



time will tell / installation/ sunil puljhun/2010

Publisher and Designer
Richard M. Rawlins

Editor
Richard M. Rawlins

Writers
Christopher Cozier
Nicholas Laughlin

Further Text
paramaribospan.blogspot.com

Photography
Christopher Cozier
Nicholas Laughlin
Richard M. Rawlins
Paramaribo Span
Ingrid Moesan

This 11th issue of Draconian Switch features Paramaribo SPAN. The show is a conversation about contemporary art and visual culture in Suriname, about art practice in a particular location at a particular time. The project has three separate but interconnected platforms: an exhibition, which opened in Paramaribo in February 2010; a book published in three editions (Dutch, English, Portuguese); and a blog, which is at once a journal, an archive, and an independent creative undertaking.

The project is, in part, a culmination of the ArtRoPa initiative, a four-year series of exchanges between artists based in Paramaribo and Rotterdam, intended to promote creative dialogue between these very different locations which are nonetheless linked by elements of history, culture, and language.

This Draconian Switch impression is at the invitation of the curators, Christopher Cozier and Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern. This issue's cover features letters from a current work in progress entitled Paramaribo alphabet utilizing letterforms found around the capital.

An artist's work should speak for itself. The artist's job is to communicate, and the language that the artist speaks is his art. It is the currency of his communication. If no one is understanding or responding, refining that language may work better than simply speaking louder.

At the urging and invitation of Christopher Cozier and Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern, curators of the contemporary art exposition Paramaribo Span, I went to the former Dutch colony Suriname having never been to any of the Dutch 'Isles' and only ever having been as far in the Guianas as Guyana. I was a bit worried about being immersed in a land of many languages and dialects, and primarily my interaction with two of them; Sranan Tongo and of course Dutch, described by one new friend as a serious language, (casting all Naipaul's "Middle Passage" musings aside).

Over the six days I was in Paramaribo, my observations and interactions among the Surinamese and Dutch artists, curators, funders and supporters put my fears to rest. In the simplest of language Paramaribo Span is an exciting show that requires no translation – no need to learn Dutch or Sranan Tongo because the art speaks for itself.

The experience of this corporate consequence, (De Surinaamsche Bank's celebration of 145 years of existence) and creative consequence, (the show is a first

odi/hello

of its kind in Surinamese contemporary art) further concretised my decision to document and record as much of this milestone as possible, in the hope of making a lasting online impression.

One of the Dutch artists participating in the first Artist Conversations, 'Afternoon in the Garden', (attended by some visiting art historians and critics among whom were Annie Paul from Jamaica, Courtney Martin from Los Angeles, Leon Wainwright from the United Kingdom, and Julieta Gonzales from Puerto Rico) noted that attempting to get to the venue he enquired of a Surinamese resident: 'What time does the bus come?' His answer, given with a smile was 'Yes the bus comes here'.

Well yes, the cross-town contemporary art bus between Holland and Surinam certainly made Paramaribo Span a major stop. Literally and metaphorically speaking, participating artists were given so much creative latitude that their work was far beyond the two dimensional and expected. From the performance food lab of Ellen Lighteringen, on through the tattoo parlour of Pierre Bong A Jan, past the video banked urban legalities of Jeroen Jongeleen; the arresting photography of Risk Hazekamp; the soil and pigment alchemy of Casper Hoogzad; the batik tapestry of Sri Irodikromo; the recorded histories of Kurt Nahar; the displacement model of Steve Ammersingh; the photo realism interaction of Daniel Djojoatmo; the supernatural journey of Karel Doing; the wit of Ken Doorson; the musings

of cameraman Jurgen Lisse; a marriage of design and photography by Hedwig (PLU) de la Fuente; the overwhelmingly monumental Moiwana 86 by Marcel Pinas; the overexposure of environment by Bas Princen; the jumpers of Ravi Rajcoomar; the homage to an Adji by Dhiradj Ramsamoedj; poetry performance of Arnold Schalks; the exploratory infringement of space by Otto Snoek; the love movement of George Strikelblok; NLY\$ Navin Thakoer loves you; Rodney Tjon Poen Gie and Sirano Zalman's floating collaboration; three faces of Mels van Zutphen; Hulya Yilmaz's identifiable movements; Jhunry Udenhout's giant chainsaw, right back to the seat of the show on the Fatu Bangie constructed by Roberto Tjon A Meeuw outside the DSB's headquarters, the viewer was immersed in a mind-blowing visual smorgasbord.

