/Kuspit debate (Green, 2017),(Harrison, 2001),(Meyer 2012),(Wallis, et al., 1984).

### **Painting-1**

You can choose a role for art that it should create creativity in organizations or create new possibilities for businesses (de Monthoux, 2000, 2004),(Hill & Lloyd, 2015). I feel resistance in me against making illustrations in support of some organisation's profitability. But we must not kid ourselves; artists have always decorated the reign of power and beautified repression. In the counter-reformation, art such as that of Peter Paul Rubens, was a means of anti-Protestant propaganda. The viewer was called upon to see how much richer, more emotional and subjectively powerful Catholicism was in comparison to Protestantism. As a citizen of the Northern-Netherlands, I choose for Rembrandt; but it is clear that Rembrandt's critically independent way of seeing his subjects for his paintings did not go down all that well with his rich benefactors, which got him eventually into economic trouble. The social history of painting is definitely rich and complex.

Donald Kuspit claims that ours is (or threatens to be) the reign of the 'aesthetic manager'. Kuspit argues that Marcel Duchamp was probably the first aesthetic manager. Duchamp's 'readymades' flaunted art as something to be seen and the artistic process as a process of visioning. Warhol is Kuspit's exemplar of the contemporary aesthetic manager. Warhol dealt in pure appearances. He took celebrity human appearances and gave them back to us as visual abstractions. The picture records the social appearances of success. His work is entirely dedicated to 'abstraction'; in the sense that it is the idea, for instance of Marilyn Monroe, that he captures. There is no relatedness, no

personability, no 'care' or compassion involved. Just a commercial ikon exaggerated and fed back to us in all its vulgarity. By serializing the image, Warhol made it even more impersonal and commercial. The human was recast as an object of mass production and distribution. The depersonalised was made even less intimate or particular. Monroe as a Hollywood artefact was stripped of all her individuality and in effect she was stripped of her personal history; Warhol managed to make her even less human: he objectified the object. What little selfhood she still had he took away from her. For Kuspit this is what aesthetic managers do: they de-individualize and reduce the Other to pure appearance. They make the human into the easily mass sellable. Successful social appearance is what gets bought and sold; it is the basic element to advertising. The claim is that 'our product will make you socially acceptable' and the role of the artists is to provide the material to back up that claim. There is no individual self behind the appearance; what is on offer is not individual self but mass conformity. This is art as quantifiable; that is, as an accessory to 'sellability'. One must not be an individual or different sort of self; there must be no 'one' but only a 'many'. The pseudo-self is basic to advertising; and the artist who provides the material for advertising has to nurture his or her pseudo-self. Art that claims that existence is only appearance, can support and stimulate mass culture and its commercial goals. Such art banishes the very idea of the 'real person' whether applied to the artist (painter) or the artist's (painter's) subject. Commercial art makes it impossible to recognize or experience a real person in what is presented. Crucial to advertising is that the images are images; not people. There can be no individuality, no personal histories, no tragedies or pain, no love or deceit. There can only be appearance; as if there is nothing else. The world of public image is fundamentally nihilistic; at its most critical it is ironic. There is no self behind the artist or the subject. There are no original feelings, thoughts or actions. Existence is a cliché. This is what the aesthetically managed product is all about. I agree with Kuspit, it entails the profound destruction of painting as I understand it. This is art created to support profitability but at the price of making individual experience impossible. It is art that defends and supports economic gain as the sole existential focus: "Aesthetic management always serves and reinforces social repression, while artistic expression cannot help but contradict and undermine it by reason of its originality." (Kuspit, 2004)

I know that the business art literature claims that art can support innovation whereby

business benefits (2004). But that literature makes short shrift of what sort of art and what sort of innovation. Kuspit's claim is that it is 'aesthetic manager-ist' art; that is art that denies rather than supports the personal, specific and living. It is art that is fundamentally married to mass production and is spiritually stereotyped in its norms and values. It may dazzle customers through its sensory appeal, but essentially it exists to sell products and services. The individual and experiential is turned into the manufactured; what is displayed is a parody of relatedness. This is the management of "rich, seductive 'associational networks' causing easy recollection" (Kuspit, 2004, pp. 591). The 'face' (seemingly a reference to Levinas) becomes a parody of the face: "the natural face is turned into a manufactured face," which can be marketed. For Kuspit, real art brings feelings of spontaneity, insecurity and expression.

In art-based research, Chris Kuiper (2007) has introduced art as a feedback loop. The researcher observes and interviews, and then briefs the artist who paints the themes indicated in the data, where upon the researcher discusses the art works with the researched. The painter never sees the researched. The idea of using art in a feedback loop appealed to me and I included it in my original project proposal to the Ministry. Later on, I ran into two problems. Firstly, with Red I was only permitted five interviews and had very limited access to their workplace; which hindered observation. With Green access was much less a problem. But for the first series of paintings it was a determinant factor. Not only was my contact with the research site weak, I was under strong pressure to focus on what management wanted me to focus on. Red I think were really motivated and very strongly engaged in their work; so I was not in bad faith reacting to exploitation and human slavery as crucial themes. The staff really did feel very strongly engaged in those themes. But I was caught in the illustrator's position. I had been told to paint the two themes and I did so; even if I found the themes legitimate the fact that I had in effect been ordered to react to them was deeply troubling. I really could not know what was authentically my perception and what had been steered. Of course, I was grateful for the assignment. I was glad to be able to bring painting into the workaday world. It gave me a sense that painting was relevant and it gave me an income. In a society where art was increasingly being marginalised and income was drying up (had dried up) I was very happy to have found a successful strategy to remain art related

but also social-economically afloat. But how did all of that influence my painting? How 'painterly' could I still be or was I really an illustrator or a sort of aesthetic manager? There was no way for me to be entirely sure of myself. The second dilemma came when I started to paint. I could tell myself what I was supposed to do, but in each case, there was a moment where I refused my own orders and went on painting broken loose from what I thought I was supposed to do. Painting entailed a loss of rational control; painting repeatedly took over.

I have witnessed art-based research wherein the 'art' is an illustration of a concept. The 'art' is a vehicle for stating a research statement. The art is 'literary'. Michael Fried in his famous article "Art and Objecthood" (1967) argued that art was destroyed by becoming theatre. In theatre the performance exists to be seen; the art is performative. It succeeds or fails in terms of its ability to reach its audience. The artwork is not independent of its viewers. It exists only in so far as the audience acknowledges it. If the audience rejects the artwork it ceases in effect to exist. Painting when it becomes theatre loses its independence and becomes dependent upon the Other. When art is used, as in Chris Kuiper's project, as a means to achieve a conceptual result, the art becomes an adjunct of the research project and is no longer really art. The paintings in Kuiper's project were feedback mechanisms; they had no independence as art. As Kuspit argues, art "involves recognition of one's own subjectivity," and that was absent in Kuiper's set-up. Neither Kuiper, the artists, nor the researchees actually were brought into contact in the project with their own subjectivity. The art was a means and not an end. It was not supposed to achieve "subjective resonance" but to reveal whether organizational change had or had not negatively affected the self-image and/or work of the therapists. The art did not work as a stimulus to the self-awareness of the researcher or researchees. And that is exactly what I see as the problem with much so-called art-based research. Artistic skills are used in a research set-up to try and convey a message. But art, as the self-investigation of relatedness is not in evidence. I agree with Kuspit, painting is not just communication, it entails self-investigation. When art-based research only sees art as a communicative means, and ignores what the artistic process in Western art has signified for the last two hundred years, it abandons what is essential in art for the managing of experiences.

I was afraid with Red that I would just illustrate the themes I had been assigned to examine. Red Painting 2 (the 'Boxer') is the most problematic. You see the red tape, the police, the exploited; all the pre-given signifiers. What saves the painting is the 'boxer'. As I was painting, I lost control of the process as I worked on him. While the rest looks like dead illustration to me, he is alive. When art has a preassigned function, the painting is unfree; it is merely the means to make a precast statement. The 'autonymic' quality of the painting, the painter and the portraited is lost when concepts, conclusions and ideas take over. The painting is made 'literary' and loses its independent being. For Kuspit, the painting is a sort of 'intersubjective contract' between a whole series of persons and contexts. I tried to respect that contract by attending to the independent dimension of the very many relevant facets: my painterly skills, what I had heard in the interviews, the context I was working in, my own thoughts and reflections, the canvases as they developed. The Red series of paintings it does not really work as a series. There is not really a consistent 'signature' through these five works. The first (Red Tape) has a hand and some forms that work as circumstantially driven and adequate elements. The third painting is the most (The Light Bulb) autobiographical. In it, self and enclosure, imprisonment and/or escape, are thematised. I think that I got the theme right in that painting. In the fourth painting (Hands a high) the theme of text and the endless writing that seems to overwhelm all purpose and action is revealed. The expressionist handling of the out reached arms I feel works. Here I am getting very close to what Red meant to me. But the lack of any faces, I feel, reveals the weakness of my position and of my possibilities for reflection. Finally Red Painting 5 (The white man) I am rather attached to the abstraction, but I can understand the criticism that it is 'too little' (it is literally, a very small canvas).

It is my experience that painting needs to be free. If the effect you want the painting to have is pre-determined it seems to weaken the work. An illustration of an idea, result or statement is not a painting. Michael Fried (1967) asserts that the painting should 'absorb' the viewer; I add that I believe that if the painting is going to absorb the viewer it first has to have absorbed the painter. Fried asserts that literalism is stuck in the everyday. The painting that is mere illustration is an example of literalism. For instance, it tells you that the abuse of labour safety laws leads to injury and suffering.

The causal link and the sentiments can be illustrated in an art work, resulting in a sort of comic strip; where you read the sentiment panel by panel. The 'art work' repeats the conditions of basic labour exploitation; the work does not transcend the everyday. The painting becomes a container for a pre-defined message. Fried distinguishes between the canvas as a place where something new and important happens, and the canvas merely as a framed statement. His issue is: 'Does something existentially important happen in and with the artwork?' Does the painting have depth; is there more there than a rendering of some given. Fried discusses 'presentness' as a key factor. For him, there is presence in art; the opening to awareness, feelings and considerations, that exceed the object (the painting) or the objects portrayed in the painting. Fried's thinking turns transcendental and he is really looking for metaphysical depth in the act of painting, the painting and the reception of the painting. I feel no attachment to his metaphysics. But his basic point, that the painting is not just some material object, but is significantly linked to relationality, to being-with, to presence, I accept. I experience painting as a way of being in touch with relationality that occurs as I paint. I am not just putting ideas, predefined concepts, or assumptions onto canvas. When I paint, I am entering into a relational process that I cannot and must not rationally steer. If I tell myself what to do and visually merely enact the ideas I command myself to render, the result will be sterile, have no depth and as Fried argues will lack presence. Painting absorbs me into the act of painting, and thereby has the ability of absorbing the viewer into more than mere rationalization. I subscribe to Fried's assertion that painting is about radical relatedness, wherein the artist's ability to achieve a state of relatedness is the fundament to being able to create an art work.

## **Painting-2**

As I interviewed Red I was thinking about whether I heard things or concepts that I wanted to use. Was I hearing things that were interesting to portray? Is this important to me; do I have to have a connection to it. Sometimes I'd have flashes of images and afterwards I started collecting these images and trying to put them together; exploring what I felt could work. And then I started painting. At first, I was quite structured because I was trying to express a feeling, an observation, a perspective. I was

trying to communicate what I had in my mind onto the canvas. But as I proceeded that did not work and I had to let it go of the 'ideas'. Painting from preconceived ideation just does not work for me. Translating from mind, to hands, to brushes, to canvas was a stretch. What I have in my mind I cannot put directly onto canvas. There are just too many steps. I end up using broad brush strokes that break up my intentions and force me to innovate. The images of Red from the interviews formed a sort of rough draft in my mind. No final ideas, but images; the painting has to be(come) visual; it is a visual thing. When I am painting, I do not see in my mind a painted figure; I see a person, a situation or a circumstance. The paint and the painted is not there yet; that only happens when I actually start to put paint to canvas. There is a proximity at first between what I see in my head and what I see on the canvas. As the painting progresses, I increasingly see the canvas for what it is. I see that the canvas has started to point in different directions; it doesn't care about what I want and what I have in my head. As W. Mitchell has claimed (2005), it becomes an issue of what the picture wants of me. It wants attention, sympathy, positive-regard, anger, opposition, whatever. Pictures want things of us; they are quasi-subjects. We know they are only fabric and pigment, but they caress us, sooth us, anger us, inspire us. Pictures have a *vitalist* dimension to them.

The picture wants me to follow up on lines that I've put on the canvas. I feel that I have to create something out of what is there; there is a sense of necessity here. I have to let go; I have to let the painting make its demands on me. I let go of the initial concept and I start to look at what I have put on the canvas and I react to that in what becomes a closed loop. I continuously talk to the canvas and it talks back to me. When it stops talking to me, or when the message is 'I'm done' I stop. If the image has a strong identity, it's completed. I do not need to add anything; actually, adding something would weaken what the painting is trying to tell me. Quite often I do not stop on time; I work on too long. Then I need to reverse the process and get rid of things. By scratching at the paint, I can try for less instead of more; and I can with white paint over somethings. I need to re-create space and openness if the painting has become too full or is shouting too many different things. I then need to see where the canvas is 'too busy' and needs simplicity. I need to gain distance from it; for instance, by leaving the canvas standing there for a while. I can start with a different canvas or even just totally forget that I had



been working on that particular canvas. A month later I can look at it with enough distance. If I have not painted for a while the chance that I will go too far is much larger than if I'm in a rhythm. If I have built up a cycle of paintings (as in Green), the chance that I stop on time is better. I can leave it alone easier and later maybe a little bit of careful scraping or an extra thin line is needed.

In the Green series I made use of a very restricted palette. That is part of the process of making a series. I like working in short series, say of five paintings. It makes it possible to really grasp a certain painterly element or visual idea. A series begins full of potential and then when it has run its course, it stops. When I've done everything I can with that particular aspect, then the series is complete. With the Green series, the incorporation of writing into the painting was crucial. I was exploring how the context was all about writing, but the writing was strangely disembodied from everything else. What do they do: they write. But the writing has become an object all on its own. It is disembodied from the outside world and from the supposed goals of the Ministry. It is not communication or a telling, it is not a narrative or a story; it is just writing, text, words, painted material. The physicality of the writing is retained; content seems to have flown. With those sentiments and images, I began the series.

Writing is for me always something complicated. My wrist is misformed whereby writing is physically difficult for me. When I was in Xiamen I made a series of paintings around the theme of misformed wrists: their pain, un-handiness and contortions. My manuscript is terrible. I find it ugly and I am very alienated from it. In my own eyes, it is not really mine. I always got comments from my teachers that what I wrote was nearly unreadable. Writing was literally painful for me; the process of writing did me pain. In the Green series of paintings I found a way I could visually make use of my handicap. I could portray aggression, confusion and disorientation by 'writing' on the canvas. It was the visual quality of the script that prevailed; what was actually written was illegible. The script was far more powerful than the 'content' of the writing. It was 'writing' as a visual effect. And that was a realization of what I saw as Green's rather absurdist relationship to what they wrote. The job was to write reports; but no one seemed to know whether the reports had any sense to them, would serve any purpose or really had a content. Their writing seemed just as painful and absurd as mine. I found

that by limiting myself to just using markers and pens to create the writing that it was much more confrontational than if I had painted it.

I always paint figuratively; abstract but figurative. By limiting myself, for instance in my palette, I feel artistically freer. There are fewer factors to consider, whereby I can focus on the central theme or effect. When I am painting, I do not want to theorize; I am not trying to think through the painting. The limiting of the variables helps. I do not want to think about what the canvas has to portray. I do not want to think about the meaning of the art work. When I am painting, I have a feeling of where the painting is going it is a rather emotional process. I let myself run with a dominant sentiment. By using a couple of colours, I do not have to think so much about coloration. I do not attend at all to how the painting is going to be seen by others. I let free reign to things that I am dealing with personally. I find it difficult how people perceive me. Creating a painting that is radically personal and not feeling that I have to care about how it is perceived, is very liberating. The sentiment or message shown is the painting's; I can just let it go and be itself. If people are not happy with it, they are not happy with that thing the painting; they are not actually not happy with me but with the canvas. For course I like compliments. If people find it a good painting that is good for me. But in some ways, I would prefer it if they said they find the painting absolutely horrible because that takes more energy and then I really know that I have reached them.

Art has to do with things that really reach people; illustration is decoration. It is something to hang on the wall of the waiting room that is forgotten as soon as you move on. It is something so that the wall is not entirely white; it is just there to fill up a space but not really to mean anything. If you really see an artwork, it captures your attention. If you get angry it is even more of a choice. The worse-case, is if you just do not care and walk on. If the viewer gets angry it is a sort of complement because you have reached them. You want the viewer to invest some time in relating to the canvas. Indifference is the bane of the artist.

After Green I made a series of three large portraits; the 'screaming heads'. It is a study in sadness and anger. The third is pure anger and then I had to stop. I was becoming too angry for my own good. There may not be a limit to anger in art but there is a limit to how much anger I can handle. I can only walk around with so much anger; at

a certain point I boil over. I had to step back. Painting allowed me to take some distance, but at a certain point not enough. When you paint an emotion, it is there on the canvas and no longer inside of me. But painting is also very confrontational. I cannot just let my emotions run my life. You can still see in my studio how angry I was; it was a totally white studio, now there are blue spots on the walls. You can barely see it, but in the third canvas there is a slice right in the middle. I went right through the canvas with my brush. I was attacking the canvas so violently that my brush cut through it. There was no painting knife or anything like that spatula involved; it was the violent thrust of the brush that I went right through the canvas. It came as a bit of a shock so I decided to not to continue painting for a while. Art be self-destructive. Too many artists kill themselves. I assume that suicide and death are always a very common topic in the arts. Basquiat is one of my favourite artists; is his overdose a suicide? Art can be therapeutic but it can lead to a downward spiral. Rothko's profound spirituality may have killed him; it certainly did not save him.

I had to stop painting for a period because I couldn't handle the frame anymore. Painting is all about what you put inside a frame; what you define as the 'there' of attention. As I have stated illustration does not define a 'there'; it merges with the wall to become background. I was dealing with disease and my own health, my own physicality and it took me years to rise above the challenge. Putting such life issues into a frame, having to confront them and be focussed on them, is emotionally exhausting. Obviously, my interpretation of painting is very psychological. I have always felt that with my own painting I needed to be very close to the topic. I stay very close to the canvas: literally as I work, but also metaphorically. I must be close to what I paint; I need to be in touch with everything on the canvas. Otherwise, I would just be making illustrations and I would hate myself for making illustrations. I would just keep going on and on, until there was nothing more than a black blob on the canvas. There would be no resolution; no sense of completion. When there are topics that I'm dealing with that I find difficult to discuss it becomes very hard for me to paint.

I actually like painting; I like the feeling of letting it go, of not being entirely in control. I like losing myself in the frame. It is very gratifying finishing a painting. It has to do with coming to terms with something and achieving a moment of closure.

I find 'happy painting' problematic. At the Royal Academy there was a fellow student who was technically very good, he could paint alright; but I hated what he painted. He would paint flowers; beautiful flowers but flowers for heaven's sake. What is wrong with flowers: the paintings did not have anything really to say. I found them meaningless objects. But with a nod to Matisse, it is not really the flowers which are the problem, it is that the student added nothing to nature but only subtracted from it. You could better just put the flowers on the table and leave them there. The flowers had more to say than his images of them. Matisse added something; he had more to say than just the flowers sitting there in a vase.

Liu Xiaodong is another favourite painter of mine. He works, for instance in the Three Gorge series (Kelley & Fox, 2006), (Kelley & Tsuruka, 2005), (Liu, 2006), from photographs. There is a marvellous book (Erickson, 2008) where you see the photographs and the paintings next to one another. The paintings are very realistic but he uses his brushwork giving life to the paintings. The photos look flat; the paintings are vibrant. Just the opposite as the flowers. The 'real' object is less vibrant than the image. If the 'real' object is the more vibrant of the two, then then why produce the painting? Just put the 'object' on display. Liu Xiaodong does not seem to paint all that introspectively. With the Three Gorge series he paints the engineers and the workers; there is critique of Chinese politics. He paints social problems; things that people try to avoid. I enormously admire his art, but I do not have the ambition to be a social critic. I have never intended to become an artist of social commentary. Though when you look at the Green series of paintings; I realise they can be seen as social commentary. What draws me to Liu is his mastery of expressionist painting; his artistic ability to capture aliveness in a painterly form.

Eric Fischl (Fischl, 2012) completes my triumvirate of favourite artists. His social anger is palatable. Again, enormously expressive brush work and figurative expressionist work. Inside his frame there is a powerful mix of eroticism and commentary. The beaches or art galleries he paints are sites of emotional emptiness. He often paints many people in a single scene where their lack of contact or deeper relatedness is all too evident. The lack of positive belonging or 'care' is all too evident in his crowds of aloneness.

The Green series of paintings are for me angry and sad. I think that in the feedback sessions, the very restrained palette made them accessible for the group. One man found them confrontational; but for the most part there was recognition and acceptance. I have already explained their iconography; I would emphasize that I think that how these paintings are aesthetically very controlled is what made them sufficiently accessible. The mixture of anger and sadness seems to have worked. For me if I am angry, I am also sad because I do not want to be angry, and vice versa if I am sad I am angry that circumstances have made me sad. The two emotions are fundamentally linked for me. The restrained or subdued aesthetic facilitated the portrayal of chaos. Art is very tricky in that sense. Portrayal of chaos must not be chaotic, or another example, the portrayal of boredom must not be boring. The very muted surface to the painting made it possible for the emotion to be communicable.

At the 'Dysfunction Day' in December 2018 I presented my paintings and my reflection on painting to the conference. My theme was the necessity to let the painting have its own dynamic, loss from prior ideation. I argued that if I tried to think my way all the way through the artistic process that the painting would never have a life of its own. The painting would not gain the ability to want something firstly of me, and later of the viewer. I argued that the painting's ability to want something of us is essential to its power and aliveness. Paintings are not just objects, they are poetic beings with an ability to demand, evoke, comfort and enthuse. My presentation was in almost total disagreement with that of Anne Dubos and Jan Schacher (Dubos & Schacher, 2019). They framed their paper with the following quote from Alexander Calder:

There are two processes gone through in making each stroke of painting or drawing. First, the eye and the brain, or the brain alone, must act and determine what it is desired to place on canvas or paper. This is a mental process. The second process is physical, for the hand must so control pencil or brush that the desired effect may be obtained, that the image the eye has carried to the brain may be correctly transmitted to canvas or paper. ((Calder, 1926) Dubos & Schacher, 2019)

Painting is portrayed here as mentally commanded and controlled and as a process of rational action. Dubos and Schacher's 'arts-based research project' took the form of projecting life-size animal forms from the Palaeolithic cave drawings of the Trois

Frères cave onto a screen surface, producing ‘a screen-based, body-size interactive experience’. The audience is invited to interact with their hands ‘with the luminous animal shapes moving on the body-size panoramic screen’. Their claim: ‘our apparatus generates an artistic object, whose primary goal is knowledge production through aesthetic experience’. The audience are invited to relate with their hands touching the screen with the performative ritual claimed to be inherent to the making of the cave paintings. The project is meant to produce a ‘re-mediation’ of the central working process of the making of the cave drawings. The research “is mainly focussed on [the] technical gesture and body movement needed to produce a design: the painter’s gesture, rather than its trace, i.e. the painting itself.” The meshwork of theory involved included: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Henri Bergson, Tim Ingold, Michael Polanyi, Evan Thompson and Gregory Bateson. The project seemed to me to become very noisy with so many thinkers just hanging around.

The Calder claim of control seemed to conflict with the assertion of ‘entanglement’. Complex emergent out-of-control relatedness, wherein two ‘objects’ potentially at great distance from one another are seemingly unexplainably linked, appears to me to be the antithesis of Calder’s claim. Dubos and Schacher seemed to me to be attempting some sort of entanglement experiment wherein the cave drawers and their drawings were via multimedia directly linked to contemporary viewers and their hands touching the images on the giant screen. The ‘re-presenting’ of the cave images to the contemporary audience was claimed to be a direct affective relation. I experienced it as Microsoft Paint gone wrong. I remember as a kid playing with MS paint. You would make shapes and then you would get a ‘paint bucket’ and fill up the shape with one colour or another. The other image I have is of the kaleidoscope: looking through the tube and rotating it to get different colour and shape effects. For me this is not art; it is shapes and colours but there is nothing more there. It is flat and meaningless. Dubos tried to put meaning to the shapes but it was all too abstract; she was trying too hard to have the screen say something that it really did not say. You can say that this line means life, and that this little horizontal line signifies death, and when they cross it is the planet, but does not work as art. The screen had motion but for me it did not move; it was lifeless; if did not want anything of me that I was interested or

willing to give it. Dubos was all into their projection of moving objects and then there was Schacher reading his text at the same time. The two aspects were supposed to be reacting to each other, but I could not see how. For me it was far-fetched. They were asking for too much from the viewer. The work did not speak for itself. If the woman had not been there and the man was not reciting his text, it would have been a screensaver on a computer screen. Screen savers on a computer are not art; they are designed to make sure that you do not get dead pixels. They have a function they are there to keep the screen from dying by making sure that the pixels do not burn through. She wanted the screen to do something; to mean something. He was too controlling and it just did not happen. In no way was it as deep or as interesting as she hoped or believed it was. It was just shapes and colours, and lines that overlapped. As a whole it did not portray anger, sadness, happiness, anything; it was just flat. The Dubos / Schacher project did not leave me with an image. I do not remember what it looked like; there were shapes and movement but I did not retain any visual image. All I remember is that I wanted coffee; I had not slept very much, working on my own presentation. I know that the coffee was just around the corner from where we were.

When I am producing the painting, the only observer is me. As soon as the painting shouts something at me, very clearly very definitely, it is done. It is not a question of balance, composition or order; it is a question of the painting speaking to me. Of course, there are different languages and texts: paintings by Mark Rothko, Sean Scully and Pierre Soulages speak a very different language from mine. Of course, we can debate which language speaks to whom the strongest, why and how. And there are issues of timing and circumstance. Scully is unhappy about how the pillars of the American embassy in London break the view of his murals. The profound dark blues of Rothko speak to me because it is my favourite colour and he makes such a pertinent use of it. I see that these works speak to me. I could not and would not really want to have made them; they are in another discourse world from me. But I can appreciate the colours, forms, intent; that is, the painting's emotion and being.

To conclude closer to home, JW was a former classmate at the Royal Academy. I think 'the Shed' is his best work. He made it during his last year at the Academy. He painted it very



quickly. I just look at it and wonder: 'Why a shed?' and 'Why this shed?' The painter was very uncertain about the painting. He was not sure if it was finished and I advised him not to continue. I am not sure if I was the only one who said that, but thankfully he didn't continue. The mystery is intact, the painting refuses closure. Quite often he wants the painting to be too perfect. He was always too concerned with how someone else saw his painting. Too focussed on what he wanted or what he felt that the painting should say; did what he want really come over? Do people immediately understand what he meant. I do not really care what some imagined 'they' see in the painting. When the painting says that it is done; it is done. Someone else might think something totally different from me; for me that is just not the issue. There is the



moment that the painting speaks and from that moment I do not want to touch the canvas, and really, I must not do so. That is the moment wherefrom the canvas leads its own life. To get there, I need to lose myself in the painting process; I have to let the painting 'be'. I must not try for too much balance or order; I must not get in the way of the painting. If I try to think through the image, I will probably just do damage to the canvas.