There are no bridges between Trinidad and Suriname – or even between Trinidad and Holland, (yet) for that matter – so for me, the opportunity to be a part of the Paramaribo Span family, even if only for a brief moment of the connection between Surinam and Holland, to be a tensioner in this cross-cultural discourse was mind expanding to say the least. As one Surinamese art student said: “There are cells in my brain that have been unlocked”. - Richard M. Rawlins



span x-po fatu bangie
roberto tjon meeuw



alice meets moiwana: christopher cozier, sean leonard, nicholas laughlin and richard rawlins at the moiwana 86 monument in moengo. the eleven metre central pillar by marcel pinas.

Span is a word common to English, Dutch, and Sranan, via different etymologies, and with a range of meanings, nuances, implications. It is the space between two points, the means of crossing that space, a linking or pairing, a tension, a tightening an excitement, a fullness, a reaching out.

notes

NOTES

Span is a word common to English, Dutch, and Sranan, via different etymologies, and with a range of meanings, nuances, implications. It is the space between two points, the means of crossing that space, a linking or pairing, a tension, a tightening, an excitement, a fullness, a reaching out.

The physical and social topography of each city has been changed in recent years by the construction of an iconic bridge. The Jules Wijdenbosch Bridge in Paramaribo, opened in 2000, links the city to the eastern region of Suriname. The Erasmus Bridge in Rotterdam crosses the Nieuwe Maas River and is a conscious symbol of the city's cultural ambitions.

Paramaribo SPAN is itself conceived as a kind of bridge, between histories, social groups, countries, cultures--reaching between realities and aspirations. Between Suriname and the Netherlands, but also between Suriname and the Caribbean, and all the farther-flung locations that contemporary Surinamese artists engage with.

The project is not an encyclopedic survey of Suriname's art history, or an inventory of "national" culture.

Rather, it seeks to start a creative dialogue about individual artists' imaginative sovereignty, about public space and vernacular forms, about new media, about artists' slippery negotiations with the local and the global, and about possible future directions.

The curators, writers, and others shaping the project come from Suriname, the Netherlands, and Trinidad, and draw on a long collective experience of tackling these questions, crossing these bridges.

Public art, it seeks to start a creative dialogue about individual artists' imaginative sovereignty, about public space and vernacular forms, about new media, about artists' slippery negotiations with the local and the global, and about possible future directions.