### **Painting-3**

In 'Art and Objecthood' Michael Fried argues for what makes for mere 'objects', versus genuine 'art'. The argument rotates around two polarities: presence versus presentences and theatricality versus art. Theatre happens in time with an audience. It entails a performance. Actors perform for a public. Theatre happens in time; it is circumstance and event bound. Fried believes that art, let me specify the painting, should, as I have been already asserting, speak to the viewer. The crux of the matter is not a circumscribed circumstance, wherein for a defined moment and bounded situation, the artist or art work performs for an audience. Theatre is time and place bound. It is characterised by a relatively short period of engagement, wherein the experience of the play is crucial. Fried argues that real art is timeless. It is not singular, situated and circumstantial; but possesses a quality of presentness or 'being'. Art is ontological: that is, about 'being'. It just is. Presence is circumstantial and event driven. Presentness is outside of time; it is ontological. Fried argues that art is not situated experience or temporally bound occurrence. Art 'aufhebt' or transcends immediacy. The painting is not just an 'object' but enframes a mode of being. Objects are just one thing after another; one scene, soliloquy or act after another. Painting that Fried sees as art is not just a collection of elements, however pleasing, but is an existential appeal or call to being. Ultimately the painting transcends the particular and forges 'grace' or some sort of united, cohesive completeness, which he calls presentness.

I find the identification of the painting with transcendent metaphysics troubling. The assertion that theatre is the negation of art sounds counterintuitive. After all, theatre is an art form. But Fried's point is that the theatrical is 'sensationalist'; a mere sequence of elements in a fairly loose structure. His illustration is Tony Smith's night

time drive on a yet unopened motorway: "It was a dark night and there were no lights or shoulder markers, lines, railings, or anything at all except the dark pavement moving through the landscape ... this drive was a revealing experience ... it did something for me that art had never done ... its effect was to liberate me from many of the views I had had about art." The unmarked, unlit, unstructured turnpike was his new paradigm. Something that was directly available to understanding, that is, just there to experience, superseded 'art'. For Fried, this is theatre taking over. Presence is all too available, too accessible, too undemanding. Theatre is objectless; purely circumstantial and available. It is a thrill directed at you from the outside. Paintings are objects; they are windows onto something demanding, questioning and ultimately affirming. There is a pictorial element to paintings; there is something anthropocentric about them. Paintings are not just human enactments; they have some sort of quasi-being or existence all of their own. Paintings are; theatre is performed and then disappears. It is the existential insistence of the paintings 'being' that differentiates it from theatre.

Throughout I have entertained some sort of 'presentness' as a quality of painting. To that degree I agree with Fried's analysis. But his insistence that 'presentness' is transcendental and leads to 'grace' seems to me excessively metaphysically laden and a bit gratuitous. Thus, I turn to Donald Kuspit, who throughout his career as art critic has debated with Fried's positions. Kuspit's Winnicott influenced psychological conceptualization of art. Kuspit focuses on the perception of the 'autonymic' quality of the painting; that is, on its authentic quality of selfhood. There is here 'presentness' but not transcendence. You could say that Fried follows the painting all the way up to the transcendent, while Kuspit follows it all the way down to the psychological foundations of personhood; that is, from the perspective of the non-temporal or non-self-aware stage of consciousness:

The prototaxic mode of experience is infantile. It is paradoxical that to establish an infantile mode of experience of the art object—immediate experience of it—requires such a heroic effort. But this is because only an infantile experience of the art object can disclose its extra-ordinary significance for us. Only the experience of it as "mothering" us with its "sensational" immediate given-ness.

The painting connects to the infantile quality of basic attachment. Childlike selfhood is intersubjective and radically relational. The painting appeals to this basic symbolic stage of being and not to the more rational specular consciousness. The painting has the power of returning us to our basic stage of being. Hereby an 'introspective recognition of one's own subjectivity' is facilitated. The issue is what inhabits the work of art; for Fried it is 'grace' and transcendence, for Kuspit human existential grounding in relatedness.

While Fried sees 'theatre' as the danger to art, Kuspit thinks the danger comes from becoming "just another obsessive form of capitalist production." I have already written about 'aesthetic managerialism' as a threat to art. The danger is that art accepts being just another consumer good with the unique selling point of novelty. At issue here are artists who want 'money, glamour/fame, parties/openings', and in that order. Art becomes the creation and exploitation of a 'marketable identity'. Obviously Kuspit's approach politically differs from Fried's. Kuspit asserts: "only when reality is 'insane', is it truly sane to make art; to dialectically engage." Kuspit was a student of Adorno's and the heritage for Frankfurter School political-psychology is evident in his thinking. The hyper-capitalism of the 21st century is typified as an insane reality, whereby escape from that reality into art is sane. Kuspit sees art as "narcissism to overcome nihilism." Artists have to love 'being', that is, existence, relatedness and feeling; in order to devote themselves to making basic images of affect, awareness and sentiment. Fried championed the 'morally significant position'; Kuspit 'emphatic being'.

Kuspit acknowledges the psychological significance of art but remains critical. Fried identifies artistic integrity with moral integrity; as if artistic ethics were inherently moral ethics. The aesthetic and ethical in Fried are collapsed into the same thing. But surely artists of great aesthetic integrity can be politically and sexually profoundly immoral. The sources of art, of making it and of appreciating it, may be deeply rooted in our psychological roots as human; but that does not mean that everything to do with art is existentially authentic. The idea that artists are more authentic than everyone else betrays hubris. Artists are not in existence in a more fundamental way than everybody else:

These implicit assumptions strike me as self-evidently false and arrogant—show a pretentious and self-righteous pursuit of dominance. More directly to the point, they indicate how the studio mentality appropriates and misuses categories of understanding appropriate to existential issues, as if being-in-the-studio was a superior way of being-in-the-world.

Fried gave us an all or nothing choice: either the death of art in theatricality or the success of art in presentness. I accept that art, as Kuspit claims, has to do with some fundamental psychological themes, but reject Fried's overwrought dualism.

The painting can propose an intersubjective contract wherein shared sensibility facilitates relatedness. Paintings can on a process level, between the painter and the canvas and the canvas and the viewer, be about some fairly fundamental processes. And my project had to do with trying to bring facets of these principles of relatedness into the lifeworld of the people I was working with

## WHO WAS RESEARCHED & WHERE

Two series of paintings, grounded in interviews and producing feedback sessions, occurred. The first cycle of research was in Red. That is, it was completed in the high security detective work portion of the Inspectorate. The second set of interviews, paintings and feedback, occurred in Green or the low security research portion of the Inspectorate. Each time there were five researchees, five paintings produced, and in effect a separate cycle of research.

I cannot give detailed demographic information about what jobs the researchees in Red or Green did, or specifically what their educational background or ages were because my promise of anonymity would thereby be breached. Red and Green are small enough that by providing that sort of information I would make the researchees identifiable. Therefore, I refrain from using pronouns in relation to the participants. At the time of my research, Red was a fairly small unit. In my sample there were two senior detectives and three juniors. The Red researchees were 'volunteered' by their boss. I chose the Green researchees by inviting the one and the other; and they provided a couple of other names. What we call here Green, or the researchers employed by the Inspectorate, was quite large, at the time about sixty people. At a minimum they have a Polytechnic bachelor's degree. Most of the Red researchees were trained as police and have a specialist BA degree level. Red often began with high school degrees and had worked themselves up over the years. Much of their training was internal to the police and/or the Ministry. The younger Red employees do have a Polytechnic or University degree. While Green's senior leadership is all male, the majority of the research staff are women (55% / 45%). In Green they work a lot in small groups, say of three. They get assigned projects or themes to investigate individually or in small groups. At any one time each researcher is working on two or three projects. A project can last up to six months. It is Flex work and they work in an open floor set-up. The person next to you in principle is not working on the same project(s) as you are. All tasks are based on assignment; you get assigned to research an issue or theme. You have very little idea what most of your colleagues are researching. The organisation is rather sloppy. There were three Heads of Department; it occurred that a Head of Department assigned people to work on project and only after a couple of months did they

discover that another Head of Department had assigned several of his people to do exactly the same thing. You get an assignment and thereafter are pretty much left alone to get on with it. There is next to no daily supervision or guidance. The relationship between the Heads of Department were said to be hostile and dysfunctional. I never actually heard anything about quality control. Were there standards of data collection, analysis or whatever? No one ever talked about it. The researchers were very relieved when they completed a task. And they were extremely pleased if they saw that something they had done got picked up and actually used by the Minister, for instance to answer questions in parliament or in discussion in a Parliamentary committee. Often the 'research' seemed more to entail a literature review of newspaper and magazine articles, than anything that in the social sciences would be called 'research'. The emphasis was on stating: 'This is what's going on in the Netherlands; this is our government's point of view; and this is what we at Social Affairs have tried to do'. Actual policy development or formulation did not seem to be part of their task. Their tasks were not proactively defined; it really was all about background information. They could identify trends, but that was about it. A lot of their work seemed to be produced to disappear into desk drawers. The Ministry seemed to have an insatiable need to be able to say, 'We have looked at that'. Sometimes they could write-up scenarios; that is, say: 'This or that could be done'. But the scenarios did not seem to get picked up all that often. Often there is no political clout or ammunition involved and the research is just not further found to be important. The Ministry really is governed by political expediency; what is 'hot' in the press, gets picked up in parliament, and has something to do with a 'crisis' is what gets all the attention. Often the researchers see nothing back from their work and they find that frustrating. An additional problem is that the data they use is all old. Current urgency often cannot be addressed with information about how things were a year or two ago. Often the projects are out-dated before they begin. And there are often several different groups unknown to one another working on the same theme spread throughout the Ministry. As soon as your task is completed you have to go on to another one. The researchers do not specialize; you just have to spend time on the one assignment after the other with little or no continuity. What happens with your results is all too often a sort of black box. When an explicit question has to be answered from parliament, then it is high pressure work and results have to be accurate

and fast. And then there is more control over what the researchers do. Normally questions from Parliament have to be answered within a single week. The Department Head is then involved and demanding.

To choose my five Green researchees I started with *G1*. *G1* was easy to make contact with and talks easily. *G1* had started a few months before I had begun my project and was in a way more a 'colleague' than most. *R3* and *G3* were also fairly new to the Ministry, but *G3* was seen as a high-potential. *G3* was assigned many tasks very quickly. I think the Directors saw *G4* as their bright future star; but it did not work out. Within a year *G3* had a burn out and was at home on leave for several months. *G3* finally came back, starting to work again part-time. *G5* was a former Red who had transferred to Green. The psychological pressure of dealing daily with the extremes of exploitation, sexual crime and violence was a diet *G5* chose to escape from. As *G5* had recently transferred *G5* was both senior (i.e. very experienced) and junior (new to the Green organisation). Task wise they gave *G5* senior work. *G4* was an experienced but young senior researcher. Policy was to try and replace the older senior researchers with younger junior or senior researchers. This was because the older seniors who are there were generally less well-educated and had come up through the organization through experience rather than the well-educated younger juniors with less experience who they could at that point appoint. The labour market for junior researchers was depressed. And well-educated juniors cost less than less-educated but well-experienced seniors. Thus, in my sample you have four women and one man; I think to be 'representative' it should have been 3:2. Because the Inspectors were mainly men, the figures for the Inspectorate were very different from those of the Analysis and Research department. But the Inspectors mainly worked from home and were very rarely in any numbers in the building. In addition, there was a staff department: HRM, accountants, that sort of thing. It was also predominantly female. There were a few staff people who sat on our floor; they were not supposed to be there. Their department had been moved a couple of years ago to another floor; but they just ignored the rules and with the Flex work there really was very little control over where you sat. But recently the researchers were moved, and now the (financial) department where these few rebellious staff members are part of joined them at their location, meaning that now they are all sitting where

they are supposed to sit. One of the accountants controlled the research project budgets, so it made sense that he always sat on our floor. But he also had made it clear that he liked the researchers a lot more as people than his fellow accountants.

With Red I would have had to go back to senior management to arrange for any more participants. With Green it was pretty much up to me and I could have increased my numbers. But the two cycles of research, including the interviewing, interview analysis, painting and feedback sessions took more than a year to complete. I was unable to complete the task within the time that had been budgeted; and an extension was granted. That was very normal with special projects; they often took longer than had been initially planned. Painting takes time; but the biggest agenda problem was getting the interviews arranged. Everything is done in Outlook; the Ministry runs on electronic agendas. But appointments get cancelled and rescheduled with alacrity. People often look sporadically at their mobile phones and end up rushing, late, from here to there trying to find their meeting. Reds were very busy and there is a mist of secrecy about them. Greens are chaotic because their assignments are renewed and changed so often; they have great difficulty planning ahead. Greens really often did not know what they would be doing a week or two ahead. At the one moment they would basically be sitting and twiddling their thumbs waiting for something to happen and at another moment they also were very busy with three projects and looming deadlines. Because there is a chronic shortage of meeting space in the building, I had to make appointments a couple of weeks in advance. And even then, getting a room was sometimes very difficult. In the end, I did several of the feedback sessions in my studio in my own house. It was just easier that way. Also that saved me from having to transport the paintings back and forth to the Ministry. The project logistics were sometimes really difficult. My project was, of course, an outlier; it was not 'business as usual'. And that probably made it more difficult to get the ten researchees to give me the time needed. If there was an emergency in their primary tasks, they would just postpone their appointment with me. The Flex-work system was rather new and double appointments as well as forgetfulness abounded. Since no one had a fixed working place, and people often worked from home, no one really knew where anyone else was. On paper we all had set schedules but sudden deviations is the norm, thus we were supposedly located on the eleventh floor;



but in reality you would find people on eight, nine, eleven or thirteen, as well. The ninth was popular, but the atmosphere there was very chatty. If you found background noise a problem it was not a good place to sit. You could go to floor one or two; but anyone could sit there and you never knew what work environment you would find. Besides there were no meeting rooms there, so if you were working together on a project one and two were pretty worthless. Privacy was a problem; even Green had to watch out about what they said or was overheard. To have a meeting space you had to reserve it electronically. You had to have IT approval to be allowed to reserve a meeting space. I have no idea if I had the rights to have that approval. I just went to the IT people explained my project and they cleared me, this might be because I've always been kind and friendly with the IT department and I am able and willing to try and figure out the issue before heading down to ask for assistance. But most people are short with the people at the IT department and expect them to know and fix the issue in an instance. And thus among these colleagues the IT department had an reputation of being difficult and dreaded having to interact, negotiate or ask IT for assistance. For the feedback sessions, getting an appropriate space was a hassle. I needed to be able to move the tables and chairs about and out of the way so there was appropriate viewing space, which was not possible in every meeting room. And the researchees had to have space to position the paintings as they saw fit. Many meeting rooms were too small, had unmovable furniture, or for some other reason did not work.

Getting the paintings into the building was also a challenge. This was solved by giving me supervised permission to use the Minister's elevator. It is the only elevator that goes directly from the underground parking garage into the building. Normally you have to pass through security and the electronic turn stiles on the ground floor to gain access. What I discovered while working at the Ministry is that the Minister smokes quite a bit; on several occasions I ended up sharing elevator space with him (in the normal elevators) quite often. He, like anyone else, had to exit the building to smoke. Although, he would go down to the before mentioned parking garage to smoke with the chauffeurs. The chauffeurs have their little waiting area and in the garage, a couch and a few chairs, although, I assume that technically they are not supposed to smoke there, they are permitted to smoke they are permitted to do so and the Minister does as well

when it rains outside. The chauffeurs are permitted to do so for they are always on-call and cannot go elsewhere to go smoke. The rest of the people have to go outside; and you are not supposed to smoke right in front of the entry (though many do smoke there).

With Green I started with someone I was friendly with and then snow-balled from the one to the other. Some people claimed to be 'too busy' but it wasn't all too hard to get a cohort of five researchees. One of the individuals who refused it turned out was existing; she was gone a few weeks later.

While the crucial themes for Red were violence and reorganisation; with Green it was more the chaotic structure of the work and the effects of the reorganisation. Sometimes they had nothing to do and sometimes they were swamped. They found it difficult to deal with the irregularity of the work tempo. While Red had a strong sense of purpose: 'We catch wrong-doers'; Green had a feeling of too often being superfluous. They found it frustrating not knowing if anyone read their reports or if their work really served a goal. Most people hated the Flex work and the lack of group cohesion it produced. R3 was very positive about the Flex work the first time I met with R3 and at a second feedback interview R3 hated it. R3 totally changed positions in a couple of months' time. The Greens had often joined the Ministry thinking that they could play a role in supporting or improving social services; only to discover that there was a major disconnect between their work and what the Ministry supposedly is all about. Instead of finding idealism, they were subjected to bureaucracy. In Green there were many more micro-political games; of favours, of who got which project, of deadlines, of who worked with who. Reds were much less 'political'; they just got on with it. Greens feared writing anything that the Minister might not like. They tried to keep an eye at all times on the Minister's political agenda. I wonder how well they really knew what the Minister was thinking; but the idea that they should 'please/protect' him was very strong. I asked much more 'How do you feel about your work?' than 'Exactly what are you now researching and how so?'. I was addressing much more their attitudes and self-image than trying to evaluate the nitty-gritty of their research work. Spontaneously, the Greens remained quite vague about what they were doing. The Reds had security issues, but they were eager to talk about the content of their work. When it comes to being content

driven the two groups were extremely different. Debate about content: goals and budgets, implementation and practicability, did not seem to happen in Green. There did not seem to be strong content level commitment. The researchers seemed fairly neutral and uninvolved in the content of their assignments.

The Green's were social scientists qua training: economists, sociologists, psychologists. G3 was a sociologist. I think that G3's biggest problem was that G3 did not know how to say: 'No'. They overloaded G3 with task until G3 broke. The higher-ups liked G3 so much because G3 took care of whatever they threw at G3. But at some point, G3 just got overwhelmed. In G3's interview G3 rarely talked about content, it was a lot about process. It was a difficult interview for me; G3 continuously tried to flip roles with me and to interview me. G3 wanted to know what I had seen and what had determined my perspective in the paintings. That was in the art feedback-session. In the first G3 was very positive. Everything was 'hunky-dory'. Working in Green was a delight; G3 had no criticisms at all of the organisation. G3 was the only researchee of the ten who said that G3 could be interested in going politics. G3 did say that G3 felt the Ministry needed to be more focussed on the plight of the poor and exploited, but insisted that what G3 was doing was important. Improvement in how people were treated internally or how people were treated in society was an important theme according to G3. G3 felt that there should be more of a connection to the people our tasks were directed to. Working with data to complete research tasks G3 found had sometimes too much of an internal feel to it. G3 thought we were excessively 'playing it safe'. That we were too much coddled. But G3's critique really was very muted. Actually G3 was the most critical of the Greens. The others just said everything was great and that the work was fine. The people were very nice and they worked very hard. What we did was good for society. After the fact, I have a very strange feeling about the Green interviews. On the one hand, it sounds saying like they are very superficial. They are all complaining about the workloads and planning, and on the other side they tell you how marvellous it is and how good the work is that they do. The Greens seemed to be a bit all over the place. They did not seem to have the same strength of an identity that was so typical of the Reds.

In terms of outward appearances, the Greens dressed much more formally than the Reds. In appearances, they are much more part of the Ministry than the Reds are.

The Reds wear jeans and sweaters; the Greens (or at least the researchers) dressed a notch more formally. If a man showed up wearing a tie you knew he had an appointment with someone higher up in the Ministry. The Reds wore sneakers; the Greens neater shoes. Green women wore heels; Reds did not. Greens wore make-up; Reds much less so.

I would classify Green as a fear culture. One Green made a joke about a typo that G's boss made in an email. The boss did not mind at all; but G's colleagues were horrified: 'How could you say that? What were you thinking to make such a comment? 'You just do not contradict the higher-ups. Certainly not until you had a permanent contract, after a couple of years there, you should not dream of saying anything critical. There was an exaggerated sensitivity to internal politics; who likes who, who was/is in conflict with who, that sort of thing. It was all office politics; real world politics did not seem to enter into it. The Ministry had gone from a social-democratic Minister to a progressive liberal Minister. That is not a huge political difference between the two ministers. There was a big difference in the persons, but not in their political parties. The prior Minister had the reputation of being very authoritarian and the current one was generally liked. The political viewpoints of the civil servants were muted. Eventually you came to know which political party the civil servants supported. One of the older persons had been a 'kabouter '(the anarchistic political movement of the squatters) in his radical youth in Amsterdam; and I assume that he now is Green-Left. He was rather happy at the replacement of the social democrat by the progressive liberal. One of the younger women was very clearly Conservative (VVD). It was really quite mixed. You were not supposed to make your politics all too clear. One of the financial advisors (not a researchee) told me that he did not agree with payments to refugees and that insofar he could that he would always push in the research he did to justify lower pay outs.

Green was fairly social. They had parties and regular outings, which I joined. And there were Ministry wide social events for younger staff members. But those were dominated by people from the rest of the Ministry. Green and Red are in the Inspectorate; the vast majority of people working for Social Affairs work for the other three branches of the Ministry. There the dominant background is economics. The culture is much more traditional; for instance, for the men sport coat and tie every day.

The Inspectorate was always under-represented in Ministry events. The year I joined two Inspectorate employees ran and were elected to the board of the youthSZW that organised an outside of work social program. Suddenly the Inspectorate was strongly represented and much more present. But the younger generations at the Ministry are politically much more conservative than the older generation. I went to the social events for a period of time, but after a while I stopped. The dominant political colour just was not mine. How you dressed and how much you drank was very important and I felt there was a constant jostling for a peck-order. I dressed more formally than most of the Inspectorate than and was often seen as one of the colleagues from the economic or policy departments, but I did not feel myself or much at home among them. The economists dominated; showing up in suit and tie. The dominant subjects of discussion were vacations and cars. There was virtually no discussion of the content of our work. I did meet a couple of people who were also doing a PhD and their research was quite interesting. But the rest were talking about soccer, cars and women; 'me-too' had obviously not sunk in yet. The discourse was very crudely directed to sex. How often you went to the gym each week was also a point of discussion. You would hear some Ministry gossip once and a while.

## **INITIAL INTERVIEW DATA**

The goal of this chapter is to offer the reader more direct contact with the researchees. This is not easy because all the interviews were held in Dutch and thus I can only present data here in translation. This presentation will be in four sections: the initial interviews in the Red and then the Green portion of the Inspectorate, and then the Painterly interviews, again divided in the Red and Green groups. The differentiation is made, you will recall, because the work of the two portions is different. Green is much broader in its focus on issues in social affairs, while Red sticks much closer to issues of criminal investigation(s). Also, I interviewed Red at the very beginning of the research and Green somewhat later, whereby I was institutionally more knowledgeable by the time I got to the Green interviews. In the Red interviews the interviewed tended more to explain things to me, this probably has to do somewhat with Red's more goal orientated/ practical culture, but it also had to do with my lack of contextual knowledge.

### **Green Initial Interviews**

#### **CONTACT:**

... you have to meet with each other so often and I find that difficult; often we are meeting about things we have to or want to do, and I think: 'Yes, I would rather be doing that right now instead of talking about it ... we're talking for an hour and a half and I could have done most of it already. (G1)

I don't like meetings very much ... I just want to be able to do my own thing, I don't want to dilly-dally, ... I do chat with people, but I just want to be able to focus on my work, I want to be able to read my things, take notes, just be able to do my thing and it really breaks up my day when I have a meeting, before I'm back in focus it takes quite a while. (G1)

... it's really important to build a strong network, so sometimes you really have to slow down a little, and go drink coffee together ... (she laughs nervously). I think it's very clever when people can do that, because I'm too direct myself and although I like it, it's still quite difficult .... here you are in a kind of box and you don't really come out enough and meet ... and get to know more different people from other departments within the organization [and get] to know the organization better. G2

I attach a lot of value to the contacts with others and connecting with them as well. I get excited about them. I let myself be inspired by them. I am quite selective about people I see as a source of inspiration and people I see as uninspiring. G3

### **THE WORK PROCESS**

What I like about work is that it is diverse and what motivates me is if you work in a more dynamic project group. Where everyone feels like contributing, so you can really have sparring partners and also that you then feel you have a certain responsibility. ... If I have to do partial aspects, then...yes...I'm fine, I'm really not too bad at picking up small things, but I also need to be taken along in the, so to speak, larger process line, I like that ... it motivates me in my work and gives me added value. (G2)

I spent two or three months trying to find out for myself [particular data] ... and then I found out when I was asking people around a bit: "Ooh, but those data are just there" (in a different voice...surprised and higher)". ... good news for me, but it's a pity that that news came after two months .... I was really stumbling [and afraid that] I'm never going to get enough data, ... "Ooh but those data are there, and they're even very recent) ... knowledge is not well shared; just about what's going on here internally. ... you call a meeting and they only have time for you 6 weeks later, it is so slow ... I was really panicking (laughing) ... I was really panicking ... I'd asked around," Who could possibly know anything about 'x' here internally," then someone just called out a few names, people I didn't know ... then I sent them all an e-mail; there were 5 or so ... about

who I was and what I did, then everyone answered, so they were all willing to help, whether or not they had anything. And then a colleague suddenly made a lot of data available and I had a choice of what I wanted to use, so very helpful, a lot of people want to help you even if it's not part of their job. So you've got some really good colleagues here. So that's how you get to know more and more people, because otherwise, like me, you walk in the dark for two months .... (G1)

... you learn here, mainly by interacting with other people. to apply what you learned at university ... The advantage of working here is that you're very free, especially that freedom is here ... because it's public sector, not a profit-seeking business, so if people are a bit, yes, a bit, less productive because they're figuring things out, they don't immediately [have to produce results]. (G3)

... we're working where research is not the primary process, but where you, as a researcher, are in the secondary process, so the primary process is the work of the labour inspectors who must be enabled to do their job properly in order to be able to establish why that accident happened, and I do research to illuminate that and I like that very much. ... it's just their process, the process of the labour inspectors, is leading you, ... the demarcations are just much simpler .... much more focused than in my previous work. I like that very much, that's the big positive point. (G4)

I've finished two research proposals, they are in the pipeline somewhere ... it's very opaque how long it takes, when you will hear something ... I have enough work to do, I can already do some preparatory work, but it is not such a predictable process that I can say that in a week's time I can start with the interviews, I just don't know, eh, because I don't know if there is an agreement yet ... (G4)

The danger of the work you do here is that you only see numbers, you see the numbers about people who have a problem with this or that, but that is much further away from you, than if you are working as a social worker. I have done social work ... I



try to look further to see what is going on with those people ... how would it feel ... it motivates me to do good work. (G3)

... if I stare at a screen for three hours, it can be very effective, because in my head [lots is going on] ... suppose I write at the end of the day a very small paragraph. Research work is of course also a creative process somewhere, it is also hard work and there are also certain steps in it, and it is also straightforward at certain points .... [sometimes] in an hour you've done what you normally do in a day, that happens of course, it's different from when you know I'm a bus driver and this is your service, and you have to go from there to there .... (G4)

.... you have to constantly call in actors everywhere and chase everyone to keep to agreed to deadlines, it does cause anxiety, but well, I'm not yet in the position that I experience a lot of this in my work, but I can imagine that this is a stressful environment if you constantly have the feeling ... I don't really know who has worked on this earlier ... is this [really] my responsibility ... (G4)

I'm proud of my previous project where I ... have been able to do and think a lot and that I managed to bring it to a good end. Nothing goes perfectly ... I have been allowed to do a lot and ... was allowed to think along in the process of defining what still had to be done. I was allowed to work on the project from beginning to end ... for a year and a half, which enabled me to make big steps in my learning process. (G2)

### **SOCIAL & POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT**

I'm someone who focuses on the well-being of people, that's what I've always found important and that's what I keep finding ... 'Once a servant of the people always a servant of the people'. I think it's good to do something for society and especially when it has an effect. ... it really has to deliver something, it has to lead to a political discussion, to changes in the work field. That's what it's supposed to achieve. (G3)

I'm quite idealistic ... I really want to improve society, but what does that mean? Some want to make society safer, others more honest, I just want to be a good person and not corrupt, which is to say, that you do things with the wrong intentions, for your own profit. If you do your job well here, but then throw your plastic water bottle on the street, you're just an asshole. (G3)

Better to have few political ambitions as a civil servant. ... when it comes to your work, I think you should keep a close eye on the politics. (G4)

The inspectorate is politically independent ... but on the other hand, there is always an eye watching over your shoulder ... their job is to keep the wind out of the sails of the minister, ... you're certainly independent, but you have to pay attention to how you put things into words, because somethings have political consequences. (G3)

Inspection is really separate from the core department and ... this can be seen in terms of political preference, the core department, which is much more about policy, is clearly more right-wing than here in a research department. (G3)

## **THE ORGANIZATION**

... it really is a very large organization, I have looked at the organization chart 20,000 times and no matter how you look at it, you are still in one small part ... but how that relates to the other groups, I simply don't know. (G3)

In the new structure, the management role is divided between two people, now each employee has an HR manager and a Program Manager ... in my situation I have a manager who has nothing to do with my substantive functioning, so how does that work, what use is this separation of duties? I now have a manager who never sees me, how can he judge how I do my job? (G2)

... what was going on organizationally, it didn't do much for me ... the broader organizational structure went right past me. From colleagues I did hear of critique ... that people were not very positive about the changes, about the role of the managers in that. (G2)

What I have had to get used to was that I often saw things that didn't go well or if there were problems that they were indeed organisationally normal ... processes that didn't go well ... the biggest problem ... there are still ... small islands within the Inspection (G1)

I came in during the reorganization and I see and hear signals from colleagues around me, the older guard is mumbling about the changes ... they have been working here for years in a certain structure which is being changed ... [in] the umpteenth reorganization that makes people sour. (G3)

## **Red Initial Interviews**

### **THE OBJECTIVE(S) OF THE RESEARCH**

[The line between 'research' and 'criminal investigation' is in Red permeable, as you will see in the quotes]

... we interview employees and the works councils, but of course that gives us a very limited picture of what actually happens on the work floor ... we want to get better insight through research. We do this through "stories" in which we draw up three cases, which tell what the situation was really like, and then we consult with parties who can really have an effect such as branch organizations or knowledge institutions. We sit down and say: "Hey, what else could we as Inspectorate do here, and what could you

do in order to be able to do something more to prevent excessive psycho-social workload" ... i.e. workplace bullying, violence and aggression. (R3)

... work and income was looking at extending service with municipalities via ... early detection of programmatic debt, before people really get into debt they already are not going to pay certain bills, municipalities can see this, so that action can be taken and debt can be addressed before it is too late. offered. (R3)

... research is used to make risk analyses and to test the effect of measurements. (R3)

Investigation is mostly about the financial side, because why do people defraud but in order to improve their financial situation? So each investigation looks at how the frauder got ahead financially, and what happened to the illegally collected assets. There's almost always still some of the money there ... all accounts will be frozen or confiscated, real estate abroad will be secured, not to bring the money to the Netherlands, but to remove the money from the criminal, what's confiscated is allowed to remain local. As long as the illegal assets decrease, the goal is to bring the criminal back to where he was. (R1)

Investigation has all kinds of methods to bring things to the surface ... a police officer is assigned as informant, and if it is really necessary, it is even possible to deploy a citizen for this purpose, but this requires explicit approval ... with the immigrant workers there is always an attempt to use a civil servant of the same cultural origin to ease the process ... with drugs and prohibited substances, there will be a pseudo-buy, that the infiltrator pretends to be a customer. And an order gets placed... there are all kinds of methods within detection. (R1)

... the Labour Inspectorate addressed illegal employment, infractions of the working hours law, ... the real big cases often did not get picked up, the real crooks

weren't caught. That had a number of reasons: (1) was that the Inspectorate just didn't have the necessary powers; (2) it was scary ... the small and medium-sized cases were less dangerous than tackling the real big criminals. ... if you're a real big criminal you shouldn't get away with it. So that's when the idea of an investigative agency was born to deal with these matters (around 1999). (R2)

The ministry's domain is social security and social services, human trafficking is also included. Investigation has eight teams looking at organised benefit fraud, collecting child benefit from two countries (which causes children to be smuggled between different countries). Trafficking in human beings is ... 60 cases a year, but this year they did not make their quota. The main focus is more on quantity than quality. (R2)

... research on knowledge migrants, in which the researcher investigated how best to determine whether an employer has illegal knowledge migrants. The abuse of the status as a knowledge migrant is used in order to be able to stay in the Netherlands such as ... a professor who is peeling potatoes. (R3)

... 33% of the criminal investigation capability is used for labour exploitation, but within labour exploitation it is both administrative and criminal. Usually criminal law is completely cut off from the rest, so when an investigation takes place, the administrative side does not know what is going on in the criminal investigation, and it is not allowed to interfere ... the inspectors are allowed to send signals to Investigation, ... but the other way around, from a criminal investigation to the inspectors and the administrative side, is not allowed. (R4)

... the inspectors inspect; they do not deal with crimes; they can impose a fine or a preventive shutdown ... the Investigation Department does the criminal investigations. (R4)

An example concerns sailors from the Philippines, who earn there €300, which is reasonable for them; and then when they came in the Netherlands they earned €600 ... they did not feel exploited because they had the idea that they earned a lot of money with €600, but under Dutch standards it is exploitation ... there was a recruitment agency in the Philippines for the selection which had to be stopped ... because of the extreme differences in what is earned in the example of the Netherlands vs. the Philippines, it is really necessary to educate people there on the laws that exist in the Netherlands ... through the embassies, we provide information on the Dutch standards of income and minimum wage laws to the local partner agencies ... Filipino labour contracts for people who come to work in the Netherlands have to comply with Dutch laws ... cooperation was possible because there was a law in the Philippines on the recruitment of people for exploitation abroad, which is punishable there. And so they tackled the recruitment company there ... there are also instances where international cooperation is not possible, such as countries with capital punishment, because suspects in the Netherlands have rights and if the treatment of suspects in the partner country contravenes Dutch law, cooperation is difficult, for example with drug smuggling and Singapore, because in the past a Dutch citizen was sentenced to death in Singapore for drug trafficking. This caused an enormous political backlash and since then, cooperation has not existed. (R1)

The place within the department/organization where I work is mainly about coming up with solutions for problems that arise during work. (R2)

What I really like about working here is that I just have to deal with so many aspects of society, it's not limited to one policy area but to really a lot. (R3)

The working method between the projects doesn't differ much because you keep using the same methods, like focus groups, question lists, interviews ... (R3)

**ORGANIZATION**

... you can indeed come up with something very beautiful on paper, but how that has to be translated to the reality where it depends on the people within the organization, and if these people are transplanted several times and sent in a different direction each time, at some point you get people who are demotivated, and give up, causing the organization to collapse. Fortunately, things are a lot better now, since professional development now comes first, ... how methods are used and with what effects is something that is now being looked at much more than before. (R3)

There are two control lines [The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Administration of Criminal Justice] which sometimes collide because the control line from the SZW (Ministry) is politically oriented with the control line from OM (Criminal Justice) not supposed to be. But most of the time it's okay. It has sometimes happened that there is a situation where politics has an attitude that a certain rotten apple we should not have now, because that could cost the head of the minister. But in general, the rule of law prevails. (R1)

I'm not an advocate of the structure they've created ... matrix organization produces so much consultation and coordination, you can hardly decide anything for yourself anymore. You have to discuss everything with everyone. The bureaucracy is awful ... because of the matrix structure, nothing can be done/decided without consultation with everyone, so everything goes very slowly. (R2)

Within the framework of the Inspectorate, ... investigation is only investigation, everything from the Inspectorate (Green) has been removed from Investigation, which has the effect that the lawyers and analysts were moved from Investigation to the Inspectorate, as a result of which they no longer have free access to Red, which means that if, in Investigation, we have a legal question about a case, the question and background information must first be anonymised before the lawyers can see it ... if

you're not in Investigation, you're not allowed to see Red information, so tricks were devised to give the lawyers access (but they have been torpedoed) ... if you are ... not in the Investigation Department, you can't get to the Red information ... this causes a lot of hassle and irritation fear of corruption/leaks is all mighty. I hear colleagues complain a lot about this, that it gives them more work, because they now (cannot) ... approach the experts. This construction makes it difficult to talk and stands in the way of cooperation, which greatly increases the chance of mistakes. (R2)

... we are understaffed at Investigation, but SZW (the Ministry) as a whole is overmanned, so Investigation has been under heavy pressure. This creates a stressful work situation which causes a high outflow of people which affects the continuity of the work. High pressure of work, poor implementation, too little time for training, create a downward spiral. The strange thing is that the work is generally seen as fun and interesting, but the resources and time to do the job correctly ... just aren't there, making dissatisfaction and disconnection and undervaluation quite high. (R2)

But I really believe in the work of the organization, which is why the mismanagement of the organization really touches me. (R2)

... more and more people have started working at home<sup>6</sup>, 3 days at the office and 1 day at home, so it is getting calmer and calmer, ... it's a bit impractical when you work in on a project because it makes communicating only possible by mail or by calling. Except during a project meeting. ... I was used to ... walk up to people and ask questions, that's hardly possible anymore ... the efficiency in communicating and working has become more difficult. (R3)

I do have a lot of freedom and responsibility ... with this new reorganization/new organization they want more responsibility lower in the

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<sup>6</sup> This was pre-Corona.



organization ... the 'professionalization', that's what they call it ... is your own responsibility, it used to be really hierarchical ... now it's more your own responsibility ... though it is really controlled ... actually my team manager doesn't know exactly what I am doing, but has to judge me ... (R4)

Previously the inspectors worked on several subjects/sectors, but regionally, now the inspectors work on one or two subjects, but nationally. That means more travel time, but they can specialize more in content. They don't like it. They find it boring to always sit on a single subject ... but this reorganization is only at the beginning, and as soon as it has settled down a bit, there will probably be another reorganization. (R4)

You don't really have much contact with other programs here, that's something I miss myself. I try to do something about that by networking a bit, by going to meetings in Red you go inside, then you sit behind closed doors, and that's it. (R4)

... the organization is very cluttered. Only through networking via LinkedIn, to find people, do you get a bit of an overview, but you have to sort everything out yourself. (R4)

... really in Internal Investigation (Red zone), I've lost contact with the rest of the organization ... this is a pity, because to a certain extent one misses what the rest of the Inspection does. (R5)

... cooperation between Inspectorate and Investigation of human trafficking ... needs to be tackled much more integrally .... it becomes difficult when you see that the organization is going the other way. (R2)

## FROM INTERVIEWS TO PAINTINGS

The plan for this art-based research project called on interviewing and observing work in the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Netherlands; translating what was discovered and experienced into paintings, showing those paintings to those interviewed and obtaining their feedback. The goal was to bring the interviewed closer to their own sentiments and to let them explore their own work experience in a more affective manner. There are several crucial points of linkage in the model. First, getting from the empirical data to an idea, or dare I say 'vision', of the people and organisation; Second, getting from my impressions, ideas and conclusions, to the process of actually painting. Third moving on from the paintings to the responsiveness of the participants. And fourth, continuing from the project to theoretical considerations and my conclusions. In the Chapter titled 'WHO DID THE RESEARCH AND HOW SO PAINTING' I explore the third linkage. In this chapter I explore the first and second. <sup>7</sup>

### From Interviews to Painting: Red

It is a pure coincidence that the organisation labelled the two groups studied with the colours matching their security clearances. But for an art-based research project such as this one it is a fairly happy coincidence. As I began with interviewing Red employees, I must begin, here, there. I knew very little about Red before I began. I had had one key informant who facilitated obtaining the research assignment. For the Ministry sponsoring an art-based research project was an amiable add-on. They did not really expect or want all that much from me; but it served their image to be able to say that art-based research was included in their activities. But once I had gained access, my key informant withdrew. This may have been because his own PhD research had stymied or simply because he thought I should 'get on with it on my own'. But in any event, this meant that I had very little pre-knowledge about Red. And as already indicated my ability to play a 'fly on the wall' was inexistent as I did not have the security clearance to be able to come and go as I willed. I had access to the rest of the building, but not to the

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<sup>7</sup> Images of the discussed paintings in this chapter are viewable in chapter 'THE PAINTINGS'

closed-off workspace of high security investigation. And I was not allowed to ask: 'It is 09:00 AM on Monday morning, take me through a typical day'. That already would entail a breach of security. I could listen to the interviewees but I could not be with the interviewees.

There had been serious information leaks from the Ministry of Justice to the criminal milieu recently, whereby the security measures had become even more strict. As far as I know, no one in the criminal investigation team of the Ministry of Social Affairs had leaked; but when such an incident occurs the government takes action across all ministries. I could interview the five selected members of Red, but I could not observe their work. Furthermore, I knew very little about their work and I was admitted as researcher on the prerequisite that I would not focus on the recent reorganisation. My time as graduate student in Management and Organisation at the University of Leicester was hereby made almost irrelevant. I was never really an organisation studies student, but of all the subjects in the business school that was the one I had related the strongest to. Perhaps unfortunately for myself I had never been very interested in HR, so the field of Red, focussed on crimes in labour relations, was not a theme I was well versed in. An HR researcher could probably have asked more about work exploitation than I did. But I saw my task as one of hearing what the researched had to say about their own work. I was not on a fact-finding mission to assess the Ministry's approach to modern-day slavery or human work-place abuse. I wanted to know what the five interviewees thought about their circumstances; my focus was on their self-reflexivity. How did they see their work and themselves? What were their impressions of the work-place culture of which they were a part?

With Red I quickly discovered that I had a difficult task before me. A characteristic of the self-reflexivity of the interviewed was to show little or no self-reflexivity. They certainly did not share much thoughts about oneself with others. The dominant discourse was very 'Do-directed'. They talked and thought on the level of tasks to be accomplished and actions to be completed. Since I wanted to capture them in their own habitat, I quickly discovered that I had to let them talk as they pleased. I would have liked more affect, feelings, conjecture, critique. But that was not their way of talking. If I was to paint them and not my projections of who they ought to be, I had to settle down

and listen. Their speech, their mood and attitudes are what I needed to discover. A rich inward-directed reflexive approach to things was just not their's. Introspection was not their forte.

They would describe (as I have already referred to) the horrors of working in the tomato growing green houses. How sacks of near boiling water are used to keep the plants at the desired temperature, but without adequate safety precautions; leading to seriously burned workers who were in fact illegally in Holland. Or how a lady ran a Chinese restaurant in Amsterdam based on illegal labour. The research team painstakingly recorded who went in and out of the restaurant for days, identifying certain persons who came on a daily basis and stayed eight hours or more. Once they had enough data they swept down on the restaurant and seized its administration. It was clear that the number of guests could never have been served by the number of registered employees, and that the restaurant had fudged with the registration of the names of its employees. The owner paid the fine and reopened the restaurant with another name and formally claiming another owner within days. The fines were built into her business model. She stopped just short of doing anything that carried a prison sentence with it. One could invest all the time and effort needed to catch her, but it really had little or no effect. Red were hereby confronted with the limits to their ability to make a difference.

Similarly, Red had discovered extreme labour exploitation of Pilipino maids. The women were recruited in the Philippines and promised a salary € 600,00 per month. That was a very good salary in comparison to what they would earn at home; but far below the minimum wage in the Netherlands. From the Dutch perspective this was labour exploitation. But the women were working illegally in Holland and from their own perspective were well paid. Red can only begin an investigation if someone complains. If the women bring charges of exploitation Red can go to work. But if the women stay silent Red is powerless. For the women the risk of lodging a complaint, if and when they realise that there are reasons to do so, are enormous. They could lose their job and be deported. Red can promise a formal complainer a legal residence visa if they cooperate. But if they can always deliver on the promise is murky. Sometimes a competitor or jealous person makes a complaint. Red can then be investigating a legitimate abuse, but

at the same time be implementing an act on vengeance. Because Red cannot initiate legal investigations, but has to work on the basis of the complaints that come in (via telephone, letters and internet), its hands are often tied.

The stories of modern-day slavery and human exploitation produced the boxer (Red Painting 2) as a symbol of victimisation; the images of Red Tape (Red Painting 1) as representation of the bureaucracy and limits on action of Red, The Light Bulb (Red Painting 3) as a symbol of confinement, The Hands in the Air (Red Painting 4) as a symbol of victimisation and the call for help, and the White man (Red Painting 5) as my rendition of lost or powerlessness. Thus in this series I stayed very close to the interview themes.

I was and am troubled by the sense of having painted the Ministry's 'official story'. How the interviewees really felt emotionally was somewhat unclear to me. They told that they were deeply involved and were committed to their work. In the interviews what mostly got talked about was rather objective and in a way impersonal. There was a division between the two more senior persons and the three more junior. The seniors were more reflective and their stories were clearly more personal. Especially the woman opened up about how frustrated she felt by the 'over-organisation' of Red. Getting anything done took so many forms and approvals; trying to work goal-directed had been made increasingly difficult. She was angry that they were so very undermanned and how the Ministry over-demanded results. She did not feel that the Ministry treated her very well. She felt that what they needed to get their work done just was not forthcoming. But, again, this is a story about structure, institutions and organisation. What was so very particular about the interviews, that no one talked introspectively, remained also in her outings.

The stories I was told were either from the past or very general. That is understandable as for security reasons I was not allowed to know any details of on-going investigations. But I seemed as if the interviewees had internalised the demand for non-reflectivity. They seemed to live not speaking about, not reflecting about, and not outing what you feel. Was this a professional deformation caused by the rules of the game; or did Red self-select for people who could work without an intense inner dialogue going on about what you did and how things happened? I would have expected an intense

story of feelings about injustice, violence and repression; but there was numbness and no such story.

I was told about Asian sailors on Dutch registered freighters who were underpaid and worked excessive hours. I heard stories about people forced to sleep in a shed at the back of a farm on cardboard. Or an Asian medical doctor working as a cleaner; which raises the suspicion that he (she) is illegally in the country. Often a very popular low-price clothing store was mentioned. The goods they offer are at prices that could never be produced correctly. They must be ruthlessly using sweatshop and child labour. Interviewees swore they would never buy there. It is horrible to hear these kinds of things, but in the interviews these matters just get mentioned in passing. The interviewees seem to be numb for pain, disgrace or outrage. Red is ethically in a very strange position. They can only help these people if they are willing to file a legal complaint. If the victims do not take initiative by giving evidence, Red can and does nothing. You are not really helping them unless they're willing to help you build a case.

There was not a word about conflict in the workplace; either with colleagues or with higher ups. There was clearly a rule that you do not talk back to authority or bad-mouth colleagues. Protest and anger are deeply taboo. Conflict seems to get internalised and to come out as 'burn out', transferring out of Red, or leaving the employ of the Ministry. The tight security makes cooperation very difficult. It seemed that your direct colleagues often were not to know what you were doing. The seniors did complain that management did not make needed decisions, that priorities were not adequately defined or maintained. After I had completed my interviews a new section head was appointed who actively pursued a divide and rule strategy to the distress and anger of many. The result was a massive outflow of people. In the logic of the organisation, people are not quickly punished or removed for failure. Bad behaviour is allowed to pass under the radar. Protest and complaint are sanctioned; ineffective leadership and unpleasant behaviour seem to be countenanced.

Really you have to work very independently. If you want to rise in the organisation you have to get good performance reviews each year. Any criticism of your boss is deadly to your career. And if you do not progress through the ranks for a few years you get the reputation of being a 'loser', which means that colleagues will shun you and not to work

with you. It is very much in your self-interest to have a good relationship with your manager. Even though the amount of actual contact can be very limited. There are very few meetings and even then you are not required to attend. The golden rule is do not make troubles for anyone else. And conflict between colleagues is definitely seen to be trouble. The bosses are structurally untouchable. Really the people I interviewed do not have to be afraid. They have permanent positions and all concur that they earn a comfortable wage. Informal contact with Red was not very revelatory. At lunch they would talk about recent soccer matches, what they had had for dinner yesterday, or popular television programs like the 'Voice of Holland'. They never talked work content. At the most, someone would inquire 'Did you make that appointment for me?'; or some such very operational comment. Red always stuck to itself; they never mingled.

There were social events in the Ministry. The younger staff would go for drinks on Thursdays and I was part of that scene. But, again, they never talked about work or their feelings.

One of the women told me that she had been the victim of unwanted attentions by a male colleague. She had found the situation unpleasant and not professional. She complained about it, but management did nothing. The man finally got the message and left her alone. Nothing dramatic had happened, but the manager involved was clearly displeased that the situation had created extra work for her. The woman involved felt unsafe because her manager, who she thought would be in her corner, obviously was not.

Because of how Red is organised there is a tremendous amount of planning, administering and organising. Everyone I interviewed had something to do with the procedural overhead. The younger three interviewees were all on their first jobs. They were university trained in things like public policy, sociology or criminology. None of them had police backgrounds. There was tension between the people who did the criminal investigation and had police backgrounds and the young staffers who were supposed to run the show but had no police skills. But that tension was kept under the surface and rarely spoken about. Most of the actual criminal investigation was done from the sub-offices, for instance in Amsterdam and Utrecht.

One of my interviewees moved later to Green. R3 found the stories of violence and repression difficult to stomach and sought out a less stressful situation. But she was psychologically prone to depression and Red was just not a healthy place for her to work. Of my five interviewees one and a half actually did police-like work; the rest were all organising, programming and administering. No one has to fear for their job; no one ever gets fired.

I had to go from scanty information, my impressions of the interviewees and the rather fascinating silences, to painting. What was not spoken about was startling to me. They were not positive about Red; the first day I came they gave me a lanyard and a water bottle with the Ministry's logo as a welcome present. A man from Red immediately commented, "You won't see me walking around that thing; I would never use it just because it has that name on it." There was an almost humorous spectacle of where Red should be housed. There were constant rumours that the department would be moved to another tower (there are four) or floor, because they or some other group were shrinking or growing. And nothing ever happened. I did get contradictory signals. That I was welcome and that I should keep my distance. The dangers of making a mistake were enormous. If anything went wrong with their investigations the yellow press would immediately latch onto it to feed their sensationalist journalism. For a starting member of the team there really were reasons to be worried. Fear was more powerful than distress. Between bottling up all one's insecurities and putting on a brave face, and discussing the issues the former was clearly the sanctioned path. Not being critical was rewarded; it was the privileged strategy.

Taking my information and impressions I had to start painting. I began by painting what I thought they wanted of me. None of these five paintings attack the dominant ethos. It is clear that I did not feel great affection, solidarity or warmth for the younger staffers. In part, what was going on was much less clear to me then than now. My access was restricted and it was an entirely new organisation for me. Perhaps I was too naïve, and my position was not very stable. I now have a permanent position and lots more experience of the Ministry. I moved as quickly as I could over to Green, where I did have access and much more freedom of movement.



As soon as I started painting the imagery took on a life of its own. The confusion and chaos of the first painting just happened. The red tie as a symbol of office-like propriety; the large disjointed hand as an unsettling element, the lack of any facial expression, the shadow in blue (or is it someone else), and the red tape are all elements of disordered bureaucracy. It is an unsettling painting. The second painting sticks much more to the official story, with police and immigrants. But the 'boxer' seems utterly lost; his expression perturbed and unknowing. Qua form and colour, he is utterly disjointed from the rest. The third and fourth painting have much more unity. You look at them and you see and feel one message. The light bulb painting again has a lost subject as its theme. Is he afraid, locked-up, uncertain; it is not clear. Is he imprisoned or free? This painting best captures I feel the ambiguity of Red. Are they inside or outside of the repression? The light comes through the door from outside; does that mean that freedom is accessible or inaccessible? Is the figure a researcher or the researched? And what is finally the difference? All the ambiguities and conflicting meanings of Red are here. The fourth painting I find aesthetically successful but symbolically too simple. The hands thrown up in the air, as a symbol of powerlessness, or fright, is perhaps too easy a gesture. Here the theme of writing, that plays such a prominent role in the Green series, appears for the first time. Evidently the threat comes from text. The image looks like someone confronted by a fire, but it is actually text. The distorted arms and hands express the unsettled and not-quite-human status of being in this image. Finally, the last, quite small painting of the 'White man', with a second figure cut off to the left of the image, with no secure foreground or background, comes the closest to appealing to feelings of being lost or alienated.

What I produced was not the same as the images or ideas with which I began to work on each canvas. I paid more attention to inconsistencies within the organisation than to modern day slavery. That was not a conscious choice; it resulted from the underlying tensions and contradictions I felt in Red. There was a sort of 'group think' wherein Red investigated crimes and was doing the right thing. But there was too little differentiation, too few personal remarks, to make the story stick. It felt unnatural that there was so little individuation and unicity in the stories. It sounded like one narrative repeated over and over, without the author's individual voice coming through. Instead

of being convincing the interviews were unsettling. But it was much more what was not said than what was said that was so crucial.

In a way I am the figure in the third painting. I saw it as someone sleeping, living, existing in a darkroom who was only allowed to be let out to do the tasks he was brought to this place to do. I perceived it as my imprisonment. I did not think that it was by his own design that the figure was where he was. In the organisation you are forced to act in a certain way and if you at some point do not rebel or take action against the things that you see that are wrong; you just become part of it. It is not as if, as in business, that you can become rich; the rewards are not all that enormous. Everyone was comfortable. I was repeatedly told: "It is a good salary." There seemed to almost be a feeling of guilt surrounding the place. When I was painting I had no illusions that I could bring any dramatic changes in the interviewees self-insight. I am a realist. It was one small marginal project. I was one individual who came in from outside. I was an outlier; they are not going to listen to me. If I am not there, they do not miss me. But I could make paintings that they authenticated in the feedback sessions. Normally the subject of a painting does not play much of a role in the authentication or establishing of the legitimacy of the work. Thus, an art-based research project like mine does change the rules of the game. I accepted the social studies criteria that the researched have to legitimise the results of the research. Hereby I was operating under very different rules than those of the art academy. In the studio-logic of the academy the artist is somehow inherently authentic and art has a sort of 'Truth' status. In this project I was operating not in the studio-world but in the life-world; and had accepted life-world rules. Thus, legitimacy is not a narcissistic quality of the artist; it is a phenomena of relatedness. The art-based research model of this project was important. There it tried to pioneer another ethic of painting and researching. I believe and think that the paintings could nudge the persons towards more self-contact and sociability; but they had no power to change the organisation. The paintings could have value for the persons, but I make no claims to organisational development. The dominant emotion in Red was one of being 'stuck'. One has to dose realisation; otherwise you will get outright rejection or panic. I believe that the choice for making a statement but also for moderation succeeded.