Co-Curator
Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern

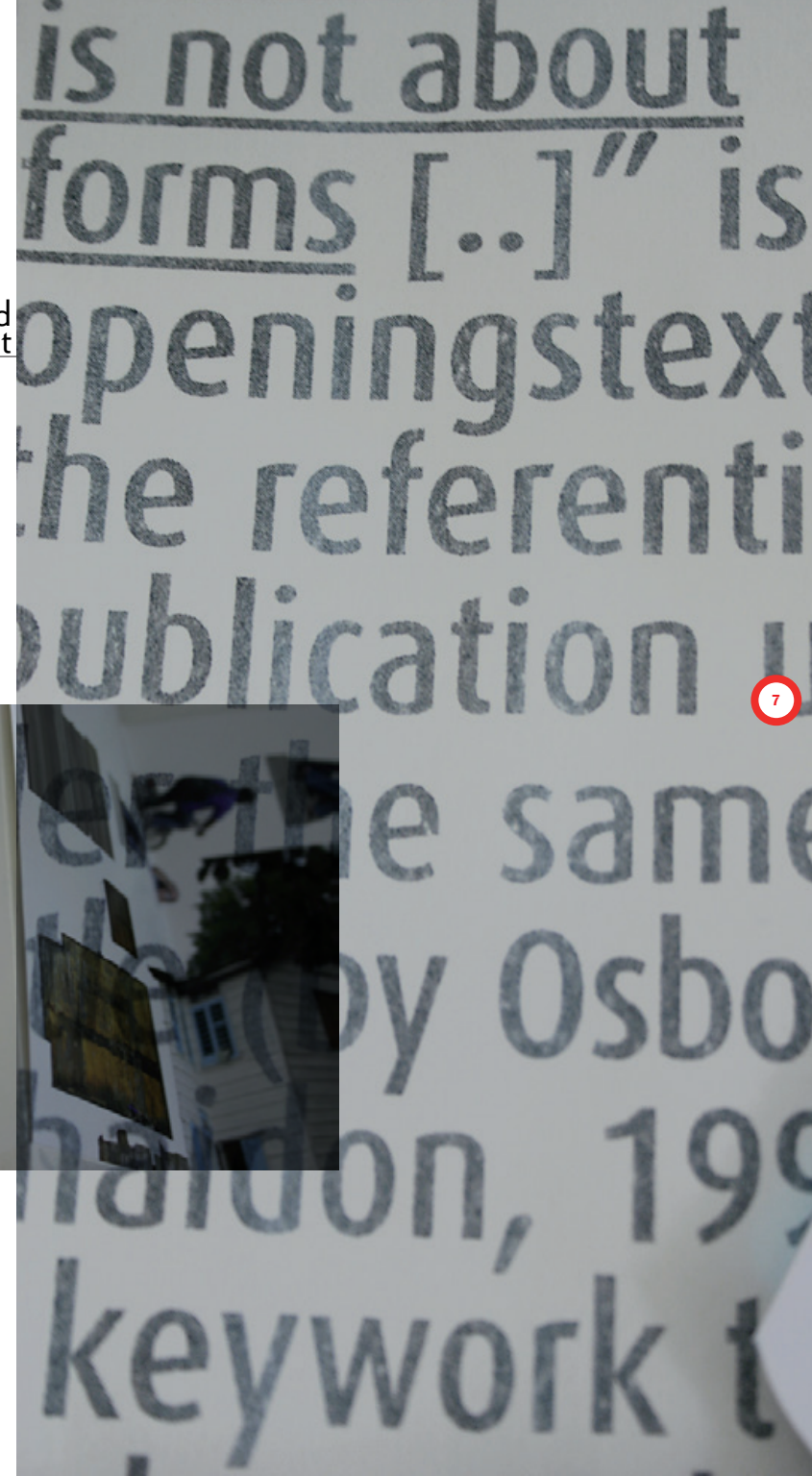
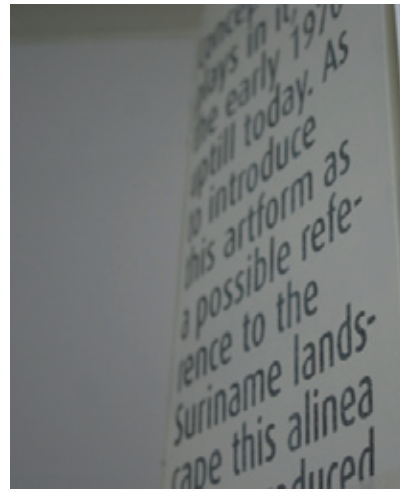
Writer
Marijke Visser

Project coordinator
Ann Hermelijn

Curatorial Advisor
Marcel Pinas

Writer
Chandra van Binnendijk

miscommunications publication/doing the influenza thing/drukwerk, editie 50 | 2010





center top: artist sri irodikromo installing her work for the paramaribo span exhibition
center bottom: detail of artist sri irodikromo's batik work ingiwinti



installation views of man in gold (2010; video loop, 20 minutes)/mels van zutphen