**Intermezzo**

*I internalised a lot of the things that I saw and I have a certain fear that I 'went native'. But when I compare my thoughts with the culture of Red I see a clear difference between myself and the interviewees. I have felt a tension between the art-based research concept and painting. Art-based research is often portrayed as the direct rendering of a research conclusion in an artistic form. I believe that this is a doomed strategy. It reduces the painting to illustration and denies painting (or art) its ontological identity. But it does mean that there was (and is) a gap between the interviewing and observing, and the painting. I believe that in art-based research that it is essential to preserve the integrity of both elements. Interviewing and observing demand care and attention to the persons and situation. But any attempt to literally or directly translate the empirical data to art, destroys art's integrity. There is ambiguity in the concept of art-based research; if it tips too far to research the integrity of art is destroyed, but if it tips too far to art there is the chance that the project becomes fiction or fantasy.*

*The balance between art and social studies is complicated. The social science context is more rational and causal; art is more intuitive and artistic. The necessity is not to fall into a 'two worlds' assumption whereby art-based research becomes impossible. Art-based research is inherently a challenge to Cartesian dualism pitching the subjective against the objective. Art-based research acknowledges the role of intuition and affect; but it strives for intra-relational knowledge. There are a plurality of elements that form the relationships that are portrayed as knowledge. The error seems more to come from making the art dependent on the social science, whereby the art loses its identity and integrity. My fear was for superficial and mechanical pseudo-art.*

*As I reflected earlier in the thesis on Hartmut Rosa's concept of Resonance (BEFORE: RESONANCE) and on the Fried/Kuspit debate about painting (DURING: WHO DID THE RESEARCH AND HOW SO PAINTING) I will further defend my assertion that art-based research has guard for the integrity of the art to be justified. Of course, the project and the thesis are not the same thing. The project was an art-based research undertaking in the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs. The thesis includes discussion of painting and Resonance that were never debated in the project itself. The thesis describes the project, but it also analyses it and draws conclusions from it that were never part of the project.*

*Projects do not write themselves. Attributions of meaning and the evaluative examination of what happened are a separate discourse.*

*I did not want to make conceptual art and do not feel that it is what art-based research should be doing. Conceptual art in my opinion tries to make some object look as interesting as possible, while that in fact it is (for instance) just a piece of wood standing on a socle. The art-based research includes the interviews and observations, the paintings, and the reflections on painting as an activity and as a form of relatedness. It is the relationships between all of these and not any single one of them alone.*

*I lived the circumstance and emotionally was very absorbed in the worlds of Red and Green. Painting forced me to be more than and separate from those worlds. In social science the distance between the researcher and researched is emphasised; in art-based research the making of art creates a creative and dynamic form of distance which is crucial to the ability of art-based research to reveal things not necessarily seen otherwise.*

### **From Interviews to Painting: Green**

The biggest difference between Red and Green was probably the six months that separated them. My access to Green was unhindered and my ability to observe excellent. But what was there to observe? There are +/- sixty researchers in Green and its leadership is formed by three managers. The managers were in constant conflict one another. Put directly, they were not really on speaking terms. Once a month there was a department wide meeting. One of the three managers would lead it; the other two would either not show up or not say a word. Each meeting it rotated which manager had the lead. The meetings were during the lunch time and at best twenty members of staff would attend. This was the only plenary activity. Policy and Ministerial overview were covered in these meetings and nowhere else. The three sub-units had meetings, but these were procedural. Who was being assigned to what task; what was the progress of the projects? Thus, in reality there was virtually no link between Green and the political agenda of the Minister. Nor was there any expressed interest in the 'big picture'. I never heard anyone discussing how their work related to the wider politics of the

government's goals. In the interviews I asked the five interviewees whether they felt attracted to politics and would consider getting involved in it. Four answered in the negative.

The staff in Green I studied all had Masters; mostly in Public Policy, sometimes in sociology. They would work in teams of two or three on projects for +/- six months. Where after, they would rotate to another project. At any one time one worked on three projects. It could happen that one dropped down to one or even no project. And sometimes you were confronted with four simultaneous projects. The work was cut up into little assignments so that it could be spread about in the project form. It was government policy that one was not supposed to get too involved or linked to a particular theme. The researchers were supposed to remain generalists and not to specialise. Throughout the government the policy is to block engagement between the civil servants and the fields they work in. Civil servants are not supposed to get too close to the people involved in their work. Identification between the civil servant and their work field was blocked. It would seem that this was to stop the civil servants from 'going native' and becoming more committed to the well-being of their target groups than to government policy. The interviewed realised that the constant rotating from project to project prevented them from specialising. In reality they sabotaged the system to a certain degree. Knowing who had more expertise in what, they would often arrange work between one another so that specialism was rewarded and utilised. I never heard anyone question the work rotation system. In a matter of a few months everyone would be working on another issue. You could never really get settled in; you had to learn to constantly stay in motion. Your knowledge of the themes you were working on was always quite limited. But no one voiced dissatisfaction or frustration about these working arrangements.

In the time that I was observing there was a group working on safety in metal working. The inspectors had discovered that in small metal working factories that the workers did not wear protective glasses as much as they should. This resulted in more injuries than there should be. The research task was to come up with a communication strategy to convince workers to wear their goggles. The group working on this theme had no contact ever with workers in the metal sector. They were supposed to draft

effective plans to reach what seemed to be a difficult target group, but without any investigation of the target group. They thought about using virtual reality glasses to convince the workers of the need for eye care safety. But whether any such means was appropriate or could be realised, they had no information. Likewise, they had no programming expertise, so they had no idea how easy or complicated it would be to realise their plan. In Dutch you would say they were 'bicycling in mid-air'. They took up contact with the Ministry's expertise centrum and found someone there who could tell them about virtual media. Thus, they had an informant about the technology. They felt no need to gain expertise about the organisational culture in small metal factories or to profile the workers found there. They wrote a report in a couple of months and were disbanded as a group and transferred to other projects. Whether what they proposed could be realised, or if it was a cost-effective idea to do so, did not seem to bother them. They studied how many accidents there were per year, but had little or no data about what caused those accidents. All their research was desk work; they never ventured into the field and did no empirical work. All reports were written without any primary data; everything was based in effect on secondary sources.

In my cohort of five there was one very ambitious woman. She, as the others, had a Masters and, as was very common, it was in Public Policy. But she was very ambitious. Any project she was assigned to she began immediately to organise it. In principle the other project members were her equals; but she always took control. And she was pretty good at it. To a certain degree her colleagues just let her get on with it; having clear deadlines and work structure made the projects more efficient. But she was an enormous micro-manager and would quickly berate colleagues if everything was not completed on time and to agreement. This created resentment. Thus, she was valued because she was a good organiser but disliked because she kept putting herself above the others. She was not there to just get the assigned work done; she was obviously ambitious and wanted to rise in the hierarchy. Such a display of ambition was exceptional. Though it did not go down very well with her colleagues, she quickly moved from job to job in her effort to rise in the hierarchy. Within a year she had left Green for greener pastures.

The internal systems were problematic, especially IT. When you were assigned to a new project you would often need clearance to work with certain files. That had to be implemented by the IT department. IT was notoriously slow and cumbersome. There was a vicious circle involved. The more inefficient IT was the more 'work' it had and the more people they could hire. They were de facto rewarded for being inefficient. Everyone knew that when you needed a clearance or hardware from IT that it was a stumbling block. Mostly the researchers threw their hands up in despair and went out to lunch when they had to get something from IT.

The culture in Green was to get reasonably along with everyone, but to avoid any real personal contact. There were cliques in the sense of people who preferred to be together in projects; but there were no cliques in the sense that everyone could and did go out to lunch with everyone else.

Most of the people working as researchers were quite young and it was their first job. The Ministry had had a very senior and highly qualified research staff pre-2008; but in the name of austerity they had purged the Ministry of highly-paid staff and replaced them with a very junior team. The new hires were just dropped in Green and told to find their way. One of my interviewees told how she had had no clue during her first months at work what she was really supposed to do or how. After a few months she had figured it out and she quickly became someone who coordinated and facilitated research groups.

It seems to me that the biggest difference between Green and Red is that in Red the work is clearly directed to identifiable goals. Red wants to capture and see tried mainly employers who exploit their workforce and expose workers to unsafe conditions. In Green, the goal-directedness is much weaker. They could say that they work to make labour conditions safer and to reduce risks; but they could not really point to accomplishments or results. Green had a story or a socially engaged narrative, but that text was hollow. In Red there were concrete and substantial goals; in Green there was an ideology.

My first painting 'The Text Window' (Green Painting 1; GP1) renders the text-based nature of Green and the lack of lifeworld in their activity. The two windows of text are juxtaposed to one another and it is unclear what they have to do with one another. In

Green the researchers would choose some text and not other for their reports. How the choices were made seemed very arbitrary as there was so little contact with the field. It is. Painting of a world of text, with the one text put into uncertain relationship with other text. Green Painting 2 (Man with his shadow) develops the theme of the person pushed-down, looking rather helpless in his chair, and his shadow made-up of text. Also the shadow gestures dramatically, whereby it is more alive and active than the figure. I am continuing here to develop my sense of self and text and the dominance of the written over the living. Green Painting 3 (Man gesturing) repeats the elements of a figure and his shadow and writing as dominant reality. But here there is a person who stands out and dominates. The person is not the victim or the subordinate; he is the boss. The eyes are lizard like slits; the fingers are also not very human. Thus the person who rises in this text dominated world; how human is he? Green Paintings 4 and 5 both juxtapose a face and the world of text. The faces have eyes, noses and mouths, but no ears; they have human features but are incomplete as heads. The face in Green Painting 4 is more stylised; just the outline of a face. The face in Green Painting 5 has more emotion to him and he is crossed by a line of red tape. Here the theme of red tape from the first series makes a reappearance. In painting Green Painting 5 it is as if a line in a diagram intersects everything in its upward thrust. Growth, more results, the rising line of activity is dramatically imposed on everything else.

These paintings form a series wherein the issues of text and identity, and humanity dominated by representation, reappears each time. I think that each of the paintings works individually, but that the series is more powerful than each painting alone. These five paintings form a statement or make an assertion.



## THE ART FEEDBACK SESSIONS

### RED ART: FEEDBACK SESSIONS



RP1



RP2



RP3



RP4



RP5

### R1

If I put them together and make a story of it, there is imprisonment and flight, exploitation and fear, desperation and fate. I see people who are completely distraught, who do not know how to get help. RP1 sees to represent the possibility of getting out, of escape. There is first the situation (RP2, RP3, RP5) and then the fear (RP4) and finally the escape (RP1). In RP2 you are recruited, in RP3 you end up in substandard housing, in RP5 you are controlled and exploited and in RP1 you escape.

These two large paintings (RP2 the Boxer and RP3 the Black One in the Room) thus symbolize labour exploitation for me. RP3, that's someone for me who has to live in a place that does not meet the standards for housing as we know them here in the Netherlands. I see circumstances that are not good. I see one side of the face in the shadow: there is always a hidden side to labour exploitation. In RP1 I see flight, people from other countries who are fleeing, trying to find an existence somewhere, and to find work. I feel difference: cultures, clashes. There is anxiety here: 'What is going to happen

to me; Where am I going? In my work I see migrant workers who are vulnerable. They are scared. The employers make the victims dependent. But also the recruitment process is at fault.

RP4 is the most eloquent for me, that's someone who is in distress, raising his hands, asking for help; for me it's a question of someone who needs help, someone who probably calls for help, putting his hands in the air for a reason. He's helpless; it is a depiction of what actually happens to a victim. At a certain moment you raise your hands, you really don't remember ... you're vulnerable, you're actually almost hopeless. The only thing you can do is work and work some more; there's nowhere else to go. Really it is someone who's helpless.

RP5 I find a bit more difficult. I see a person in the middle; I don't know how to explain it. We often see in the cases of labour exploitation that a group of victims, somewhere in a factory or on a bulb field, where the boss is not there with a whip, but almost. The workers get ordered about; what they should do and what they shouldn't do. This little painting could portray that for me, only it's just a person and a person behind, that's what I can see here, being a slave, being a slave. From the five paintings, I have the most trouble with that one (RP5), to place it. It is perhaps the most abstract, because here I see (RP1) a fleeing woman and here the man or the person who asks for help (RP2).

In RP1, I see an out stretched hand; again, I sense people fleeing. Here one may have the possibility of fleeing the situation. The red nails: is it suggesting sexual exploitation? Is this a prostitute who has managed to escape from the pimp. Here someone seems to be able to get out of their situation, to flee. The red bars: that seem to be flying all over the place; is this a sort of explosion out of imprisonment?

Order:

RP2, RP3, RP1, RP5, RP4.

Titles:

Labour exploitation; where it starts: RP2 and RP3.

The victim's fate: RP1, RP5 and RP4.

Recruitment and housing: RP2.

Labour exploitation itself:

RP3.

The victim's final fate:

RP1, RP5 and RP4.

At our previous meeting I was still team leader and as team leader you are responsible for a group and for their research. Now I am monitoring everything that comes in from reports to how we deal with our stakeholders and conduct our investigations. I am now much more operational. What's changed in that I see a lot more that I didn't see before. It wasn't my task at the time to see these things. I have seen that we don't deal well with victims in a number of areas. We don't pay enough attention to victims. We are often too busy just trying to catch the villains. Of course we have to catch criminals, but we also have to have more attention for the victims. That is sometimes difficult for detectives because helping the victims will often not lead to a successful investigation. Previously I did not see it because I was also in investigation. I knew the problem was there, but it was a far from my bed show. Now I'm in the middle of it and I just see that we are not doing that well in helping the victims. We're just not doing it right. We do not comply with laws and regulations regarding victimization. And we don't abide by European human rights rules either. The European Convention on Human Rights, in particular, demands that we do more to protect the victims. You have to have an eye for the victim, if you don't have that eye (pointing to the paintings) and actually end up pushing the victims away, you are failing in your task.

I am very pleased that you have put so much of our identity into the paintings. I'd like to use them for my PowerPoint presentations, when I am talking about human trafficking, recruiting or housing. I like to work with images that tell a story. And then I'm can ask my people: "What do you see?"

### **Intermezzo**

*I feel it took me too long to complete the R series. At a certain point it is important that more paintings are produced. This series has taken far too long for me to feel okay with. That's because I was stuck at one point. I couldn't find the right balance between telling the story and painting. I am not and do not want to be an illustrator. These having to be paintings and not illustrations. How do I find and maintain the*

*integrity of the painting? How do I not get snowed under by the interviews? It is one thing to listen and create, and another to just produce images on order. The paintings must not just become 'Advertisements for the Ministry'; they have to have artistic integrity. But that means that I have to have worked through what I've seen and heard and be able to make paintings in dialogue with an experienced circumstance. But it took quite a while to not just feel confused, lost or overwhelmed by the Ministry. There were moments that I really felt disoriented. My role was very indefinite and that made me insecure. As an artist attached to the Ministry as researcher, I had a very strange role. There were researchers all about me but no artists. So what would they make of me and what would (could) I make of myself? The painting process is so very different from their working process. My task was far more secondary than their's. I have to react within myself to what I experience and translate that into action. My creativity is through working through what I see, feel and know. For them the working through of matters is purely private; it is most definitely not part of their task. And it is not really something they are expected to talk about or perhaps even be aware of. At no time did I see or hear that they were supported by their employer in their pain, fear or powerlessness when confronting often monstrous matters. They were dangerous for me: their pain and frustration was sometimes hard to absorb. And I feared that I might be dangerous for them: how far can they only do their work by not confronting their emotions and by looking the other way, and just getting on with it.*

*I had never painted as politically engaged and I did not want to fall into the trap of making propaganda. How can I let them affect me in the art and remain artistically honest? How to not be overwhelmed; but to be moved and in touch? I felt very stuck for quite a while. I felt I had to paint the theme but that the theme was not mine but a sort of imposed necessity. And I felt a sense of obligation. Afterall they were paying me! So many of my fellow students from the Royal Academy of Art had failed to find a way to earn their way with their art.*

*Finally I realized that my being stuck was not just a hinderance, but it was my theme. Being stuck was how the situation presented itself to me. Not just as my condition but as the problem for the people in the Ministry. They are stuck: in too many senseless rules and in desperate situations they cannot adequately redress. My sense of 'being*

*stuck' was not just me, it was the whole situation as well. Once I felt that I could paint. The link between me and them was forged. There was a sense of integrity for me about my relationship to the people I had interviewed. It was very paradoxical: realizing that feeling stuck was something we really shared liberated me to paint.*

I, R1, am not a painter, I can't make artworks, but I think it's beautiful, but in the end it's your job to make such beautiful work from a story. To portray what's there; that's not my quality, and if I see it now, I can make a story out of it. But you hear our story, you've interviewed us all and from that you have painted. I wouldn't be able to do that.

I fear that the coming years things will not improve, but worsen. On the one hand, we are getting a better view of matters, which doesn't make them worse, but it means that we see more. But also our economy increasingly is relying on labour migrants from the EU, but also from outside the EU, who are vulnerable to labour exploitation. It is of course wonderful that we have a flourishing economy, which is really booming at the moment, but there are also risks in that. There are so many low-skilled jobs, and the temptation to bring people here from countries where there are few opportunities .... and where wages are very low. People will want to come here for a few hundred euros in the month, because that means a lot to them. In their own country the family can live on that; their children can go to school. These people don't feel exploited; they come here to make money; the major risk is that employers are going to take advantage of them.

## **R2**

Put them (the paintings) in order and come up with titles: Okay, I've got some work to do: RP1: I don't want it, I won't take it anymore; RP4: if you get into a situation like this, you can't get out; RP1: this is just another moment... this is not what I want.

RP5: I saw the red surface as a door, and the white one is the light where you can go to. You see an opportunity and you grab it; but you don't know what's on the other side of the door. That's the beginning. RP3 I can see him as a fugitive. He reminds me very much of the Pole who sits somewhere in a house and who thinks my God, here I am. Tomorrow I have go back into the greenhouse. The red lines intrigue me: there's that red line there RP5, and then they are in RP2, returns in then onto RP1 where they almost take over. RP4 is the exception.

Order:

RP5, RP2, RP3, RP1, RP4.

Titles:

An Opportunity: RP5.

The road: RP2.

What am I doing here?: RP3.

I do not want this!: RP1.

But it is so!: RP4.

By the way, I really like RP1. RP2 I recognize it. That dark room with a single bulb (lamp) RP3, that's a situation you encounter. That's the reality, it's recognizable. RP2 reminds me of a stream of migrants. They come here thinking that they will do well and in the end they're horrendously exploited. And I can also imagine you're trying to get somewhere in RP5 without knowing what you're getting into. RP4 I find intriguing; it is not what I want. It has something desperate about it: No Exit!

I keep looking at the painting, I find them intriguing. I see all kinds of things in them. Someone is running away: is it an offender or a victim? RP1 is a woman for me because I see a hand with nail polish ... and I think she's wearing some kind of cape ... there seems to be the movement of a skirt or a dress. But if I block the hand, I think it's a man again. You can speculate about it. In RP3 I get the idea that they are closing the door and then it will get completely dark.

What strikes me more and more the last months, is that we are very busy with things that are relevant to assembling successful court cases ... and much less with the what is going on. For human trafficking cases you would think that we would really look at what is happening and the situation of the victims. Who are the victims, how did they

get here, what is happening to them? And what are the characteristics of perpetrators? We could try to really understand the processes and the people. But really, we are almost entirely on the procedural side, and quite instrumental at that. too. I think this is partly because more and more people at the management level have little or no experience of the content. They want to manage the procedures and the rules and not focus on the what is really happening in the field. If you go to them with what you think is a significant and even important case, they reply "Yeah, yeah, but how many people do you need, and how many hours?" More attention to the content would pay off via more professionalization and probably better results. For management it is all about whether you do 60 or 61 cases; but not how relevant the cases are. I think that the gap between the content and the managers has widened. We are working on reducing it. If we focus much more on content, I think you can achieve a lot more job satisfaction. The more expert you are, the better you can handle this kind of thing. You shouldn't have people running just because you say, "Go run." It's also smart to think about what you do.

Pointing to the paintings, what you've pictured is interesting qua content. Whether I've done thirty Polish employment agencies or not. Through the paintings I have to think very much of people who work in the greenhouses and then I always have to think of the Poles. Of course, it can also be Bulgarians, etcetera. And that reminds me of RP2; indeed you come here as a fugitive and think well I'll see what happens. .. Before you know it, you're stuck somewhere. Maybe not literally, but you can't go anywhere. Standing naked gives the impression that you are stuck, because it would have been different if you had been in three-piece grey suit.

Let's imagine things the other way around; starting with that RP4. You are very desperate that you want all kinds of things but nothing works out . I'm going to do something about it ... and then you end up somewhere in a Polish hotel (RP3). You see all kinds of people; refugees flowing past you (RP2). And then you think, yes I went through that door but where did I end up (RP5). That's the double edged sword of human trafficking; you can start at any point. You can just think, I come here, it's not so bad. I come to work for a few months and before you know it, you're in a situation you can't get out of, and you're stuck.

The downside is that our organisation is cut up so much. We do not work enough in teams. Really working together is much more satisfying. Now it's all cut up in little pieces of work --- miniscule work packages. I've got a piece and that goes on to the next person for the next piece. And every time you cut it up further, the work really gets more complex and you have to spend more time on the transfer moments. We have the feeling, that we do this or that, but we have no idea what happens next. We do lots of things without even knowing why. That's sad. You're doing all sorts of things without realizing what an impact they have, or what they're good for. It has all become very abstract. The social is lost. The disadvantage is that you dehumanise the work. Human trafficking is really only about money and it's very hard to catch the big fish.

### R3

R3 picks up the first small painting (RP5) and inspects it; she puts it on the right side of the other paintings in the window frame. She puts PR1 upside down. Here there is a black painting (RP3); there, there is blue-yellow (RP1) and there is the yellow. Pointing to RP4: I think that falls with human trafficking, just because of the skin color. And there is a boy (RP3) locked up in a small room who has had to go to work for the rest. It is a bit because of what you get in movies, from people being locked up and abused. I find (RP5) very difficult to place, but I recognize two people in it. Or is it a lonely doll who disappears in the painting? You don't really have anywhere to go. Very often you're in a situation in which you're forced to stay in that situation

I like that little guy in RP5. In RP4 there's a wall with all the names written on it. A whole bunch of names, I think. But why does it appeal to me? RP4 & RP5: they are not people but puppets. They are not real people. RP4 the figure has five fingers and a head, but the head doesn't have a normal shape, that's why it quickly becomes a puppet. The figures in RP2 and RP3 are more human. In RP4 he holds his hands in air in front of the text. He's trying to wave off something. RP1, the hand with varnished nails; it seems like a very artistic setting.



## Order:

RP1, RP4, RP2, RP3, RP5.

## Titles:

The Chair or Weight: RP1.

Invisible distance: RP2.

Human Trafficking: RP3.

Containment: RP4.

The tricky thing: RP5.

You disappear because of everything that happens around you, and that there is no way out. Nothing happens unless we or someone else intervenes. It just gives a feeling of confinement and of loneliness. That you use cheerful colors, doesn't make it any happier. It is all pretty lonely actually because that's the way it is. Most people just look away and don't actually do anything. You're on your own in a situation you can't get out of. In labour exploitation people are being used. There are very moving cases. But you also have people who choose to live in these working conditions because it is more advantageous for them. I see that less as labour exploitation. We are focused on equal pay and working conditions so that Dutch people do not get displaced out of the labor market. I see the vulnerable group ... the group who stands alone and needs help. And I see the group who benefits from working here because there are better working conditions here, than at home.

My feeling that is oppression weighs very heavily in the paintings.

**GREEN ART: FEEDBACK SESSIONS**

GP1



GP2



GP3



GP4



GP5



The participants were invited, one by one, to view the set of five paintings that had been made in relationship to the interviews. Thus Red only saw the Red set of paintings, and Green the Green set. The participants were asked: (i) for feedback; (ii) to put the paintings in the order of their choice; and (iii) to give titles to the paintings. When the participants entered the room where the interviews were held, the paintings were placed against the wall; they had to turn them around and order them. I present their feedback person by person and not thematically because each person made different categorizations and orderings.

**G1**

Being in the shadow of someone else: the figure in GP2 is under a shadow; a shadow that appears to be the man in GP3. What to make of GP3: who is in the shadow; what is it to be in someone's shadow? GP2 and GP3: are there really two people each time; what is the relationship then between them? GP4 and GP5 are just faces: no bodies, no one else, no relatedness. And GP1 there is even less; just some text. GP3: he looks proud and active; he is doing something; while GP2 is downtrodden. The face of GP5 does not tell me very much. GP4 I find hard to read; I cannot really get a clear facial

expression out of it. But GP2 there's no doubt about the sadness. This person (GP3) in terms of how he stands dominates [she mimics the stance while clicking her tongue]. GP1 I find very difficult .... what do I feel or think? There is a lot of text on it and a piece has been erased ... I don't know, I'm thinking maybe some kind of metaphor for getting along with text. Is this a kind of tunnel vision; it's as if you're looking through a window and suddenly you have a blurred vision of what's happening. I don't know ... how do I relate this to my work ... tunnel vision ... is that all the text surrounding the blurred window? You are very much looking for a solution, for something, and that this (the blurred window) is all you see. But you can't really make sense of it, but you're so fixated on making something out of it. Many are stuck in their work and just trying to look away from all the confusion and not to be open to all the other things that are also part of the work, or would be a good but alternative way to do the work.

GP1 reminds me of one of my projects, which I am working on. I am the 'odd man out'; the person who is diverse or different. I am working with 5 plus men and I notice that sometimes they are not always open to new things; or they are open to new ideas but don't want to do it themselves. They're fine with trying a new technique or something, but then ... "If that's what you want to do, go ahead." If I want to do something, they're fine with it, but they don't feel like learning something new themselves or contacting people they do not already know. They're not really open to do that.

(GP4) I can read a few words here ...um...here ..., turning back to GP1 I can't read much of it. But here, turning back to GP4 ...it clearly says we have a 'meeting' ... I recognize that we talk a lot about what we should do, and that we discuss it so much, meet so much, that I think... "Well, all the time we were talking about doing this, maybe I could've done it already." What I really recognize here, from myself, "We are here to justify our own existence." That's not my line. But it tells me about the work. But I think the work I do is relevant; I think it's something very important and this is something everyone in the organization finds ... I hope ... because it's not at times the most exciting of things. In the private sector, you probably could earn more. I think everyone finds the work important and therefore sees the importance of everyone's effort to insure honest work for people, under good conditions. You shouldn't be discriminated against at work

or when you try to apply for a job. We don't want the social services to be abused, because then the necessary support disappears. Our themes are about the whole of society and everyone comes into contact with them. From discrimination to benefits, .... it's very relevant work and that at least 95% of our colleagues agree. I think ... I hope ... we share this.

Standing next to GP5, I think he looks very shy; he is a man in my eyes. I find striking that the canvas is about half empty; not painted. But here (GP4) there are also pieces wide-open, I only notice it now. You could classify the paintings by how much text there is; GP1 would be at the one extreme followed by GP2, then GP3, then GP5, and then GP4. Maybe it says something that I'm just seeing it now for the first time. GP2 has much smaller text, but GP1 only has text. But I made the link with the people first ... that might say something about me.

Going back to GP5, I see this person ... at first, I found him rather neutral but, I don't know if this is a tear (pointing at left eye (from the perspective of the observer)) or a bit just a black pupil, but it can also be sadness or is he cross-eyed, I don't know, can be both. But if he is cross-eyed, it can stand for inclusiveness and diversity ... but I don't know if that's the message. The longer I look at it, the more surprised or astonished the person seems to be. In relation to the work ... maybe he doesn't know what to do with it, or what to expect. Or just if it's a neutral view ... then it could be that he does feel connected to the work and that it doesn't affect him personally. You do not take the people who are being exploited home with you. Even if you are crying at the office ... sometimes you hear really nasty things about exploitation or discrimination ... when you hear how illegals are threatened, "Do what I tell you, or else you go back to China, or wherever." ... you have to care, that's what makes the work so important and why you're committed to it. But you do not want it to make you personally depressed ... depends per person, of course. Actually, I only now really notice that there's some kind of red line on the canvas, a slash ... yes what can it stand for? ... maybe it stands for your career, that you grow a lot in the beginning, and at a certain moment, you don't grow as much ... in the beginning you have a lot to learn. In the beginning you go up one step, if you're doing well, and then at a certain moment you have to apply for a higher position, your salary doesn't go up that much anymore, you already know a lot, you

don't learn that much anymore ... you still develop, but the line is less steep than in the beginning.

GP2 that could be us here: in both Gp2 and GP3 there is some kind of shadow; in GP2 the figure is made up of words and in GP3 it is 'the blue man' ... the gesture in GP3 matches the shadow in GP2 ... only in GP3 I associate it with pride, positivity something good like ... look I'm presenting something ... or I'm self-assured, this is my job and look! While here in GP2 because the guy ... is sad, you get a very different vibe, some kind of angry kind of figure lurking behind you.

Order:

GP3, GP2, GP5, GP4, GP1.

Titles:

Proud, positive employee: GP3.

Sad, scared worker: GP2.

Crying worker: GP5.

Employee searching: GP4.

Unclear Data: GP1.

### G3

In GP4 I see crowds and the word 'meetings'. I see a bit of a face, No warm, but cool colours. Seems a bit miserable .... [deep sigh] ... sometimes things are complex and there is so much coming at you, that you can't see the trees for the forest. I can't place the face and I can't place the text. GP2: this one is also a bit sad. Pathetic figure sitting on a chair, the outstretched hand looming above him [G3 tries to read the text]. I really notice that I want to read the text, but that I cannot decipher it. I may be very text directed, but when I look at the face, it's sad. GP2 & 4 have to do with each other. It is all too much. You want to say so much, or that so much gets said that you don't know what to do with it anymore.

GP5: again, a lot of words, a lot of thoughts shooting through your head. The face: I don't know exactly, someone who thinks a lot ... difficult ....

GP3: I see chaos, a lot of hustle and bustle, little coherence; seems like people who are searching.

(Points at GP5): he has a searching look; (points at GP3) he also has a searching look. Maybe they are ... searching for the meaning of the work.

GP1: is very vague ... literally vague.

If I have to arrange them (points at GP1): I see here a kind of beginning, everything is seen vaguely and is not clear. I don't know what I want. I would say that the two faces (GP4+GP5) are two faces that are facing each other. One is looking to the left the other to the right ... they are looking for where they want to go, what do they want?

(Waving at GP4): so many meetings, complicated. Today I am here (GP5 line on canvas), wondering where to want to go. [He switches GP 4 & 5 around so that they are now facing away from each other].

The order of preference: GP1, GP4, GP5, GP2, GP3

The process starts vague and searching, maybe even in despair, then there are solutions ... that's how I see it.

I recognize it too, that's why I have arranged the paintings in this way ... in my own working. First the attitude of vaguely searching for things I have to do. A lot of worrying about tomorrow and about today; then I understand something. And finally finding solutions; that's how I see it ... It was actually like that for me. Starting very vaguely, looking for answers, asking what do you want? Full of incomprehension. I always feel a bit shitty by myself. What I see here (pointing at GP2 + GP3) is desperate, annoying; and there is someone behind it all. You stand in the shadow of success, worrying about what you want, and whether you will find it.

I went through all these stages in my work. ...well still, but to a lesser extent, but you find your way, you grow to that point ... [Pointing at GP3] ... you become a bit more self-confident in the dialogue.

I like the work a lot more than in the beginning. Now I can immerse myself much better in it. [Pointing at GP4] What I see there, I had that in the beginning; what should I do here; what has priority? I started very much like that ... now I am [Pointing at GP3] finding myself [Pointing at GP1] it is becoming more and more clear. You learn to do what is expected of you: "The way it should be" [Spoken with posh The Hague accent].

I see GP1 ... just as a reasonable text, but you see it in a blur. A part of the experience is the incomprehension, and then you start to wonder about everything, and that ends in an understanding. It is a process of thinking, that is what I see. I see emotion in the faces; a reaction (GP4 & GP5) to the work [GP1] which is [GP2] the outcome of the search; success beckons.

If it is uncharted territory for yourself; not really explored...searching. It can either be sad or if all goes well it is success. You can therefore see it as two sides of the same coin; on the one hand negative (GP2), on the other hand positive (GP3). In (GP2) the background, I see the positive; but (GP3) is much sadder ... maybe they are two opposites or something .... I see (GP3) as positive, the hand outstretched. In the department there is an explicit appeal ... "Let's go out together, do this or that together." I don't like the social pressure. We all work together. If you don't want to join, fine, but ask. I wouldn't hang the paintings up at home, I find them too busy.

Order:

GP1, GP4, GP5, GP2, GP3.

Titles:

Blur: GP1.

Here: GP4.

or There: GP5.

Disappointment: GP2.

Rebirth: GP3.

#### **G4**

What strikes me of course is all the text, I see there the link to my work. I work in a very linguistic environment; everything ... we make is text, our sources are text (written or spoken). Text in our work is both the source of the research and the result of the research. So it can be both. If I go on about this (GP2), then I have to give meaning to it, then you could say, "Well this is the text we base ourselves on." The background could be seen as the source of our research, and then we make something out of it. We superimpose something. We investigate, a first layer of text, which is again a reflection of what we see. I want to use the word 'reality', but what we see isn't tangible. If these are the people we are researching; we are not looking for what they are doing but for the specific phenomenon we are researching (pointing to the pointing figure). That

could be this ... GP2 is a kind of summary of how research works. You are looking at something tangible, you are looking for a broader phenomenon about which you want to say something, and that you stop or organize all kinds of data, text and you shape it all into something, which hopefully says something, gives a direction. Hopefully research is not done just to do research but to help someone or something further. Although the figure looks a bit like a devil (laughs); well, good research is not innocent, of course, so in a sense it would fit.

There are, of course, horrible examples of research. Research with good intentions can help the world further, but when research pretends to find the truth, I think it soon becomes dangerous. The research we do often must give a yes or no answer. Particularly with research we do for the government, it is only input for a decision to be made somewhere else. You're supposed to come up with research that says 'This is reality and that's how we ought to do it'. The researcher as an outsider ... that seems to me strong.

I do not think it is a good development that the government expects clarity, concrete figures / information / pigeonholing ... that doesn't do justice to a society that has become more complicated, everything is "wicked problems," in which different actors and different causes are involved. But then we think it's OK to hang a percentage on the complex problem. I think that is just not possible. As soon as someone says 'it's this or that'; it's just a story that is part of the bigger picture and a reality that is constructed by our own eyes, and certainly by the eyes of the researcher. So the fact that I see something or write it down in a certain way, does matter; and I think that we can really investigate bacteria in an experimental setting, but with people I don't believe in it very much. Within government and the Ministry there really is a great appetite for simple answers, percentages. I'm always surprised, what did those people study? Have they ever followed a philosophy of science course or something like that? Of course what we write has to be justified, but with a line of reasoning substantiated with research that it points in a certain direction. On that basis you adjust your argumentation. Within government they do not make decisions based on research, but make decisions using research together with other considerations.



GP1 shows how research starts. If we see the script (all written text on a canvas) as raw data. Then you start with a vague idea. Like here, how you manipulate the raw data. You frame it, using the idea you want to do research on. Some things you leave out, based on this, you interpret .... this is the first step ... a framing of what you are looking for. At first it may not make matters any clearer. In the beginning things become more vague.

I would ... select GP4 as step two. What appeals to me here this (Pointing at 'Meetings' in left lower) ... meetings, scheduling, meeting again. This is often Step 2 in the research; you have a certain problem, something you are looking at, we want to have an answer to something. Then the organizing starts, involving others in the research idea ... then the discussion starts, especially in a bureaucracy like ours, you start talking to people, one says this ... makes sense, then you adjust the idea, then the others say again, that is right; then you go back to the first person. You just have a lot of conversations. You wonder is this worth it? Is this a subject in which we have to invest? It seems like the most bureaucratic step in the research project, but I think it's also one of the most important, especially if you work for the government paid for with public money. If you get the go ahead, you get into a situation where the research becomes almost uncontrollable, with the feeling I don't know if I will ever get out of this again. Because you get so much input, and after that, you actually have to find the path back to clarity.

Moving on to GP5: you've sorted it all out a bit, and then you think this will be it, this is what we're going to research. In many cases you're going to do field research. This red colour (the red face) looks a bit bloody and horrible to me. I think it fits the subject of industrial accidents. Then you look at it, and see what actually happened. Companies improve ... that could be the upward trend, based on the blood that has flowed. And in this phase, you also start to organize. You start here on day one, and then you try to organize a little bit of what you see in your fieldwork. A very large part is still blank (see GP5) so there is no answer yet ... or even no idea whether you want an answer or not. But it is good to realize at this stage that there is much more than what you see.

Moving to GP3: after that, you often end up in a very chaotic phase. You have observations which already start to look like something. When you look at your data, in

the analysis phase, you think it is clear, but after that you have a part which is uncertain or 'dark' – the blue shadow. But you do not know what that represents. At the beginning of the analysis phase, the chaos that you are in as a researcher, there is just so much coming at you; it is all letters and data and trying to make a classification, to organize it all, is devilish. The finger points, I read 'Norm', and that is something we often do ... you often put a standard up to your data. Does 'it' work or not? ... But it often remains a mess for a very long time [Pointing at lower right corner]. ... You are under time pressure and you don't really know where you are ... it gets more and more chaotic ... you turn it around ... look at it... [She moves around the painting trying to make sense of it.]

Moving on to GP5: and this is the end result, you have an image, a recognizable image, with a certain order in it, a reflection of the reality with a beginning and an end, which gives direction...

I was at a meeting where I got a lot of criticism about my research approach. I think the person was very frustrated about something else, but he acted out against our research. He hadn't heard anything about it, and he did not know much about Investigation, its needs, procedures, results or significance. He was just a member of the department, who asked us about how we did research. I explained that we conducted in-depth interviews, among other things, with accident victims. And his reaction was: "Yes, but you don't get a picture of reality that way, do you?!" Bewildering, I find it very difficult then to then remain calm; what do you start with, then? ... do you have to take him seriously; you think: "Come on?!" ...really, what do you think?" But like I said, I think there was frustration somewhere else.

Order:

GP1, GP4, GP5, GP3, GP2.

Titles:

Beginning: Curiosity: GP1.

Input and Organization: GP4.

Fieldwork: GP5.

Analysis: Creative Chaos: GP3.

It Is Finished: GP2.

**G5**

I like better to watch GP1, GP2 and GP3; GP5 I do not like very much; she stands so she does not have to see GP4 or GP5. If those were the faces of colleagues, I would stay away from them. GP3 appeals to me and I find it strong. I like to look at it.

GP1 is alright; I talk a lot, that fits. [Pointing to GP2] I see an image there and I don't know how to link to it; I see a figure stepping out of a situation.

The figure in GP2 feels lonely, I think, is that the person himself, who has talked? Or is that what he is coming into contact with? Is it a victim of human trafficking? It's difficult when you're confronted by human trafficking and slavery; you're influenced by what you see. ... when you're busy every day with unpleasantness, with human trafficking, of course it has an effect on how you. Though I think that a lot of people here are not fully aware of that. ... with GP2, you have a kind of shadow figure in the background. I'm mainly working on the theme of labor exploitation and therefore the social situation of the very poor. Right now I'm a bit further away from all that; I'm not surrounded by those themes.

Turning to GP4 and GP5 [to which she has turned her back]: I think they fit even more. Refusing to look is a sort of avoidance behaviour. I prefer to get rid of the confrontation with misery as quickly as possible. [Pointing at GP4] We have meetings there ...bla bla bla ...yes, sometimes I try to avoid such things. Not if I have a deadline or have to do something that I see the point in; then I do go for it, but I have to admit that actually the social aspect of working to get along with colleagues leaves me cold. Yes, I sometimes turn my back on that, because I think it's a waste of time, that costs energy, I do not see the usefulness of it, it is not functional ....

(Pointing at GP5) "Oh, that's that colleague who's going to whine" ... I will walk away from it, yes, he looks like that. ... I have come from (Pointing at GP2) a department where what you were doing was really about people's lives; it was a different kind of responsibility, more intense, more demanding. It became too heavy a burden for me; .... that's how I got there [Pointing at GP4].

I had to discuss how something was said, ... I had to take that seriously ... whether someone had had enough of post-its ... and then a whole meeting full of these little things... I thought: 'This is what we have agreed to, so we are going to do this, but

we still had to discuss it a couple of times more'. I see it in front of me, I am sitting behind my desk, finally doing something useful, and then a colleague comes [Pointing at GP5) ... with a whining voice: "... can we still talk about that?" Then I think, yes, we had a meeting about that for an hour yesterday, alright? ... I associate it with that... [Pointing at GP5]. I find it complex that a lot of people complain about the amount of meetings, but do not do anything about it.

Now that I am in a research team, I have a less clear identity than when I worked in Investigation [Red]. This is much more vague work; it is not as concrete, you're doing research, what is that? And we don't know that very well ourselves; our goals aren't very clear. People are searching. When they start looking about together for a goal, I don't they'll find it. So yes, I walk away from that, but as soon as it is about specific work content and concrete research, when we talk about that, I am engaged. I try not to put my energy into arranging to have enough sandwiches for lunch.

I see GP1 as someone who has talked a lot, but in my opinion hasn't been very clear ... when I apply this to my work, I think that my current role as a researcher is rather unclear. In research, you have to sell your research to program managers, who sometimes don't understand what Investigation is; after all our research is supposed to be in support of the Investigation process. Even in cases of labor exploitation, if you discover a problem somewhere that we really have to deal with, they may not understand. New colleagues don't know what to do or how it works, or what we do as a department, people don't get worked in. You get the job, you show up, you ask "What should I do?" You don't get an answer. Many researchers are analytical but not pragmatic, and because the department does not have a clear goal, some researchers lose themselves in the details and that is why I think we have all the meetings [Pointing at GP4]. You get meetings where: "I really reserved the gluten-free lunch," and then I think: "Why aren't we talking about the report that needs to be written." I used to work with detectives, the goals were pretty simple ... there was a suspect and he had to be investigated. Here you have to deal with a club of very involved, intelligent and analytical people, who want to do everything; but if there's no clear direction, then I think you get confused ...

We have three managers and a department head, so with so many managers, I think it's weird that there is so little control. It turns out that these four don't always communicate well with each other. One of the three team managers knows very well what research is, has done that himself for years, but the other two don't; so then I think you should get to know each other better, and get to know what you are doing in terms of content. At the moment things are changing, ... two weeks ago we had our first meeting about what exactly we do as researchers. And that was because a few of us have raised the alarm and the team managers now have to get organized. Responsibility for mission and goals certainly lies with the team management. Should we actually have a framework, but that is still vague [Pointing at GP1]. To do good research, you have to shield yourself from the irrelevant things around it (the ballast) created by the bureaucratic matrix organization. People are afraid of taking responsibility and possibly being judged, so they often dive into a victim role and complain a lot.

Order:

GP1, GP4, GP5, GP2, GP3.

Titles:

Search for organizational goal: GP1.

Lonely Warrior: GP2.

Solutions & Perseverance: GP3.

Standard Colleague: GP4.

Nagging Colleague: GP5.

### ***A Few Comments***

*All four researchees, above, focused on horizontal relationality. They tended to make pairs between different paintings. Their mindset was directed to interact and contacts. But there was clearly much unease about the quality of relatedness in the workplace. Research as a social activity, either qua its content or in terms of ways of working together, was seen to be problematic. The art-research exercise brought relatedness and issues about the quality of relatedness to the fore. We cannot conclude*

*how much there was new thinking or awareness; or it was just the product of the change in the interview situation. Thus, the art-based research succeeded in prioritizing resonance as a theme and the researchees talked resonantly; that is actively and with affect, about their contacts with others, their circumstances, and their context. We can thus claim that art-based research is thus congruent with resonance in its results, but this project was far too limited to be able to test art-based potential for supporting organizational change.*

**THE PAINTINGS**



Red      Painting 1





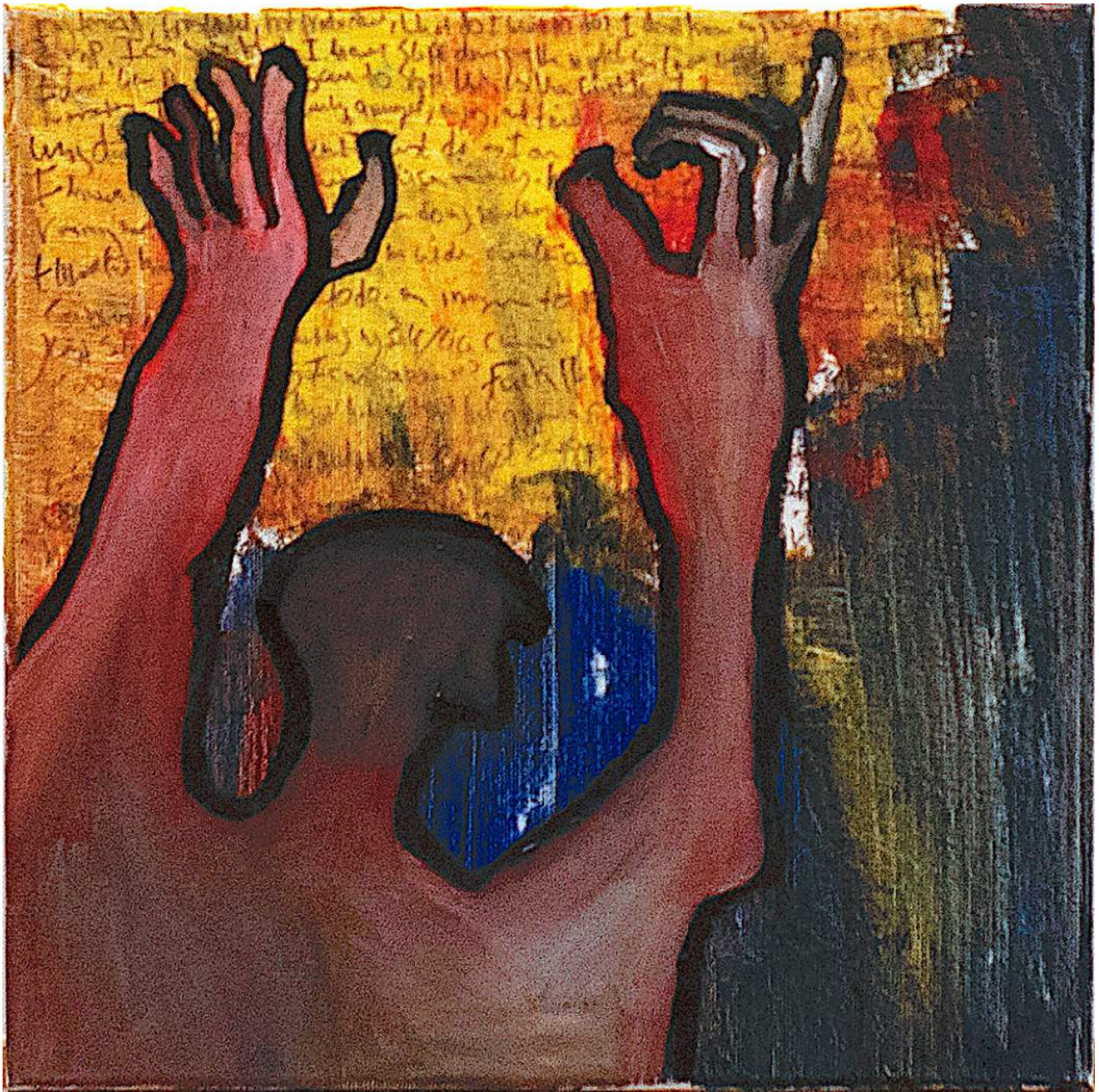
Red Painting 2





Red Painting 3





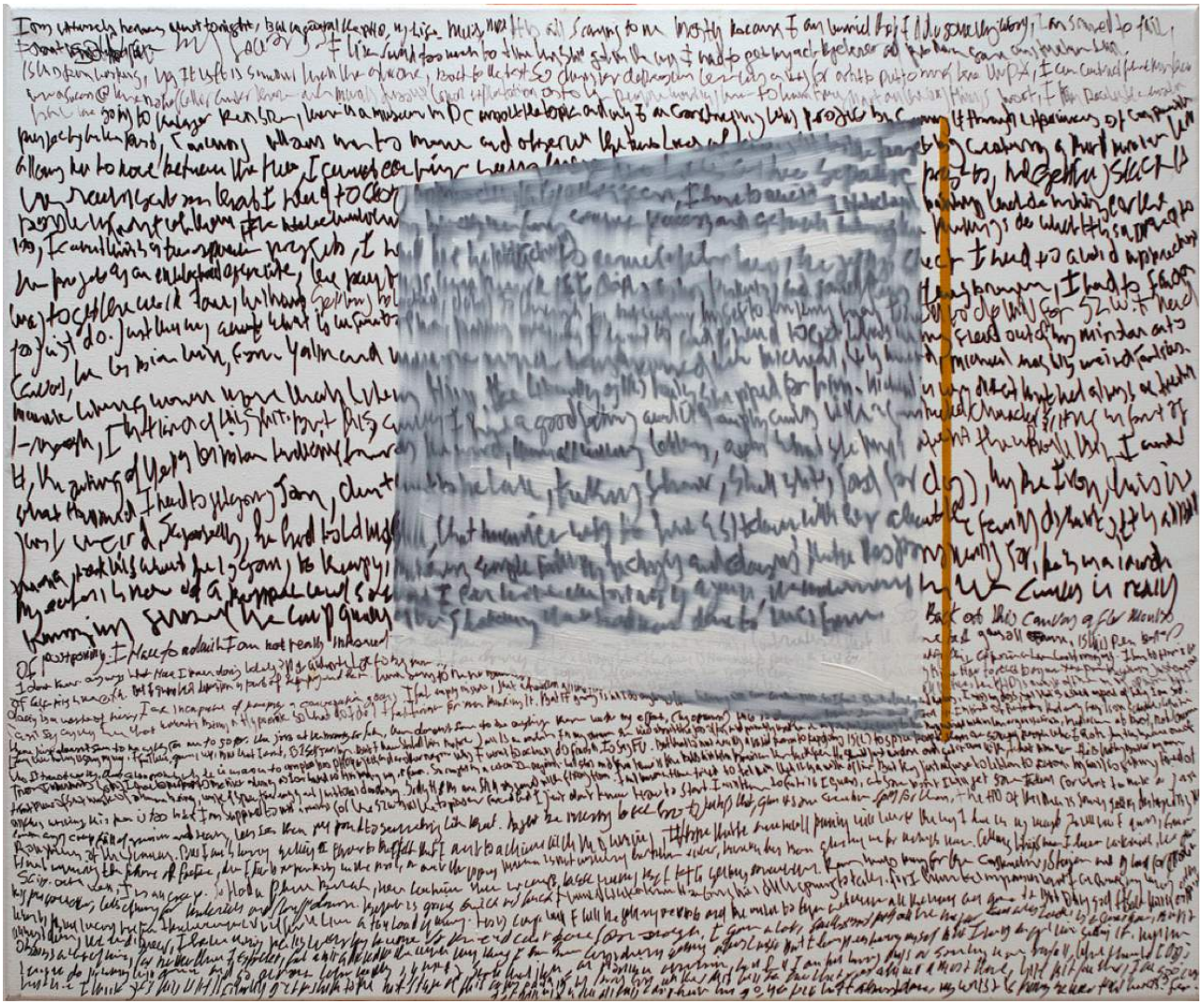
Red Painting 4





Red Painting 5





Green Painting 1





Green Painting 2





Green Painting 3









Green Painting 5



## **AFTER**

Having presented the two research cycles, one with Red and one with Green, including the interviews, feedback sessions and paintings, I turn to the researcher perspective. What was my role, what did I observe, what did the experiment mean to me, and what do I think the project has for a more general sense of meaning?

First, I re-visit the two research cycles: Red and Green. And then I will develop my interpretation of the project; that it can best be understood as an experiment in Resonance. 'Resonance' is the key term in Hartmut Rosa's social theoretical reflection on what he identifies as the contemporary crisis in relationship. On the one hand, his ideation gives this project its needed theoretical depth; but on the other I believe it also corrects for Rosa's chief weakness, a lack of empirical carry-through.

## **REFLECTIONS ON THE RESEARCH PROCESS**

### **(i) The first series**

Since I was not allowed in the interviews to directly ask about the work, as I had been told to avoid discussion of the reorganisation, and the people I studied with Red clearance are restricted for security reasons from telling all too much, I had to ask the researched to reflect on what the work situation meant to them. I had to draw them out on a meta-level. I could not say: "Tell me exactly what you do?" or "What did you do today?"; opening questions that I really like. But I had asked: "How do you experience your work?". As long as they would talk about themselves, I was on safe ground. Especially details of the criminal investigations were understandably off limits. Pretty quickly they began to talk about how they did (or were not able to) deal with the levels of distress that they felt about the work. Generally, they did not talk much about their feelings. Everyone could see that many hires did not last very long; there were pretty obviously issues but they were not normally discussed. There clearly was not any policy designed to keep the detectives healthy. The cracks were showing. It was clear that something really was very wrong. That was part of the reason why they had accepted me to do the project. But they were also afraid and did not want me 'to do too much'. Basically, they wanted be able to say 'we're doing something' but they did not want me (or anyone else) to do too much. The mentality is very much 'Don't rock the boat' but we do need to pretend that we're doing something; at least that's how I felt it.

In reality they talked a lot about all the limitations they felt that the reorganisation had put on them. There were more and more systems, making the work more complicated. You needed more clearances and permissions to do your work. All procedures that ate up time and had no substantive contribution to the task at hand. In the interviews basically I only asked four questions: (i) How do you feel about your work? They were always very puzzled about that question; they didn't understand it; so, I always had to explain it a bit. The idea that they had 'feelings' about the work was strange for them. They were not used to identify their affects or to talk about their sentiments. Because of the 'positive inquiry' which was required of me (perhaps not really required but I had been advised to make use of it) I asked: (ii) 'What in your work in last six months have you really been pleased by?' (iii) 'What went really well?' (iv) 'In what situation did you really excel?' And for the rest I just let them talk. My back-up questions were things like: 'Can you tell me more about that?'. The interviews lasted at a minimum 40 minutes to an hour and a half. Most of the time they dried up after an hour and a little bit. The institutional norm was that meetings took 30 minutes to an hour and that just seemed to be the time span that they spontaneously reacted to. The whole Ministry works on Outlook and Outlook tends to plan in segments of 30 minutes. It has become how their mental agendas work. Anything that took more than hour had to really be very important, exceptional or lunch. I interviewed one-on-one and made it very clear in the beginning that I was not going to report back what they said to anyone. The interviews were strictly confidential. I invited them to talk if possible about day by day events. Within minutes most of the participants opened up. The more senior they were the more they opened up. The more senior interviewees were the easier ones to get them to talk. I think it was because they had a 'they cannot do anything to me' mentality towards the Ministry. They'd been employed long enough that they had permanent positions and felt sure no one could fire them because they knew where the skeletons were buried. At the same time, the older generation of employees generally were more sceptical and less optimistic about change. They were less naïve: of course, the next reorganisation is on its way and it will only make life worse. Indeed, every two or three years there has been another reorganisation and none of them seemed to have made things better. They always make things worse; complicating the work. The goal, of course, is always to get the workers to work harder. The younger staffers still believe the official stories that the consultants want to make things better for them. In the first interview I did, it was a woman who told that she was very keen on her work and very happy with the reorganisation because

she felt that issues were finally getting addressed that needed attention. I listened, but must admit I took her story with a grain of salt. And it certainly turned out to be an outlier and when I caught up with her several months later she was demoralised for the promises had not panned out the way she had expected them to.