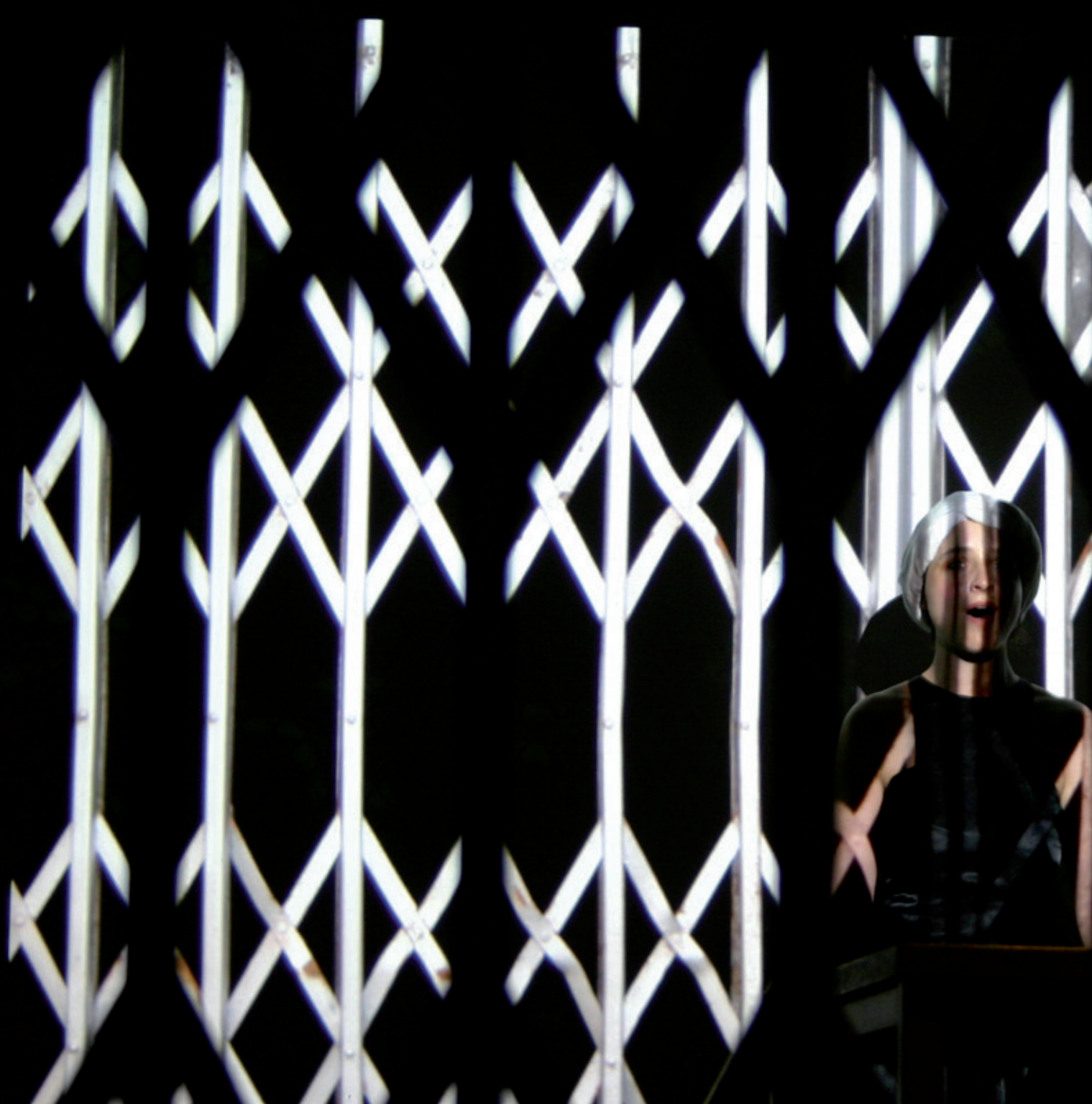
sroto (in the sky of the future, there are no stars), a collaborative performance work by alida neslo, stanley noordpool, arnold schalks, cora schmeiser, and herman snijders

SOMENI TONGO (so many languages) is a community project by the Rotterdam visual artist Arnold Schalks. SOMENI TONGO centres around poetry and recitation.

'Someni tongo' is a line from the poem 'Wan' (One) by the legendary Surinamese poet and elocutionist R. Dobru. Schalks interpreted the line 'someni tongo' as an imperative and had Dobru's poem translated in sixteen languages, that are all spoken in Suriname, namely in: Arowak, Aukan, Chinese, English, Hindi, Modern Hebrew, Javanese, Kaliña, Lebanese, Dutch, Portugese, Saramaccan, Sarnami, Spanish, Sranan Tongo and Trio.