I did not try to analyse the interviews person by person. I was not out to make a painting person by person. I wanted to paint from the general picture I had gained from all five interviews. The paintings are produced by the atmosphere in the Ministry and they are not portraits, one by one, of the five interviewees. As I painted, I did not say to myself; this painting is on interviewee Two and that painting is on interviewee Three, or any such thing. I bundled the collected data, used it as inspiration and painted from general impressions and feelings. When I had completed the five interviews I had a sense of closure. I felt I had enough input to paint. It were enough impressions without risking data overload. The scale of five interviews per series worked for me. Less I felt would lead to too much individualisation and more would start to become unmanageable. I had found the right input level for me to move on to the painting and then the feedback sessions.

I had Chris Kuiper's research as a model, but there were real differences. Kuiper did not paint himself but handed his impression of the interview data over to the artist. Even more crucial each painting was addressed to one person alone. I did not do it that way, for one reason I did not want the researchees to each take possession of one painting. I wanted them to express their ideas and thoughts in a feedback session triggered by the paintings together as a whole. I wanted to enrich the data by means of the artistic intervention. Kuiper was not trying to enrich his data but to answer a research question. He wanted to know if the physical therapists experienced the reorganisation of their work and workplace as repressive and as a form of deskilling? Thus he had a research question and was out to get an answer. In his feedback sessions the physical therapists claimed that the reorganisation had not hampered them from doing their work and that the work culture had not been sacrificed. Poignantly enough, within a year of he completing the study, the results reversed radically (oral communication). His researchees suffered health, personal, work and psychological crises that all had to do with the reorganisation. I do not really know what went wrong in the Kuiper study. Were the researchees so flattered by the artistic methodology that they reacted more positively in the feedback sessions than should have happened. Or was it just a mishap in

timing? In any event, I wanted the paintings to remain 'food for thought' and a possibility for reflection and not to become highly charged artefacts that distorted more than they revealed.

I did five interviews and made five paintings. I showed all five paintings to each individual and asked them to react, differentiate and comment. I did not want to set up an 'Oh that is me' effect. Whether it was his goal, that is what Kuiper did. And each researchee owned his painting. I wanted discussion and reaction and not some sort of ego document effect. I saw the paintings as a catalyst to discussion and awareness and not as a 'truth act'. Whether it was his intent or not, Kuiper hyper-individualised his researchees. Each one became ever more a 'Me' by being painted and show (albeit abstract) his or her portrait. I wanted to know about a shared work situation and not explore ego documents. I hoped that it would be a 'situation' that was more or less recognised and not a 'Me'.

In the feedback sessions I positioned the paintings against the wall, more or less at random. And asked the participants, one by one, the sessions were individual, to touch and arrange the paintings in the room as they saw fit. I had cleared out the meeting room (the sessions with Red were all in the Ministry building) as much as I could so the researchees would have a maximum freedom. I asked the participants to 'have fun with the paintings' and to put them in an order that they thought made sense for them. While they were doing that, I asked them to think about titles for the paintings. I asked them: 'What do the paintings mean for you?'. In addition, I asked them to please vocalise their thoughts as they engaged with the paintings. In reply I got repeatedly asked: 'What do you mean by this painting?' I would reply: 'I'm not going to answer that.' I did not want my perspective clouding their's. Whenever I was asked why did I make this or that, or for my opinion, I (as politely as possible) refused to give an answer. I stacked the paintings in a corner or piled them on the floor so the participants had to actually physically touch them to see them. I wanted there to be a real physical link to the paintings. I did not want the 'museum effect' of the art object as an icon on the wall, inaccessible to the participant's direct actions. My thoughts being that if they started by touching the paintings, they would start thinking more directly and engaged than if the paintings were presented with an aura of 'high culture'. Art is almost always is something where there is a line around; and which you are forbidden to touch. I felt it was crucial to break through the taboo sphere to make the art accessible and open for response. I wanted the participants to establish their own connection to the paintings, freed from the standard

barriers. And indeed, the paintings were placed differently by each participant; sometimes all over the room, sometimes tightly bunched, sometimes grouped. They were hung up; they were put on the floor. They did whatever they did, and I just observed and recorded what happened. I was interested in how they positioned the paintings the one to the other; and how they positioned themselves to the paintings. One person put certain paintings in the corner, on the floor, while another painting she hung up. She immediately turned her back to the paintings on the floor. After the participants had completed their first round of observation, I wanted to know why these things happened. Why turn your back on a certain painting? Why be focused on the one painting but not the other? What exactly was it about this or that painting that prompted the reaction? She said she felt that the figure (in GP04) was making order out of chaos and that was the ideal situation. There was text in the painting, just like in their work there was a lot of text they had to make order out of. The interpretation was surprising for me. I saw the hands in the air more as a gesture of despair; but she saw it as a parallel to the orchestra director.

In one painting (GP5) there was an abstract figure, especially the neck and torso that she felt represented a messy situation; she saw in that painting the sort of meetings that she had to endure. She would be prepared to discuss content and her colleagues would start to complain that the lunch that had been ordered was not the right type of lunch. Or that there were not enough pens and paper on the table; creating meetings about meetings and not a discussion of substantive issues. Instead of working to improve the research we were doing and addressing how we could best prepare ourselves to do our work better, it becomes time wasted on trivia. It is just annoying. That sort of people (GP5) are frustrating and she feels she is at a loss for how to deal with them. She sees herself (I think rightfully) as a kind and sweet person who doesn't dare to say: 'Okay people shut up and let's get our work done.' She is now Green, but she was Red. She hated working in Red because she found the culture sexist and woman unfriendly. There had been a lot of conflict where she worked (in Amsterdam); a lot of infighting and backstabbing. I felt that if I had given her just one painting, she would have more or less forced herself to say: 'I see myself and my situation in the painting.' She would have wanted to please me and to 'help out'. And she would have thought: 'Okay, so this is what he thinks of me'. That is all much too unfree, static and forced. She asked which painting is me, but I answered truthfully that it did not work that way. Also, for me to paint, in effect, abstract portraits I felt was unwise and inauthentic. It was the situation, the shared circumstance, bits

and pieces of various interviews, that inspired me each time. I was painting from a collective experience and not from an individual by individual perspective. I was genuinely artistically inspired by the collective effect and not person by person. And remember my theme was work; not Jean, Michelle, Carla, Mike .... My project was thematic. I did not believe that individualisation was the right way to go in a thematic project. I did not want to suggest individual ownership but shared circumstance. I got repeatedly asked, 'Which painting was me?' But the honest answer was all and none of them.

She saw order in the blue painting versus chaos in the red painting. Often the participants saw things in or even between the paintings that I had not consciously put or seen there. But the paintings were their's; I felt that what they saw was really what 'IS'. Someone who thinks much more top down and is fairly authoritarian saw totally different things in the blue and red paintings. I was sometimes a bit surprised, but never had a desire to say: 'No, no that's not what I meant'. In fact, there was always some consistency between the feedback and my sense of things. But there were surprises for me in what got emphasised or neglected. For me, once the painting is done, whatever I had felt or thought while painting, I now need to let it go. I took whatever they said as gospel. I was there to listen and what they had to say was what I found important. My ideas were not really important in this stage of the project. I just wanted them to talk about what they saw and felt.

In a way I have gotten ahead of myself; jumping to the feedback sessions. Indeed there were four stages: (i) interview, (ii) abstracting from the interviews, (iii) painting, (iv) feedback sessions. And thereafter there has been the writing-up of the project, whereby I re-experience it from a distance and work to make the project accessible for readers. Also, this fifth stage, is one where links to research methodology and social theory get introduced. The presentation of representative quotes from the interviews and an indication of the themes I drew from the interviews will be a separate chapter. As I worked/painted serially, with a significant time gap of six months between the Red and Green interviews, I will need to present the two groups separately. Logically enough, the two series, each of five, of paintings are also quite different from one another. I think that the second Green group forms a stronger unity than Red does. This could be because Red was more diverse, but it can also be because in a second round of painting I was more sure of myself. Having experienced the successful Red feedback sessions I was more confident about the whole set-up during the second cycle. The interviewing, the painting and the sessions were done in the same way.

In both sessions, when I studied the interviews, I observed themes that repeated themselves. In Red, there was a focus on the human necessity to react to the plight of the abused and exploited. There was a strong sense of doing something for the extremely victimised. They felt that they were trying to correct a wrong; there was a very strong social consciousness. An expressed desire to do positive something for society was repeatedly expressed. But there was also caution and doubt in how far they could make a difference. Because of the strong sense of social commitment, I asked in the feedback sessions if they would ever consider going into politics. Working in a Ministry you are not supposed to show your political preferences and are charged with serving whomever the Minister is, whatever her or his political party. Only one of the ten stated any willingness to go into politics. All the rest saw politics as unattractive. Red is much more apolitical than Green; and indeed no one in Red had any inclination at all towards politics. Actually, it is frowned upon to even discuss politics between civil servants. The themes of labour exploitation and modern-day slavery preoccupied them; but did not seem to politicise them. Quite often I heard illustrations such as workers in the tomato greenhouses forced to sleep on sheets of cardboard on the floor. They were eager to express how necessary their work was. The Reds were much more concrete than the Greens. Indeed, the Green's work is much more abstract. Red's could say, I am working on this case, helping these women on regards to this war story. They felt much more connected to their target groups or persons. I listened repeatedly to the interview tapes and tried to internalise their themes. Each interview had a mood of its own; I tried to typify those moods and to translate them into visualisation. Quite quickly I started seeing images.

In comparison to my previous painting; these two series are quite different. I did not just use an already existing visual language and continue with it. These ten paintings really are visualisations of what I saw, heard and understood while in the Ministry. My own art was very autobiographical with lots of elements of self-portrait. For the project I painted much more figuratively, the first series was all about human exploitation. The imagery is very different from my prior work. It is still definitely my style and my way for instance of rendering the faces. As I knew I was going to make paintings throughout the interviews I was already looking or thinking about imagery. There was a lot of talk about people being locked up and what was hidden from society. They deal with what they called 'invisible crime 'because the general public doesn't see it. Female slavery and prostitution, and modern-day exploitation, are all implicitly condoned. Society pretty much lets them happen. Walking with your grocery cart through the supermarket you do not see or think about the people in the greenhouses. Their

situation is invisible to you. The Red series are meant to show that invisibility. For one of the paintings (RP2) , I used the image of that I made a character of a boxer. The image is of the torso of a young boxer whose upper body is naked. I left out the boxing gloves and I painted the very sad look in his face. And I had the idea of shopping streets as my background. For the crowd walking through the shopping street, I painted just the silhouettes. Only the 'boxer 'was in focus. The normal public was just doing their own daily routines. The principal actor was just totally ignored by society. He is invisible to the media. In another painting (RP3) that I positioned a person in an extremely closed off and totally black setting, with a small light bulb and a door opening shown. As soon as the door closes, he would be locked up and hidden from view. The dominant feeling I had was of being trapped. I would not have painted these things, if I had not been it confronted by them in the interviews. The way the paintings relate to the project has to do with the content of the work; for instance, of the Red group. The paintings are based on the content of what they told me and what they told me about their feelings. In the interviews they immediately started to talk about cases that they had been involved with in the past that were now completed and how they had made them feel. When I painted more about how they feel about their own work situation or what they think of each other, I am more abstract. There is a painting (RP5) which is the most abstract. For me it is a very disorienting painting as there is no clear perspective. The principal figure is suspended on a coloured field with no real definition of ground. I see the imagery as one where identity is weak and the human form is deformed. I thought the imagery was all about being forced into a situation of ambiguity. I had made the image ever more abstract as I worked on the painting. I painted out one accompanying figure and at some stage there were a couple of faces that are no longer there. I worked to make the painting more symbolic, more open to interpretation. I did not want to make 'literary 'paintings that in any way look like political pollsters or propaganda.

(RP1) was my least favourite of the Red series. The interviewees complained insistently about all the red tape. I literally took red tape and integrated into this painting. The central figure is someone in an official position so that figure has to wear a (also red) tie. The theme has to do with trying to escape from red tape, while being stalked by it. The theme of red tape and despair is crucial to the interviews. It can be rendered in terms of (RP1) a person in the work situation who is being mistreated but it can also be about drowning in the sheer amount of work that one is confronted with. The painting is about despair. Of course, as an artist you have a complex relationship to such a theme. If you paint a painting about boredom it must



not be boring. If you work on a theme of despair you must not despair yourself, or the chance that you will complete the painting is rather small. When making art about negative emotions you have stay engaged in composition, use of colour, the process of painting. However paradoxical, as painter I had in a way to 'enjoy' despair.

I start a painting with an idea; with a sense of what I want to portray. I am not a classical realist. I cannot say to myself I am going to paint a lizard and then make a 'perfect' likeness. I will have a general feeling I want to portray. If the painting goes well, I get into a flow and the painting starts to generate its own momentum. I have to demand of myself, does this colour fit with this other colour. Is the image achieve the right tone in my opinion? I have to keep guessing, am I getting what I want? At some point, it is done. There was a lot of anger in these paintings. I was then very relieved when a painting was finished. I am totally absorbed when I am painting. With this project, what they were talking about in the interviews really hurt. It hurt to get involved with what they had told me.

I would think about what I had been told and then go to work. Often, I had a feeling as if they were in the studio with me. I tried playing the tapes while I was painting but that did not work. It was frustrating, as soon as I had an image, another bit of text would take me off in another direction. I worked much better for me to remember the feelings that that the interviewees had given me. I know my face the best and used aspects of self-portrait in my older work. When I saw that faces in this work were tending too much to my own, I painted them out. There are definitely elements of my face in there, but it was not my intent to go that way. No one ever mentioned that they saw me in the paintings, so I think I succeeded in avoiding that trap. In RP1, I worked to keep the image as abstract as possible. I tried to keep it as vague as possible to let the spectator question the painting and to see what they would come up with.

The small painting (RP5) has two figures; with the one figure on the side, hidden. I call it 'The White Figures' and see it as about abandonment. I feel it is all about being lost. I am not sure whether the figures are doing harm or trying to help someone. It was painted out of a sense of the ambiguity of dealing with crisis. For the feedback sessions, I was focussed on the relationship to red tape and despair. How would the researchees position themselves in relationship to the themes? The painting with the hands up in the air (Painting no 4) was my symbol of hopelessness, which very ironically (for me) was seen as a symbol of creating order by some.

Artistically, I like the hands help up high a lot (RP4) and the abstract quasi-figures (RP5). I have the most problems with the 'boxer painting '(RP2). I feel there is something wrong with his navel and the breadth of the chest seems a bit strange. I do like how the lines disrupt the image, but I am concerned that it is too narrative and not really painterly enough. The lightbulb (RP3) is very narrative; almost illustrative. One can quite easily use it to make-up a story. It would work quite easily as the illustration for a book cover. It was very annoying to make because I wanted the line by the doorway to be absolutely straight and it took me quite a long time to get it as I wanted it. I was also concerned that the figure was perhaps too balanced; i.e. the left and right side of the face and jacket. I admit that I do see myself in it; but no one seemed to react to that. The first painting is the most confusing; a person is implicitly indicated, but there is no face and the red tie is not logically placed. It is very colourful and I find yellow a very difficult colour to use. I am satisfied with how the yellow works in that painting.

In the feedback sessions the researchees reacted the easiest to the boxer and then to the lightbulb. These are the most literary pictures and thus the closest to written storytelling. Painting no 5 was clearly too abstract for them. I had to push them to get them to say anything about it. One person saw a chair in it; I have no idea how. I see the white people as weird puppets; certainly not human, but nonetheless somewhat human-like. I had been unsure as to whether to include it. I realised that it might be a stretch for them to deal with. But I am attached to the strange ambivalence between the two figures. And that sort of connected, but not connected; related but not really so; seemed to me to be characteristic of Red's work. With the Red paintings I was just starting the project and I was still unsure whether the idea would work. I think I was a bit too figurative out of fear of not being understood. The first Red set is less cohesive as a whole than the second Green set. In the Red feedback sessions, I discovered that the topics which I saw in the data were quite easy to deal with for the researchees. They are doing doing research about groups of people that they have no direct connection with. They do not really have a connection with the problems they have to face. They may get a successful, even high profile, court case out of their work but they don't get actually connected to the victims they work for or the criminals they get prosecuted. They are supposed to work to targets; so many investigations per quarter; but those are not people.

As for Green the problem of disconnection is even greater. They are supposed to facilitate policy evaluation and creation. But they get short term assignments, often with no context. They mostly have no idea why they are assigned to collect information on this or that

theme. And their work is all with second hand material; they never deal with primary data collection or analysis. They have to process a lot of information but with very little guidance or direction. It is very easy for them to drown in the information they have to collect. My Red researchees were more senior than my Green ones. When they hire people to work in Green as policy staff, they give you a job and say get on with it. There is no introduction to the work, its methods or what is expected of you. Some succeed; some drown. In general, the first six to eight months that they are employed, they're walking around almost aimlessly and have next to no idea what they're supposed to be doing. Obviously, they do not want to fail, but they feel that they do not really know what they are supposed to be doing. They get next to no guidance. At some point they get evaluated and told 'You did fine 'or 'You've bombed out'. Everyone in my Green group did fine and is still there; but they were mostly still in the stressful stage to their career. But at the time of the interviews several of them said: 'I'm here now but I don't know for how long'. It takes a while to master the Ministry lingo and its implicit demands. To survive you must not be abrasive and have to somehow find your way in the maze of rules and expectations.

In the first set of Red paintings, you see in the lightbulb (RP3) and hands held up in despair (RP4) much more direct commentary than in the second set. With the lightbulb the image is very ambiguous; there is one lightbulb but it not the actual source of light. The light is coming via the door from outside. The lightbulb is out, broken or whatever. And the portaited face is dark on one side and light on the other. Thus there is light/dark, inside/outside, and in effect good/bad imagery in the painting. There is something very dualistic going on here. And the door is dirty, chaotic, rather ill defined. It is a big and very present sort of painting. I do not feel it is a literary painting in the sense that you have to read all the symbols to make sense of it. But I think it is quite easy to relate to and you can use it to speculate. I wanted the researchees to make-up a story in relationship to it. And it worked; they responded a lot to it. One person started to talk about how she felt she was all the time in the dark and was grasping for light. But she felt she was not getting anywhere and was therefore very frustrated, In the despair painting (RP4) it was the first one where I started to use text as a crucial image. Not text to be read; or even can be read; but text as a symbol. In the Green series the background use of text intensifies. There is also potential fire imagery in this painting; as if there is a fire in the background and the hands are help up high in reaction to the fire. And, of course, you only see the back of the person; the face (no faces) are shown.

It could even be a portrait of burning bodies or flesh; that is, of some sort of hell. The hands help up high have something or surrender or giving up. The Red researchees mostly saw this painting as far less sinister than I did. The theme of surrender to powers unseen but threatening resonated strongly with several of the researchees. There was also projection of the 'call for help' into the scene; it was then seen as symbolic for the situations they investigated. One person did ask for electronic copies of the images to use for a presentation; but in general they are not the sort of paintings that you would hang above your couch or bed. I was the most unsure about Painting no.5; I realised that it was quite abstract. And I was concerned about Painting no.1 for the same reason. I would say that 5 indeed had a difficult reception, and 1 went down fine.

The five are not really consistent of style. The second set of five paintings, the Green group, forms much more a unity. Partly the problem of style with the Red group of painting came because I had not painted for a while. Between my BFA and the project, I had done a Masters in Media Studies. I had to get back into the rhythm of painting. I was still searching a bit for my chosen style. The themes of Green were also very different from those of Red. Really the Green researchees were much more junior and often felt themselves lost in the Ministry. I could identify easily with their stories and share to some degree the same situation as they did. In fact, I felt I often had a better picture of what was going on in the Inspectorate than they did. While with Red I was somewhat overwhelmed by the stories and the problematic. The Red paintings, thus, form far less a series than do the Green. The Green series is consistent in style and clearly share a common theme. Making five 'lightbulb' paintings might have produced more consistency; and certainly the theme of being locked up, forgotten and key facts being hidden was appropriate. And I could have alternated a woman for the man. But there was no way I could have created a series like that. It is just too forced and too literary. The common denominator would be in the symbolism and not really in the painting. It would be as if I was redoing the same painting, with minor variations, over and over. For me carbon copies with slight variation is just not really painting at all. The lightbulb is not the only painting in that series that could have been extrapolated into a series. The boxer could have served as well as a theme for repetition; but it would meet with exactly the same objections I have made for a lightbulb series.

I had so many impressions from the interviews and probably rather too many ideas than too few. With the Red series I think the paintings varied so much because the data was

so rich and I was having trouble synthesising it into one visual language. In the beginning I was too afraid of losing control and not being able to complete the paintings in a coherent way. After all a painting has to coalesce into a single entity to work. If the painting stays bits and pieces competing with one another it just does not work. I was not yet free enough to just let the painting happen.

The Red series took two months to make. I probably thought too much about what should or should not go into the paintings. With Green I was much more sure of myself and able to let the painting happen. That it was a series of five paintings was a bit of happenstance. It was not because there were five researchees. Three paintings seemed too Christian to me; it would inevitably be experienced as one central image and two complementary ones. Five seemed to work. It gives the impression of multiplicity without becoming overwhelming. I did not want to fall into repetition, so still more was problematic. It was enough that I felt I could show different aspects of the data; I was not limiting myself to a single statement. But it was. Not so much that I feared that the experience would become chaotic. No sixth, or seventh, etcetera also came because I just ran out of steam. The energy and inspiration carried me each time that far and not really a lot further.

The paintings were always viewed individually. I did the feedback sessions as one person with five paintings. How much they discussed the work between themselves I do not really know. I did display the paintings in the Ministry and offer a reflection on the project, but that was for a special occasion; an introduction to the ministry for prospective external PhD researchers. None of the researchees were members. I did let them know that the event was happening and a couple of them passed by; but that was not an opportunity for me to talk anything through with them.

The project was supposed to achieve art-based research into work. But did it? In terms of the Red portion of the project what was achieved? I need to be clear; it was never my intention to do action research. I had no pretension of changing the work situation in any way. And my research cycle is not in any way an action research cycle. There was no A-R diagnosis, feedback phase, or chosen change strategies; let alone implementation and/or evaluation. I did want to support thought about what the researchees experienced and were doing. Red as I have stressed was a very confronting work situation. Rape, murder, blackmail were daily issues. I suppose nothing surprises people working in Red any more. The danger is that they become so desensitised to horror that their personalities harden. Horror stops phasing them

as it does others. Returning to a theme from the very beginning of my research planning; the danger of zombification is large. But not zombification as I had reflected on it in the past. It is not so much an effect from bureaucratised and alienated work; as from the content they are confronted with. My project in effect reopened the tragic book of horror that they almost have to keep closed on a daily basis. And despite the enormous demands made on them, they felt pretty rightly undercut, not appreciated or adequately respected by the ministry. It seemed they were just seen as tools to catch criminal mis-use of social services, without recognising how demanding their work was. And that sense of powerlessness in the front of the horror was something they voices in the feedback sessions. There was a strong response: yes that is what we have to deal with. Modern day slavery and people dying on the street were all new to me. The learning on my part was certainly intense. And how the horror gets cleaned up so very quickly and efficiently so we do not have to deal with it startled me. The criminal element is much more present, though hidden from view, than I'd ever imagined. The denial leaves Red isolated and allows politics to ignore the problems and issues. Instead of focusing on what is really happening the higher ups impose targets; so many convictions per year. The result is that they have to go for the low hanging fruit to meet the requirement and ignore the higher ups in the criminal organisations who are really important. Less more important convictions would really be more valuable; but there was no way to change the rules.

### **(ii) The Second Series**

In the paintings coming from the second 'Green' iteration of the research cycle the colour pallet is much more limited. All five paintings are the same size (1.00 by 1.20 meter) and there is illegible writing done in black present, mainly as background, in all of them. In one painting (GP1) there is only writing, placed on two different planes and in one painting there is a shadow figure defined by writing (GP2) that is more closely cropped than in the rest of the background to produce a figure. In four of the paintings, the colour scheme is virtually limited to black, white and blue. This series is much more cohesive as a series in terms of the use of colour, the compositions, and the sketch-like style of figuration. The fifth painting (GP5) has a face drawn in reds and browns and thus a somewhat different colour scheme. The difference in the use of colour with the first series is major.

A first reflection on the choice for text and blue: the researchers read, process and produce text. Their work is text. And blue is the dominant colour of dress. The dress is

dominated by blue and grey, especially among the men. There is some contact between the figure in RP3 and the one in GP2; but the sphere between the two series is quite different. There are two different artistic languages in play here. Certainly, the data overload in Green triggered the use of illegible text. The illegibility is crucial; several researchees had complained that they were asked to do things that made no sense to them. In effect they were forced to start with the required results and then work backwards. Obviously, this does (not) match up with social science research ethics. With questions coming from parliament, they often knew what the politicians wanted to hear; and then the question was what to give them in return. Parliamentary questions are all too often 'fishing trips' where the politician is trying to prove the her or his assumptions are right. Often the questions came from the leftist opposition parties who were trying to find evidence of increased social injustice. It occurred that the researchers adopted an attitude of: 'We'll just create an answer for you, so you will shut up and go away'.

GP1 was the first made in the series. In it there are no persons, just text. The idea behind it was that there is a world of text; the researchers make a window to examine that text and highlight some aspects, but ultimately their actions do not make things much clearer. It seemed that the researchers often had a whole lot of data which they then boiled down to something more compact, but none of this actually created any added clarity or any new insights. The frustration that often the data was old, so as soon as the project was finished you start all over again on to work the question, triggered the image. There was all too much of the myth of Sisyphus about it all: pushing the rock up the hill until just as one reached the top the rock would roll back to the bottom and then you had to start all over again. Also, they reported being so internally focussed, in effect on protecting their own jobs, that they seemed more to work to produce more work for themselves than to actually solve anything.

Painting no 7 was the second made. It portrays a little man in the corner, with big shadows looming above him. For me he is a sort of brother to the figure in Painting no 3. I think this is the only painting in series two with a strong carry-over from series one. Crucial is the little figure's lack of connection to anything or anyone else. In the lightbulb painting there is the ambiguity of the light bulb ('let there be light') and the open door. In RP3 there is a world outside of that of the figure; in GP2 that is much less clear. The visual language of the second series is much more hermetic or closed-in on itself than what there was to see in series one. The Greens were complex: they really seemed rather pleased with themselves. They had safe

jobs and privileges. But in the paintings, they do not look at all happy. The figure in Painting no.7 seems to be squashed into a corner of the painting and to have a dunce cap on. He looks more like a victim than a 'happy camper'. And the shadow has an arm stretched out as if giving a speech or some such thing; while the little man has his hands passively in his lap. Direction comes from the shadows and not from the self. M in the interview stressed how he succeeded with the text on-demand as ordered up. But there was already in his first interview a sense of unease. Downtrodden and thrust into the corner; that was not M's initial story. But his subsequent burnout confirms such a reading. The little man in the corner does not have agency; he's not empowered to do what he wants to do. He cannot even stand up. Was my intuitive rendition of the interview prescient? It seems that way.

In Painting no 10 the key symbol of the first series reappears: the red tape. I saw it as a graph; that is, as the typical data display. But indeed it is 'red tape'. The expression on the figure's face is definitely not happy. And the back of the head dissolves into the nothingness of text and empty space. In effect, he has no ears; he cannot hear anything. It is possible to read some of the text; and it is all very negative, disillusioned, cut off from the world.

When I have given papers at art-based research seminars I have tended to focus on GP3. I think that is because it is the easiest to 'read'. It tended to be the painting that the participants reacted the most strongly to. GP5 seems to have been too confronting for many. The red line (or tape) seems to have been too direct. They saw it as 'complaining' and that evidently really was taboo. It sometimes got side lined. No one showed anger to me that I had painted this or that; but there was occasionally an expressed rejection of this or that painting. The reactions were contradictory in a way: sometimes rejection but acknowledgement that what was rejected was in a sense 'true'. M did seem to feel that I was very critical and perhaps should have shown more positive feelings. But his work-related burnout has obviously mitigated how his comments need to be understood.

My favourite is GP3. I was fascinated by the reactions. Some saw the character as clean, as the leader who was creating order and giving direction. He was supposedly the manager giving directions. I saw him as very negative; more like a con man with slit like reptile like eyes. I painted it when I was very angry. It had been publicly announced to my colleagues that I had been appointed to a permanent position as a researcher. My position on a temporary research contract was coming to an end and I was uncertain what would happen next. I had been told that an extension of the research contract was not possible. In reality the research



contract was prolonged for an additional six months. But after having been congratulated by my boss for a job well done and seemingly appointed to a fixed research post; the appointment fell apart. My boss did not have the OK of HR to appoint a new researcher; the department was over budget and the higher-ups were not willing to appoint anybody. I felt humiliated and betrayed. My personal feelings of oppression and injustice were very strong. It was then that I painted GP3. The 'leader' was a charlatan for me; his promises untrustworthy. My research position turned out to be to a group that was planned on paper but never came to fruition. It was a job that ultimately did not exist. In the end I was appointed to a permanent position, but a totally different one. The job I was initially meant to do involved researching social and anti-discrimination policy in Canada. Disability policy supposedly was much better worked out and implemented there and they wanted someone who was fluent in English to compare the Canadian policy with the Dutch and to try and draw conclusions for our policy development. Canada supposedly had stricter anti-discrimination legislation than everyone else and the hypothesis was that The Netherlands could follow their lead. But as far as I know the research was never realised. I had a (fleeting) title and task; it just never happened. It was announced and then I never heard anything until I demanded to know what was going on and was told it was just not going to happen. My temporary research position was Red, even though I did not have a Red security clearance. The job that did not materialise was Green. I was much closer to Green. At the time of the job coming and not being realised I was completing the paintings for Green. The manager who had announced my new position avoided me for quite a while. I really had to track him down to get an explanation of what had happened. His own position was uncertain and his assigned tasks were not turning out all that well. I suppose he did not dare to really defend my position as his own had become somewhat insecure. How things actually happen are often not how they really do happen. Sometimes you can force matters and get results; sometimes it fails. When it fails you make enemies and create resentment. The successes can outweigh the failures; but it is a risky business. I am no longer angry about the incident; but at the time I was. Often the decision-making process is dysfunctional and nobody dares to take a decision. If you force matters, no one may dare to oppose you and you can get a lot done. But it is a high-risk strategy and you can hurt people along the way. As a manager you can bet that before matters implode you will have moved on and that your failures will not catch up with you. That will work some of the time, but not always.

In retrospect I am very happy for having had the opportunity to do the research and for having gotten a permanent position. But now I want to change functions to do something

more serious. My position in that sense is now typically Green. It is not the worse job in the world, but it is not challenging enough. Things in Green ultimately are OK, but there is a lot more wear and tear that I think necessary. I think that sense of bruises and things being bruising can be felt in the paintings. There are no suicides or total disasters; but many people leave, frustrated. In my opinion, too many people get overworked from the lack of direction. Few people say: 'If I could get a job anywhere else I would'. Most are happy with the salary, say that the hours are good and thus they feel comfortable. The building is OK; there are some issues with the heat and light, generally all the equipment is very good (chairs, desks); we get free coffee and the food is fine. The coffee isn't that great but it is free. We're kept comfortable. The Ministry is a sort of golden cage. I think that the feeling of 'enlightened imprisonment' is strong in the paintings. We are locked up and it is very difficult to get out because you adapt to the way of working and to the ease existence.

Leadership is weak, people are afraid of one another and they do not communicate terribly well. Leadership seems to be scared of being held responsible for their actions, so they do not make any choices. Things have been like this for the last five years. The status quo stays that way because no one wants to make the choice of intervening because a change effort could fail. Before the austerity politics post-2008 hit, the Ministry had the reputation of having an excellent research department. But to save money the seniors were either eliminated or not replaced. Ministers from the Conservative parties did not want good research. They only wanted to reduce expenditure and eliminate benefits for the poor. It was politically expedient to weaken the research function. Ministers who did not want criticism, in effect did not want the research unit to function; they created a non-functioning research unit that matched their political agenda. Since I have been there has been no strong research agenda. Research puts out 'brush fires' and that is about it. I suspect that globalised neo-capitalism does not need strong research units into discrimination and the abuse of labour.

Really the researchers are very limited in their career path. You come in as a junior researcher and you can become a senior researcher. And that is just about it. To rise further you have to leave research. If you are ambitious you can become head of the department but then you really are joining management. The organisational culture is to do everything possible so that problems and conflicts do not become visible or (in effect) get solved. It is a 'let's keep everything quiet and just do your thing' culture. Stay friendly and do not rock the boat. Here is a sizeable group that just stay researchers. Basically they feel that they get a nice salary, can

pay their mortgages and their kids are safe. Highly motivated people have burnout and/or move on. It probably is not good for your health to be highly motivated or to push for success. Policy work is very fragile; every four years there is a new Minister and the priorities can shift. As a civil servant identifying with a policy line is rather dangerous. The next minister may not appreciate you at all.

There seem to be two countervailing organisational flows. The dominant one is out to keep everything under wraps, no conflicts, no disruption, continuity at any price. Eventually that line becomes deeply dysfunctional; at a certain moment, elements of disruption are permitted to be introduced. But the dominant culture seems to reassert itself very quickly. The reorganisations are part of the culture of denial. They push out opposition and try to police staff ever more strictly. The outside world has great difficulty having any influence on the Ministry. Reorganisation often simply means that a hatchet man is hired to reduce the headcount and to get rid of 'trouble makers'.

With Red the paintings were almost entirely based on the interviews, but with Green I was a participant observer and what I saw and experienced had an influence. In all the text on the paintings there is written up much of the ideas and impressions presented here. But my handwriting is so poor that it is not readable; and I counted on that. But of the ten persons in the feedback sessions only one showed any aggravation and as already indicated that could be ascribed to his own difficult situation. And he was not really upset, just a bit defensive and irritated. He did not disagree with anything, but felt I was pushing a particular perspective a bit too hard. I did hang out with him; we had lunch together and that sort of thing. But after his burnout and partial return to his job he has kept himself hidden and has avoided contact. It is true that his department has been moved to another building, so I would no longer run into him by chance. Having been moved to another tower they are even more removed from everybody else, which I suspect is not a good thing at all. Red needs more and more space, with the effect that everything else gets moved into other buildings. Maybe Green research will be absorbed into the research department of the rest of the Ministry. Green as part of the Inspectorate is much more socially conscious and directed much more to labour abuses than is the main research department. If Green was to be absorbed into the dominant culture; its economics and efficiency driven priorities would prevail. The control at present is passive-aggressive. No one will criticise your research. They will never tell you that your research is

bad or anything like that. They will just scrap your funding. Suddenly you have nothing any more to do and you feel yourself threatened.

I see I am foreshadowing here the theme of resonance or of the need for relatedness. All my descriptions and thinking behind the paintings has had to do with relationship and relatedness. With Red the relatedness to outside, to the victims of exploitation and criminal violence, is very strong. With Green that dimension of relatedness to the world outside is very weak. A Ministry of Social Affairs does inherently have something to do with the nature and quality of relationships. But strange things happen to content in a bureaucratised context. I have always used my paintings as a way of organising my thoughts. It is not that I drew my conclusions and then illustrated them in the paintings. No, I painted to work through what I felt and to give it form. I am not first a social scientist or a rationalist; I am first an artist. I did not illustrate ideas with art; I discovered reality via the art and after the fact I conceptualise matters. This thesis does not begin with theory and an hypothesis; it began with a context and activity, these then led to my findings and lead eventually to theoretical reflection. Art-based research can exploit art to assert a thesis; then the art is purely illustrative and is not used to think, reflect or discover. Such research strategies do not, in my opinion, do justice to art. They exploit the artistic to make their conceptual points; but they do not explore reality or circumstances in an artistic manner. Art is not their means of research; it is just a means of dissemination.

I paint to organise my thoughts. Painting for me is a way of working through what I experience. In Green I felt an enormous disconnect between the themes and issues, if you wish the content, of the work, and the researchees actual awareness or speech. It was as if the content did not really exist for them. It seemed that they were being kept in the dark about the real intent behind their assignments and the goals that have been set. Was it really all directionless as they seemed to feel; or was there a directionality that was hidden from them?

Green reminded my of herding cats. There is a British panel show called 8 Out Of 9 Cats and it has a funny sketch about herding cats. There was a basket of kittens and the talkshow host, Jimmy Carr, who unsuccessfully tried to keep the kittens in the basket, but they just kept escaping and running all over the place. Carr was playing with the kittens and it was great fun to watch. Everyone of course was oohing and awing as the kittens were very sweet. But eventually Carr got desperate and had to ask for help from the television crew. He could not control the kittens. Green tries to do things but they do not know if what they are doing is

actually working. The time span is very short term and not under their control. There is no long-term vision revealed to them. Some of them really are struggling with the that fact that they do not know how to position themselves. There is a lot insecurity and it is very hush-hush. You do not discuss your insecurities; it's just not done. None of this is directly imposed by anyone up above. The situation is it simply too threatening and everyone runs away from the uncertainty. The absence of guidance; the inability to ask for help from your superiors makes it so frightening. The kittens running all over the place is disorienting. With the kittens you tend to assume that there is a mother cat somewhere who can control it all. But for Green that sense of control, security or of ultimate order just is not there.

We will see that Rosa thinks that relatedness ultimately is there and is essential. The need for relatedness and order was clear to me; but the assurance that in the last instance it is there, or can be there, I am less sure of that. But I am getting ahead of myself; these are themes for the discussion of Rosa's conceptualisation which is yet to come.

The Ministry is very functionalist. Ultimately there are results and the pieces somehow form some sort of order. Given the level of chaos and insecurity of the contemporary society the level of insecurity and vagueness may be inevitable. Perhaps I expect more order than I have any right to expect. Perhaps I am more a Modernist than I realise. Am I demanding goals and reasons throughout? Is this an unreasonable demand? Maybe there are no goals, and no reasons, and no structures with closure. Rosa claims that we have accelerated ourselves into total confusion. Are we doomed to muddle through, without cohesion, order or goal-directedness? But relatedness is what saves us from burnout and that is important. In Green the researchees did not really care about the social implications of their projects. They just do the work, more or less blindly, as if they were aimlessly moving pieces around on a chessboard. As long as they can keep everything in their 'comfort zone' the work inches along.

My project was not even Action Research; there was no pretension to change anything. The project was supposed to give the researchees space for self-recognition. They were being asked to look in a mirror and to see whatever they would see. The idea was that the mirror image was a sort of possibility for insight. It remained (metaphorically) a mirror image; thus left and right are reversed. One does not really see oneself in a mirror; one sees a complex reversal that exists in relationship to oneself. If I have to portion the growth of insight between the researchees and the researcher, I suspect that I learned more about them than

they learned about themselves. But do not the researchers always learn more than the researchees?

I can now point to the danger of a breakdown in the culture of the Ministry. The capacity to understand one another and to achieve relatedness is in the danger zone. Is it an accident that the most motivated Green who was the most result driven, and successfully so, collapsed into burnout? Neither Green, nor Red, were zombies in the sense of the Comeroffs (1999). The researchees are not violent and the last thing in the world I see them doing is burning down the building. They have internalised their insecurities and if they torture anyone it is themselves. The South African zombies the Comeroffs describe are unemployed, desperate, poorly educated and profoundly jealous of those with wealth. They imagine that the wealthy have zombies doing all the work for them in the middle of the night and that is why there are no jobs left for them. Thereby they become themselves zombies, in the sense of out of control violent gangs who root and murder. The key to the analysis is that the violence comes from the growing divide between the rich and the poor, and the inability of the poor to understand the social-economic principles governing the world around them. My researchees were zombies in the sense that they also displayed little or no understanding of the social-economic and political context within which they function. But as I have stressed, they perceive themselves more as privileged than downtrodden. There is no uncontrolled aggression towards the institution or the higher ups. If they are zombies, everybody is in it together and the violence is pervasive, but muted. The violence takes the form of endlessly complaining and doing nothing about it. Eventually everyone gets tired of hearing the complaints and shrugs their shoulders and walks away.

Stronger relatedness to one another and to the target groups you work for would seem much more healthy, but it would totally destabilise the status quo. You do not ask yourself why am I doing this in the way I am doing it and survive. The denial of the researchees' agency; is it merely a result of the bureaucratic order of such an organisation, or is there more behind it? Is it a blind result of bureaucratic order or is it by wilful design? Is there someone (someones) who knows (know) what is going on and wants it that way or is it really blind? Of course it could be a combination of both. From the position of the researchees, or myself, there are no answers to these questions. Motivated researchers or detectives who are proactive, in command of their work and take responsibility for their results would demand an almost total change in the power relations.

At best, I increased just a little bit the reflexivity of the researchees. If that is really in their best interest is uncertain. I began with an implicit humanist agenda; I assumed that awareness and autonomy were good things. I discovered that it was not so clear cut. If we look back to the Chris Kuiper research, I recall, we see that he interviewed the physical therapists, drew key concepts out of his data, presented these to artists to be translated into paintings and then organised feedback. His theme, determined by him and not the researched, was what effect was bureaucratisation and protocolisation of physical therapy having on their professional identity. The researched voiced in the research cycle that they were not especially troubled by the changes. And later data demonstrated that the changes actually were very destructive. There are at least two major lose ends to the project. First, what produced the false consciousness shown in the feedback data? Second, was the research method suitable for the theme? The first issue is strongly present in my data as well. Researchees reproduce the required ideological texts of their surroundings. They tell you what they believe they are supposed to tell you. You do not interview just individuals; you interview situated persons who talk to you of and from that situation. If you see the interviewees purely as individuals voicing their personal opinions, you are off-base. The interviewees correctly see the situation as institutionally grounded. You are interviewing them as part and parcel of their context, and to a certain degree it is the context that talks to you. Only if something goes very wrong in the relationship between the persons and the context do they, I believe, start to talk to you from outside the context. I interviewed inside a context and a lot of what I heard was essentially also inside of that context. What they told me was at least just as much collective as individual. The research was situational and I understood it that way. I fear that Kuiper thought he was interviewing individuals and assessed their agency in the situation incorrectly.

The second question follows on the first. Is this sort of art-based feedback useful to test an hypothesis. I answer 'No'. The project model gave me access to the Ministry. Without an efficiency or organisation goal I could relate to the researchees and get to know their stories. As a way of getting to know Other I think the model is entirely successful. But it is just because I had no prior hypothesis or thesis that I could work effectively as a researcher. Neither implicitly, nor explicitly, was I out to get a predetermined result. I had only one objective, listen and reflect artistically. I was not problem-solving or testing a theory. I think my radical neutrality made it possible to listen in a way that I never could have done if I had had a thesis to defend or explore. The researchees reported back that they felt themselves heard. Indeed, heard and interpreted; as the paintings of course are interpretative. The researchees did

always feel that what I had painted was what they would paint. They voiced the opinion 'I see what you have done; I would do x or y differently'. But I do not see that as a weakness of the project but as a strength. The paintings were close enough to them that they entered into dialogue with them and sometimes disagreed. In most research there is no dialogue. The social scientist speaks a totally different language from the researched. The researched are silenced by the language of research. They do not say: 'I would have looked more to Durkheim, you are too close to Weber for me'. Understandably, the sociologist's language, for instance, is most often divorced from the language of the researched. I see it as an enormous advantage that I 'spoke' a language that my researchees could understand, address and talk back to. But by bringing research much closer to an authentic relationship with the researchees I do lessen the theoretical or abstract dimension to the research. Proximity comes at a price.

The research I believe does display some profound existential issues within the Ministry, without proposing any solutions. This can be frustrating for the reader. But it is how Red and Green actually are. I do not think the research ultimately is all about the ten researchees. Both samples revealed shared or collective patterns. In so far as the researchees revealed quirks of character or personality these have not been reported here. I think you could swap the persons around within Red or Green and the results would stay pretty much the same. I am convinced there is a Red story and a Green story. It is a privileged organisation in that it does not have to make a profit. It is not Unilever trying to sell ice cream. Nobody is going to close down the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs; well probably not at least in this century. The educational level of the employees puts them in the top 20%. Their task is to implement and research policy issues having to do with the efforts to defend the weak and exploited in society. Red feels itself petty strongly connected to the goal; Green much less so. Maybe they are far too self-centred, defensive and preoccupied with self-justification. With Green you can question their emotional ability and willingness to relate to the policies 'target groups. I started the project hoping to see move affect and movement; I should not blame the researchees that this did not happen. I need to turn back and review my assumptions. The researchees either cannot (Red) really shift in their identity, or are not willing (Green) to do so. Even though I was and still am on the margins of the organisation, the dilemma in relatedness is slowly becoming my dilemma as well. I must not take on the 'victim' role; it is the easy way out and probably the most common excuse for passivity in my sample. The victim does not have to take responsibility for her/his actions. As an artist I had and have agency. But somehow



writing policy texts that no one reads, or going to meetings where nothing is ever decided, seems more 'real 'than painting. The challenge is to enact a research strategy that remains active. My effort will be to challenge Red and Green with Rosa's principle of Resonance. The paintings were an experiment in resonance; an attempted act of relatedness. What I still want to do is to voice and defend the principle of relatedness focussing on why it is crucial to answering the issues I have pointed to.

## CONCLUSIONS

The project which formed the basis to this thesis was designed to be an exemplary investigation, grounded in art-based research, focussing on resonance in the work context of two portions of the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs. One portion (Red) focuses on Investigation into crimes involving human trafficking, abuses of welfare entitlements, exploitation of (often foreign) workers. The other (Green) does research in support of the Inspection of health and work situations. Resonance was my theme. When I was initially designing the project I focussed on terms such as 'integrity' or 'authenticity'. From the very beginning my intention was to do art-based research. I had a BFA from the Royal Academy and an MA in media studies from Leiden University. Art and research were fundamentals to my identity. Art, as making paintings, exhibiting in galleries and selling one's art, no longer seemed to be a viable alternative. Post-2008, more galleries had closed than remained. Selling yourself in the art scene was never an option for me. I am no good at 'making advertisements for yourself' and find it demeaning. But also, I feel that art needs to escape the gallery-scene and (re-)position itself more in the society than as a luxury good far away from most everyone. Art-based research much better matches my perspective than does exhibiting in galleries.

'Authenticity' as a term is very artist directed. I had the term from Eric Fischl's book. It appealed to me because it focussed on art as human and social significance and meaning and not as hyper-consumption. But many of Fischl's later best paintings show the 'spoiled social classes' in art galleries; while his earlier work focuses on the boredom and despair of the sterile suburbs. In Fischl it is the artist's integrity versus the world. The opposition may be justified, but the polarization did not match what I really wanted to do. My 'authenticity' too quickly implies your (someone else's) 'bad faith'. Thus, I had to find another way to frame what I wanted to do.

Via a fellow PhD student, the possibility of becoming an intern-researcher in the Ministry of Social Affairs opened up. And 'resonance' emerged as a concept bringing together my intention and the research setting. Resonance comes from sound which is 'full and reverberating'. I took it to mean, rich in significance and affect. Hartmut Rosa had written a whole book about 'resonance' which gave me a much fuller idea of what the

term means and what I could do with it. I agreed with Rosa's premises but not with how he applied them to practice, especially artistic practice. That gave me a theoretical goal: that is, to show how resonance should be applied as an alternative to how Rosa does so in his examples. There are two spots in *Resonance* where Rosa talks art: one in the beginning where he sketches ideal types of resonating and not-resonating behaviour; and one several hundred pages later where he is discussing vertical resonance (resonance towards the ideal, metaphysical, meaning). Resonance in Rosa is all about relatedness, relatedness between two (or more) entities that retain their particularity but therein fundamentally touch one another. In resonance there is always (at least) the dyad; resonance is not holism, it is not total surrender of the one to the other, or of both to some third truth, reality or factor. When you connect and resonate with something, you mutually interact in relatedness. Resonance is not just acknowledgement; it is more mutual, active and interactive than that. Rosa writes about three axes to resonance: horizontal, vertical and diagonal. My focus is on the horizontal axis: where there is cooperation, sociability, awareness and solidarity.

Rosa came to resonance from his prior work on acceleration. Rosa had written repeatedly about how society is continuously moving faster and faster. Whereby people lose touch with themselves, creating problems like burnout. Rosa argues that there are three social systems: that of technology, that of the capitalist economy, and that of individual/social identity and that these three systems are in mutual interaction of furthering acceleration. The technological and economic stimuli build up, putting increased pressure on the ability to react. Stimuli overwhelm people who just do not know how to respond to anymore. The persons dehumanize as they become less able to feel competent or involved. The analysis was very pessimistic: the systems intensify further and further, destroying ever further human relatedness. The theory resulted in a sense that 'we're doomed'. The resonance book came as a sort of answer to the accelerationist threat. Simply slowing down was not an option; the underlying social-economic-psychological systems were too powerful, making that not realistic. Reconnecting or strengthening the connections you have to your surroundings emerged as Rosa's strategy. Rosa argues that connectedness is ontically certain: the mother/child, the intergenerational process of education, etcetera all establish relatedness as a fundamental

ontic structure of the human condition. Rosa continues to argue that resonance is an ontological necessity: it is inherent to the human to want, need, seek social relatedness. Acceleration drives us into disassociatedness; resonance is inherent to honouring our social being.

A Ministry of Social Affairs, I would assume, is all about social necessity and, in effect, resonance. The Ministry as a workplace, I again would assume, needs resonance for its employees wellbeing and to successfully fulfil its mission. Afterall, the Ministry has as its task the enforcement of social legislation, the protection of the weak and exploited, and the drafting of social legislation in support of fairness, safety and justice. Contact with varied target groups is necessary to accomplish the tasks.

But Rosa's examples did not reassure me that he had found a successful practical way to support resonance. The example that troubled me the most is one of two artists that basically are competing for a commission. They have to present a painting in two weeks' time. The one artist starts by collecting all the things that he needs. He meticulously gets all the brushes, paints, everything that he needs, until the night before the due date, he starts painting. The other artist basically puts on his headphones and starts immediately to paint. Rosa claims that the first artist shows little resonance while the second is resonant. Starting immediately, happily working away, is positioned as 'resonant'. My problem is that I fully agree with the first approach and do not agree with the second. Even as you are collecting all the stuff, you are thinking about what you are going to paint. You start to produce the art in your mind and to ask yourself 'Where am I going with this painting?'. You are 'preparing'. Rosa does not seem to have a feeling for resonance with paint, brushes, easels in an artistic process. Rosa writes that the first artist knows what it is to create a good piece of art and plans accordingly. But he nonetheless fails to understand the inner and complex resonance of the artistic process. Artist two may look very active and involved; but artist one can be the one whose resonance is much more profound. Resonance is not something of appearances; it has to do with fundamentals of relatedness. Rosa's other examples are also dubious. For instance, there are two women where he traces their day from breakfast to evening where the first lady is so positive that I began to think she was 'manic' and the second was so negative that she seemingly was 'depressed'. And there are two men, where the one is highly educated and goes to

museums, and buys books from amazon.de, and the other is a school teacher who takes walks in the forest and has had more issues in 'finding himself'. For some strange reason Rosa seems to assume that if you are ambitious and you work for your goals that you're not resonating. Admittedly showing resonance is a problem. If resonance is a relatedness between a person and an Other in a circumstance, the observer (or the 'third') will have to 'objectify' the resonance if the observer wants to make claims about it. There is an inherent problem with studying resonance; if you make resonance into an 'object' you misform it. My criticism of Rosa is not that he is confronted with the aporia of his theme, resonance; but that he does not seem to see or understand the problem. Resonance as an event of affect poses fundamental problems when you try to theorize it. Theorizing threatens to destroy the object being theorized. Lived relatedness is not a theory but a relational circumstance or occurrence. Rosa I believe is inadequate in showing awareness of the epistemological issues surrounding his theme. I do not see or experience resonance in his examples. He names it; he does not show or display it.

The problem that I have with his examples is that they are so stereotypical or 'over the top' that I do not feel that they are true. Consequently, I do not see resonance. There is no affect, no experience of connecting to something. Rosa, himself, does not seem to be resonating. He continuously talks about people having to resonate, but in his text, there is barely any resonance. He seems to be preaching something that he is not doing himself. Of course, the same criticism can be addressed to me. My reply is that there are moments wherein my own relatedness is revealed or discussed; but that this thesis is not autoethnographic. My intention was to explore resonance situated in the work context of the ministry. My objective was not to inwardly or introspectively explore my own resonance. My means to relating to the ten researchees was primarily via my art. The ten paintings are acts of attempted resonance; and they were actions meant to create heightened relatedness. The researchees speak to the paintings and thereby speak about resonance and relatedness. Not resonance especially with me, but resonance between themselves and their circumstance.

I feel that Rosa gets stuck by a lack of performativity. The conceptualization is important and I agree with much of it; but it demands actualization. That could be achieved in a self-reflective and very literary way; I have attempted it via an interactive art-based

experiment. I believe Rosa actually got stuck because he could not activate resonance as an activity. In his later writing the theme of 'unavailability' gets stronger and stronger. In resonance there is a necessary unavailable element. The one never totally knows the other; for there to be a relationship there have to be two entities that connect, but each entity has to remain a singularity for the dyad to not collapse into a monad. In personal resonance the Other must not be possessed or totally 'known'; some 'unavailability' must persist. Resonance requires difference.

When I started at the Ministry, I felt that the effects of accelerationism were very clear. People were clearly being pushed to work harder and harder and were losing their connection to the work. The work was reduced into piecework. You did one small task and handed the project on to the next person. There was no overview; involvement was discouraged. A sense of engagement with target groups was discouraged. There was no real connection to the poor, exploited, victimized, etcetera. The goals are abstractions, vague categories, situations and people one never actually sees. The researchers never really see the results of their work. It is much too much organised like a factory. The Ministry should represent 'care'; not just care for the target groups but also care for the people working there. Just in that I did not agree with Rosa's examples, I thought I could find better ones. The theory shouts to be put (better) into practice. I had already made my choice for art-based research before I read Rosa. Reading Resonance was a sort of 'ah ha' experience; this is a way to frame what is crucial to the project. This is a way to explain what is at stake in such a project. And I felt strengthened and much more sure of myself, with Rosa on my side. Now, with Covid-19, the disaggregation, with everyone working from home, is even worse than it was. But before the flex-work already meant that you never really knew where someone was. You couldn't just stand up and go to someone's desk and talk to them. First you had to figure out where they were and even if they were in the building at all. Flex-work was sold as a way to create productivity, but in reality it created more barriers and distance. Rosa is attempting a response to such phenomenon. But he never puts it into practice. What I was doing was basically putting his theory into practice. But we split ways very drastically over 'moralism'. There is too much 'it's either good, or it's bad' in Rosa. I do not think resonance is ever entirely achieved or ever totally

thwarted. The extremes are not liveable. More resonance was needed; but relationality is always partial and precarious.

My project is a small experiment; it attempts to be exemplary. That is, to point to an important worthwhile possibility. I cannot say that I am changing the organization. The scale of the project is far too small for that. And I never had (or could have gotten) permission for an organizational culture change. My project was like a drop of water on a hot plate. It could produce some indications; reveal possibilities that are worth investigating.

I worked with the two groups, the one from the criminal investigation side of the ministry (Red) and the one from the research support unit (Green). My work with Red was done at the beginning of the the research period where the researched had to explain a lot to me. Their culture is much more 'factual'. What they work on is much more clear, and the people in a way are much more goal oriented. Most of them are former police agents. Very 'we see a problem, let's get it done'. The other (Green) group does research in support of policy development. They are much more in touch with the bureaucracy of the organization. The first group is in contact with a lot of nasty stuff; they really go into the field. The second group are rarely so directly connected. The differences in clearance to data makes for a strong divide between the two groups as Red are not allowed to communicate openly with Green. You see the difference back in the paintings. The Green paintings are all about text and (the lack of) meaning. The Red paintings are much more about people and situations. Green resonance has much more to do with collegial work and ideation; Red resonance addresses social inequality, powerlessness and exploitation. Disassociation is a Green problem; emotional exhaustion is a Red problem. In Red there is more passion about the work. When I was doing the interviews, Red was very badly understaffed and overworked. The Ministry was overstaffed and was not allowed to hire. But extra economists in the Ministry's policy branch had no skills that could be put to work in Red. Ultimately Red got budget to hire; but then integrating new hires was something that took a lot of time and energy. The stress was excessive. Support from management seemed to be insufficient. Who is responsible for what was always a big issue no one ever knew and it was kept very vague. That way more and more pressure was on people lower in the organization.

I was originally told that I should let the researchees talk about their feelings and motivation, whereby the recent reorganization would be a key theme. On my first day, I basically was told 'You're not allowed to look at the reorganization we don't want to hear anything about that. It is a hot topic. We want people to get on with their work without complaining.' It was a shock. I had access, I had a research internship, but I no longer had a theme. I knew I was to make paintings to be used in a feedback loop. But I would have to redefine the research goal. I was wondering, should I ask for budget for the painting materials? I quickly decided not to ask, because as soon as I would ask for a budget, there would be issues with who owns the paintings after i'm done. And there is always a chance of conflict if you are looking critically at or inside an organization. I wanted to maintain full control over my data and over my paintings.<sup>8</sup> My first actual day in the Ministry I felt as if I had been kicked in the face by issues I was ill-prepared to meet. My research internship was suddenly (at least on the content level) under attack. Okay I was not allowed to investigate the reorganization but what would that mean for my project? I could not really stop people from talking about the reorganization; if i in my interviews people would start talking about the reorganization that was fine by me. But I must not instigate it. But if it was such a hot topic I assumed (correctly) that they would talk about it anyway. This was my baptism into the culture of the organization. Quickly you learn that we work on the behest of the minister. Anything you produce that can get the minister in trouble is forbidden. I do not think the minister is all that bothered, but everyone else is.<sup>9</sup> I am not and never intended to be in change management. I never thought that my project had the scope to make organizational change happen.

So I got down to interviewing two groups, each of five, staff members. And I made my paintings based on those interviews. The paintings were not done one-on-one (i.e. one painting based upon one person's interview). I did not want to provoke possessiveness: 'That is my painting; that is yours or theirs'. Resonance has to do with relatedness and not exclusive possessiveness. Each set of five paintings was my working through of the shared and collective experience of the cohort's interviews. The paintings are meant to resonate

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<sup>8</sup> Actually, after the fact, my relation with the Ministry in terms of the art has been exemplary.

<sup>9</sup> I ran rather often into the minister in the underground parking lot where he would come to smoke with the chauffeurs.



my experience of each cohort and to invite the cohort members to talk to the paintings as if they were talking to a small collective. Shared feelings, common attitudes, collective emotion was the theme. I hope that the paintings reflected relatedness and would provoke reactions of relationship. My goal was to render relatedness and not individual identity. The paintings are not (however abstract) meant as individual portraits but as shared event and commonality. I hoped for: 'I can see aspects of my work here, and something I have felt there, and I really want nothing to do with that'. I hoped for rich, complex and varying responses. There is lot of distancing in the Ministry. People stay very separate and detached; they create gaps between themselves. Bundling them together in a set of five paintings and asking for responses that pertain both to themselves and to others in the group, was quite radical. The task I set them to examine, label and talk to the paintings entailed a different sort of relatedness than they are really used to. My goal was that they would resonate to circumstance, work and one another 'on the canvas'. My biggest concern (and risk) was whether the paintings would work successfully; would my art successfully resonate in relationship to them. Would they accept the premise that the paintings were something to dialogue with. The project depended on the paintings being implicitly accepted as a resonating presence. Of course, that is what I want my art always to do; to be a point of relatedness wherein the viewer expresses and has contact via the art with her- or himself. The risk of art-based research is that the art has to succeed. Poor or weak art will not succeed in art-based research.

The researched first met the paintings stacked against the wall. I asked them to: (i) look at the paintings, (ii) put them in order, (iii) choose a title for the paintings; and to talk me through what they were doing. I did everything I could that their experience would not be framed by my choices. I wanted them to create the situation and the relatedness and not predetermine what went where. I wanted it to be their relatedness that counted. I wanted them to feel that they were in charge by giving them as much control over the situation as I could. Normally, of course, you do not touch paintings; but here you had to. I invited them to move the paintings around the space however they saw fit. Hereby they immediately had a physical connection with the paintings; they immediately had to touch them. The tactile dimension was evoked; which has a tendency to create more openness. Each person started looking at the paintings and moving them around. They were walking

around, putting things here and then there. I think because they were active in the space that they were immediately less guarded. They were not sitting behind a table as they do all day either in meetings or looking at computer screens. Moving about, they just started talking. In the interviews they were nervous and much less relaxed. There was fear of researchers; normally they lead to reorganization, labour intensification and all sorts of problems. When the organization hired a researcher was almost always to increase productivity, and cut costs. Organization research was to 'tighten the belt', not to benefit the people doing the work. I had asked about how they felt about their work, which had immediately reduced the sense of threat.

My worst fear was that my data would not reveal anything. For very long I researched without writing. I did the interviews. I made the paintings. I conducted the feedback sessions, all without writing. I only started to write after the whole project was complete. Only the last twelve months have I been writing. On the one hand that meant that my data was not contaminated by my writing. For the thesis I really have to reify the concepts. Both resonance and art-based research had to be written up as if they were stable, knowable, fixed objects. In a thesis you cannot say 'resonance is sort of this, but a bit like that, and maybe lost in these uncertainties'. Likewise, you do not say 'art-based research has been made popular by linking it to exaggerated claims and inferior art'. You have to present the 'best case scenario' for your methods and the concepts you use. I was enormously relieved when I started to work through all the material I had collected and saw that there really was consistency and results I could be proud of. It would have created a lot less tension if I had cheated more and massaged the data collection process to confirm predetermined assumptions. My research-based honesty was more a product of writer's block and insecurities than a thought through research design. I was constantly afraid that the results would turn out to be all over the place and that I would be stumped to make a statement. I had collected everything and I had not written. In the end it was actually quite easy to make sense of it all. The interviews led naturally into the paintings and in the reflection sessions the response to the art led from self to resonance and affective relatedness. It all just happened by itself. I was shocked and am still stunned by how little resonance there is in the daily operation of the ministry. I am appalled that the leadership does not seem to see or to be sensitive to the problem. Working so estranged

from one another is painful and I agree with Rosa, it is almost unnatural. The biggest surprise: the research cycle shows that it was much easier than I had ever imagined to initiate a process of resonating. Rosa may be right, resonance may indeed be ontically present and just laying right in front of us waiting to be enjoined. In the Ministry there is much too much attention to budgeting and goal-setting and far too little to what we know is important and really counts. What is supposed to be about people and some profound issues of fairness and civility all too often becomes a question 'Is there budget' and 'Is this efficient'.

These comments do not refute or attack Rosa's theory. Economic efficiency in the hyper-consumer society rumbles onwards distorting human relatedness. The size of my sample, of course, was very small. But I really have to be very happy that the Ministry let me do what I did. It was perhaps more laissez-faire than dedication; I think I got approval more because I was an artist and that was seen as unimportant, than because the higher-ups really understood what I was doing. But still I should be grateful that they gave me access, supported me with a research internship, and have kept me on.

Because my objective was purely to produce an exemplary project the size of the sample seems just fine to me. If we doubled or tripled it that would not really prove anything. The sample would still be far too small to be representative. My point was purely to develop a resonance based intervention, wherein art-based research could display a new aspect of dimension of its possibilities.

What could a continuation produce? One can pick up the idea and place it anywhere. The artist researcher is crucial. As I have written I make art for it to resonate and make affective contact. Much contemporary art does not have any such intention. There is much art that is ego-centred and profoundly self-absorbed. There is a lot of art that is emotionless and extremely rational. Only an artist who is performatively committed to a resonance based ethics fits the model of this project. Many artists I do not think would be at all natural for this project concept.

Of course, the project is merely an indication; something that shows a possibility. The project is not limited to Ministries of Social Affairs, or to government institutions at all. The project model could be used to do what I thought I was supposed to do, namely as part of an evaluation of organizational change. But how often do organizations really want

to know what effect their reorganizations are having? Obviously in resonance research the researcher cannot pretend she (he) is an objective observer; the researcher has to be performatively congruent if the interviews (first and second round) as well as the painting are to succeed.

To explicitly apply the project model in an organisation change context one would have to have commitment to creating a better work situation or environment. As Rosa claims, most organizations are gun-ho on technology implementation: that is, recasting themselves as efficient technologies that complete their tasks faster and faster. They are not open for self-criticism and see hierarchical bureaucratization as a self-evident good. Is the work environment of the Ministry of Social Affairs social enough? Is the organization caught in performative contradiction?

Of course, one could use other materials than painting. Photography, for instance is a possibility. Drama and poetry could be engaged in similar experimentation. Too much use of art-based research would probably back-fire. The freshness and singularity of the project was important to its success. Right now, in this text, it is a monologue. Clearly, I have been aware of the dangers of performative contradiction and dissonance. I have accused Rosa of making repeated performative mistakes. There are moments in this manuscript wherein I open up more and try and relate to you the (possible) reader. But my performativity is grounded in the visual art much more than in the written text. Thus, there is a 'second conclusion' that follows this one. Five more (new) paintings that I have made for you.

My hope is that this project is an enabler. An activity that brings me further in integrating art in my social praxis. An action that provided a bit of respect, warmth and companionship to ten of my colleagues. And hopefully something that gives the reader just a bit more hope about our shared ability to circumvent acceleration.

Obviously, the Intermezzo's are the more personal moments in the writing. But, as Rosa says, you cannot be resonant all the time. There are moments of relationship and of successful relatedness, but they are moments. I was like the painter who Rosa does not understand. Periodically, often late at night (or very early morning) the paintings were produced (or produced themselves). The painting was not planned in the sense that I could decide ahead of time that on 17 September I would paint PGR4. The unpredictability of

painting, and often the need for a crisis like necessity to get it done, is entirely recognizable to me. I love to paint and was very engaged as I did so; but I also fear giving myself over to such a radical relatedness necessary for making the paintings. Resonance as relatedness is frightening and dangerous. Rosa does not seem to understand the risks and uncertainties of entering into a radical relatedness with other.

I hope I will have strengthened, just a bit, the field of art-based research. I do not want to idealize art-based research. Art-based projects can fail. They can have no effect at all. They can be a waste of time. They can be used to champion false concepts of 'creativity' and to further the ideology of hyper-performativity, as if business needs art to become even more (accelerationist) entrepreneurial. You could with art-based research touch upon a raw nerve whereby someone reveals that they feel horribly undervalued and become quite upset. I am not a therapist and I am not qualified to provide counselling assistance. Nothing like that happened in my project, but I realise that there is a possible issue of responsibility along these lines in this sort of work.

It I think is evident that my own feelings about the organization are complex. I am grateful but appalled at the amount of accelerationism I see and experience. The paintings have been a way for me to deal with the contradictions and complexities of the situation. I feel that I have to be quite careful to hide certain aspects of my reactions. Is that part of coming to terms with the complexities of resonance or actually the opposite?

As I near the end of this project the question whether or not I will continue to paint has been posed. My immediate answer is yes, of course I will....but why?

"Because I would like to." Is on its own, not really a satisfactory reason and why of course? Why is continuing to paint important for me? Objectively there is no real reason and even if I feel that it makes me happy to paint, it is not that I actually I paint happy things, in fact, the opposite is truer; I paint aggressive, horrid and frightening things. But doing so, this makes me happy in the sense that it helps me to stay sane, with this I mean that painting or in the process of establishing, contemplating an image, a portrait to paint has a grounding, cathartic effect on me, it enables me to address the situations I find myself in, it helps me to decide on a course of action when I am puzzled or feel lost. But more so I enjoy and it get invigorated, energised by the creative process of creating

something, something where the various elements come together to make something aesthetically interesting, how disturbed this image may be.

In the project one of the crucial elements was that I was painting with a relationship to context which clearly defined other people. There were 10 participants who provided the data for inspiration. This way of painting; painting with defined context I would continue if the possibility arose. I believe that art-based projects like this one provide possibilities for visualisation of inner workings, of existing (hidden) problems; of reflexivity which, ultimately benefits organisations and the people working there.#00:09:26.03##00:09:26.03#

The paintings are in fact portraits, not portraits in the traditional way, but portraits in the way that visualise the internal “going-on’s” of the people and situations find themselves in. The biggest tension with Rosa is in representations/portraits. Either we consider no portraits or when he does do portraits they are just flimsy to the point that I actually find them incredible. Portraits as an art form currently are not mainstream; when talking about contemporary art portraits are not what comes to mind. Thus within this project there is experimentation going on from two sides. On one side there is experimentation going on which is a very particular way of thinking of returning to making portraits, in the art academy, when you make a portrait most of the time it is done and seen as a traditional and realistic thing. In fact nowadays art schools do very little in the form of portraiture and when it is being practiced it is generally seen as exercise, not to be the end result.

The whole project has two lines to it, it has the paintings and it has the social science; the paintings and the interviews. Portraiture allows me to bring it down to one thing, for it hits both sides. Portraits for artists these days...Hmm? A contemporary artist who does portraiture? How does that work, what would that be? There are some artists who do it and I’ve mentioned two of them in this text, but portraiture is certainly not mainstream art anymore. And in social science portraits or being concrete, specific, close to other people in what you write and study is also exceptional, not that it is not there, there are people who try it, but it is exceptional. To conclude this thesis and come with

suggestions on what would come next, what should this text produce, what I come to is that there should come more experiments in portraiture. In this project these is a social science/reflective/intellectual element and an artistic element, but both of them are bit out of joint, this thesis is not really what is expected as social science thesis and it is not really what is expected art to be. What this project has achieved is that it just destabilises a bit what is art and it destabilises just a bit what is social science. And it attempts by example to do something that has antecedence in both, but somehow combines them and bring them together. For instance in conceptual art you can see that art become intellectual and actually does all sorts of things where I start to believe that it is no longer art. With certain amount of social science with art, either they are trying to make business more creative in order to make more money, where the art is a farce, or the art is and pretty weak as art and it doesn't really work. The problem is that to really take the art seriously and to be serious about reflexion and concepts and say we want ideas; Rosa's ideas; sociology, philosophy...If we really want ideas and Art somehow to cooperate, this project is an experiment that attempts that. Out of this the only thing I call and feel that I can call for is for people understand the purpose; what is fascinating, what really is exciting about making this combination and to attempt their own experiments in what I now called portraiture. I don't call or want people to imitate this project but to imitate what I attempted to do, what my purpose was with this project. Thus I hope for other people to do more and new other experiments in portraiture.

**CONCLUSIONS: PAINTINGS**



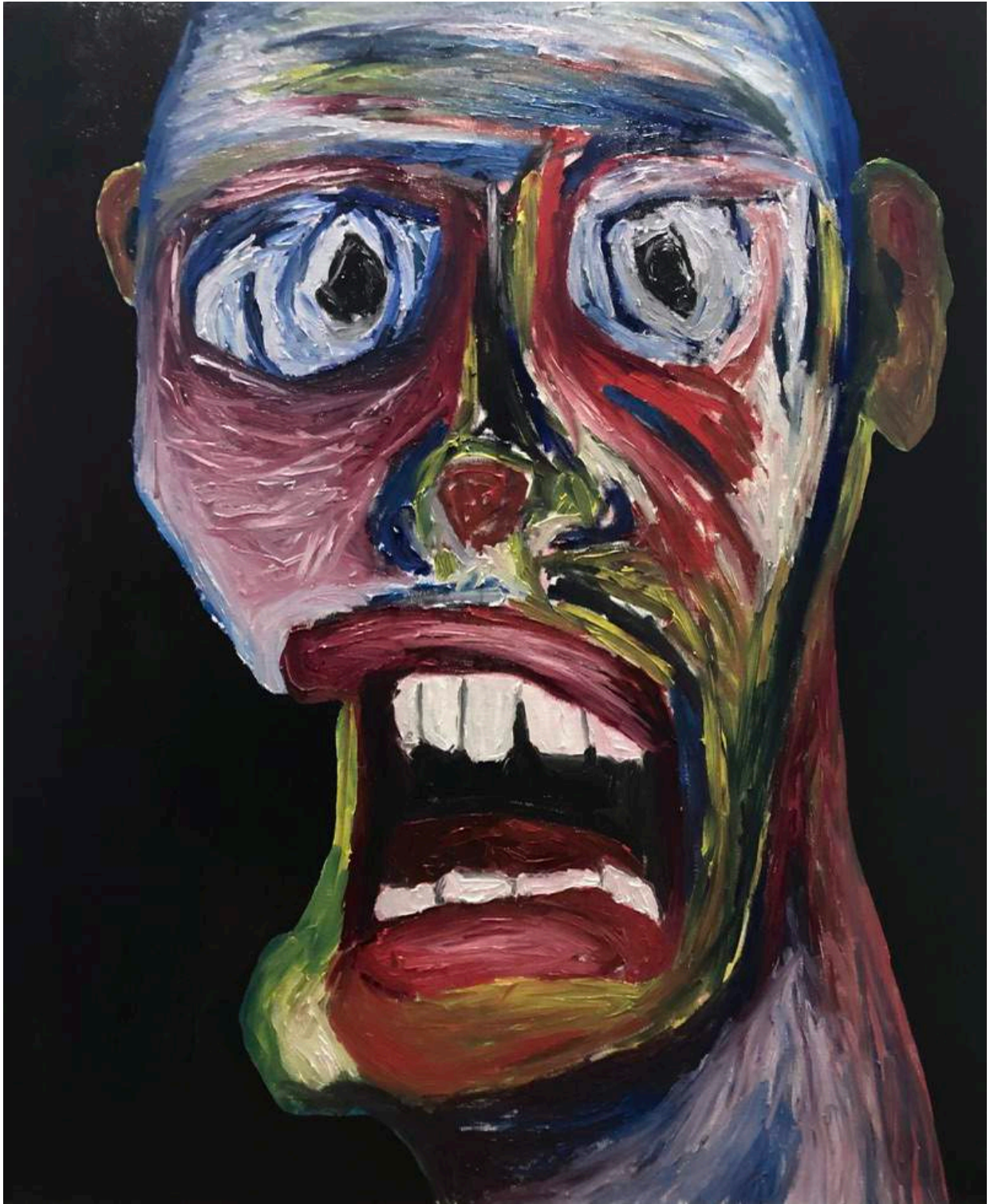
Conclusion Painting 1





Conclusion Painting 2





Conclusion Painting 3





Conclusion Painting 4





Conclusion Painting 5

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**Titre :** La résonance au travail par une voie artistique

**Mots clés :** Rosa Hartmut, Art -- Recherche, Créativité Artistique -- Recherche, Oeuvres -- Peinture, Relations Humaines, Vitesse -- Résonance Philosophie.

**Résumé :** Cette thèse de doctorat rend compte d'un projet de recherche artistique exemplaire, influencé de manière critique par la théorie de la résonance de Hartmut Rosa. Elle étudie la relation des chercheurs avec leur travail et leur situation professionnelle.

La recherche a été menée dans une institution gouvernementale néerlandaise où l'environnement de travail rend la relation problématique en raison d'une bureaucratisation poussée, des processus de travail opaques, du manque de personnel et de moyens, de la surcharge de travail des employés. Ceci se traduit par des niveaux de congés maladie supérieurs à la moyenne et avec des signes d'épuisement professionnel. Une enquête était requise pour voir si une recherche fondée sur l'art pouvait stimuler les relations entre les travailleurs, en s'attaquant à certains des problèmes précédents.

La recherche fondée sur l'art dans le cadre de ce projet a été inspirée par les projets de recherche artistique menés par Shaun McNiff, Chris Kuiper et Philippe Mairesse. Dans chacun de ces projets, l'utilisation d'éléments artistiques avait été cruciale pour établir des relations et un dialogue. Dans la recherche de Kuiper, elle a permis aux personnes recherchées de parler de leur situation professionnelle ; dans la recherche de Mairesse, elle a rendue visible et discutable des structures de pouvoir subtiles des discours. Contrairement à Kuiper (qui a fait appel à un artiste externe) et à Mairesse (qui a construit une installation participative), j'ai interviewé, analysé, peint et organisé les réunions de feed-back.

Avec la résonance, Rosa réagit à ses recherches antérieures sur l'accélération dans lesquelles il déclare que les processus sociaux augmentent perpétuellement en vitesse et en fréquence, alors que les ressources naturelles et les processus naturels comme le temps et la gravité restent constants et que la nature ne peut donc pas suivre la société, et que cela conduit inévitablement à la crise. Rosa affirme que la société ne peut pas être ralentie, arrêtée ou stoppée car cela conduirait à l'effondrement, mais il théorise qu'une augmentation de la prise de

conscience et de la relation au sein des processus clés pourrait éventuellement réduire ou prévenir la crise. Il appelle sa théorie de la relation (*relatedness*) correctionnelle "résonance". J'ai identifié la résonance comme étant cruciale pour la situation des personnes étudiées, mais j'ai été déçu par l'incapacité apparente de Rosa à mettre en œuvre la résonance de manière empirique et j'ai considéré cela comme un objectif pour ma recherche.

J'ai interagi avec deux groupes de cinq participants chacun : je les ai interrogés individuellement, j'ai analysé les résultats des entretiens, sur la base des résultats, j'ai réalisé cinq tableaux par cohorte, j'ai exposé les tableaux lors de séances de feedback individuelles et j'ai étudié les résultats de ces séances. Les tableaux ont été attribués au groupe et non aux individus. Les deux groupes (l'un appelé Rouge, l'autre Vert) remplissent des rôles différents dans l'organisation ; le Rouge est beaucoup plus tourné vers l'extérieur vers les injustices sociales et le Vert est plus tourné vers l'intérieur vers l'élaboration de politiques. Il n'est pas surprenant que les deux groupes soient très différents.

Je pense qu'il s'agit d'un projet de recherche fondé sur l'art réussi. Comme souhaité, les recherches ont été plus ouvertes et réfléchies lors des sessions de feedback en relation avec l'art. Le rôle de l'artiste-chercheur peut être positivement maintenu sur la base de ce travail exploratoire.

Même exploratoire, le projet, tout en soulignant sa pertinence, interroge la théorie de la résonance de Rosa. Il a tenté une exploration empirique que son auteur n'a pas fournie. Certes le projet rend évident le manque de résonance dans la institution gouvernementale néerlandaise (et le dernier gouvernement néerlandais a chuté en partie à cause d'une coupure/du manque de relations avec ses sujets) Mais il montre qu'à trop théoriser la résonance, on perd la possibilité d'entrer en résonance. Résonner est toujours relationnel, toujours dans le concret empirique, ce avec quoi la théorie abstraite et générale de la résonance ne parvient elle-même à résonner.

**Title :** Art-Based Resonance at Work

**Keywords :** Rosa Hartmut, Art -- Research, Artistic -- Research, Oeuvres -- Paintings, Human Relations, Resonance.

**Abstract :** This PhD thesis is the record of an exemplary Art-based research project, which was critically informed by Hartmut Rosa's theory of Resonance. The researched's relatedness to and with work and their work situation was investigated.

The research was conducted at a Dutch government institution with a work environment where relatedness to work has become problematic due to extensive bureaucratization, the black-boxing of work processes, the organization being understaffed and underfunded, employees being overworked resulting in above-average levels of sick leave, with signs of burnout. An investigation to see if art-based research can stimulate relatedness among the workforce, addressing some of the above-mentioned issues had urgency.

The Art-based research within this project was inspired and based on the Art-based research projects conducted by Shaun McNiff, Chris Kuiper and Philippe Mairese; in each of these projects the use of artistic elements was crucial to establishing relatedness and dialogue. In Kuiper's research it enabled the researched to talk about their work situation; in the research by Mairese, it allowed for subtle power structures in discourse to become visible and addressable. Unlike Kuiper (who made use of an external artist) and Mairese (who constructed a participatory installation), I interviewed, analyzed, painted and organized the feedback meetings.

Resonance is Rosa's reaction to his earlier research on Accelerationism wherein he states that social processes are perpetually increasing in speed and in frequency, meanwhile natural resources and natural processes like time and gravity remain constant and nature therefore cannot keep up with society, and that this inevitably leads to crisis. Rosa states that the society cannot be slowed, halted or stopped for this will lead to collapse, but he theorizes that an increase of awareness and relatedness within key processes could possibly reduce or prevent crisis. He calls his theory of correctional relatedness Resonance. I identified Resonance as crucial to the situation of the researched, but I have been disappointed by Rosa's seeming inability to convincingly implement Resonance empirically and have seen this as a goal for my research

I interacted with two groups, each of five participants: individually interviewing them, analyzing the interview results, on the basis of the results making five paintings per cohort, displaying the paintings in individual feedback sessions and studying the results of those sessions. The paintings were pinned to the group and not to the particular individual. The two groups (one called Red, one Green) fulfill different roles in the organization; Red is much more turned outwardly to social injustices and Green is more internally focused to policy development. Not surprisingly the two groups of paintings are quite different.

I submit that this is a successful art-based research project. As desired the researched were more open and reflexive in the feedback sessions in relationship to the art. The role of the artist-researcher can be positively maintained on the basis of this exploratory work.

Although exploratory, the project, while underlining its relevance, questions Rosa's resonance theory. It attempted an empirical exploration that Rosa did not provide. Certainly, the project makes evident the lack of resonance in the Dutch government institution (the last Dutch government fell partly due to the breakdown/lack of relatedness with its subjects). But it shows that if you theorize too much about resonance, you lose the possibility of getting into resonance. Resonance is always relational, always in empirical concreteness, something with which the abstract and general theory of resonance itself fails to resonate.