Schalks incorporated the sixteen translations in a five-part arrangement for a speaking choir. The translations are interwoven in such a way, that each part sheds a different light on the poem's theme "unity in diversity" / "diversity in unity". In each part, the sixteen voice-groups (one for each language) pronounce their versions of the poem simultaneously.

The mixed choir, composed of 43 Surinamese, is conducted by Eldridge Zaandam and accompanied by the percussionist Ernie Wolf.



109 x Sranan liba / Video | Length: 15 minutes | 2009/ Hulya Yilmaz



detail/Otto Snoek /'1ste Middellandstraat' / Photo on Dibond on aluminum | 2009



higher ground /installation | 2010 /sirano zalman/rodney tjon poen gie



still/ looking for apoekoe/ karel doing/video | length: 13 minutes | 2010



chain saw /installation | 2010 /jhunry udenhout



Untitled /tempera on canvas /2009/ casper hoogzaad

This third issue of the Town literary online magazine engages with the Paramaribo SPAN project, a survey of contemporary art and visual culture in Suriname.

Perched on the shoulder of the South American continent, Suriname is in the zone of intersection between the Caribbean, the Atlantic, and Latin America. It is home to the descendants of indigenous Amerindians, Dutch and English colonisers, enslaved Africans and free Maroons, indentured Indians and Javanese, and immigrants from China, Portugal, and the Middle East. The cultural collisions and collusions of all these peoples have been often fruitful, sometimes anxious, and occasionally violent.

This issue of Town is also a sort of bridge, or the fragments of a possible bridge of imagination and understanding. It connects poems by a writer from Guyana, Suriname's neighbour to the west; images by a Dutch artist of Surinamese ancestry, which reflect on the ironies of colonial history; a self-portrait by a young Surinamese artist, a work of both self-representation and self-assertion; and a deliberately mysterious photograph of the monument memorialising one of the most tragic events in Suriname's recent history. The three Afaka characters atop the Moiwana Monument spell out "Kibii Wi": Sranan for "Protect Us": a hope, a wish, a lamentation, a charm, a song.

Mahadai Das (1954–2003) was a Guyanese poet, actor, dancer, and teacher. During her lifetime she published three collections of poems: *I Want to be a Poetess of My People* (1977), *My Finer Steel Will Grow* (1982), and *Bones* (1988). In March 2010, Peepal Tree Press will publish her collected poems, *A Leaf in His Ear*, including many previously uncollected pieces and unpublished work.

Patricia Kaersenhout is a Dutch artist with Surinamese roots, based in Amsterdam. She recently participated in the Wakaman Project, a series of exchanges between Surinamese artists working at home and abroad. Her book *Invisible Men*, reproducing a series of works on paper, was published in 2009. The two works reproduced in this issue of Town are from a new series in progress.



Nicholas Laughlin, and unnamed cohort literally put up issue 3



Dhiradj Ramsamoedj, born in 1986, is a Surinamese artist, and one of the participants in Paramaribo SPAN, with his *Adjie Gilas* project. He is a graduate of the Nola Hatterman Institute and has shown his work in several group exhibitions.

Marcel Pinas is a Surinamese artist based in Moengo. He was born in 1971 in the Ndjuka village of Pelgrimkondre, and studied at the Nola Hatterman Institute in Paramaribo and the Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts in Jamaica. He has shown his work widely both in the Caribbean and internationally, and has established a cultural and contemporary art centre in Moengo. He designed the Moiwana Monument memorialising the massacre of the inhabitants of the Maroon village of Moiwana in 1986, during Suriname's civil war. The photograph of the monument in this issue of Town was taken by Trinidadian artist **Christopher Cozier**, who is the co-curator of Paramaribo SPAN.

Call Me the Need for Rain

Call me the need for rain.
 For I am in want of a shower of truth.
 I am starved for bread and the milk is too dear.
 Call me the need for rain.

Call me the want of sunlight.
 For I am hungry for a star but the swine eat husks.
 This leprous air.
 I am starved for flowers and stars.

Call me the need for rivers in my eyes.
 For the pain is so deep tears will not come.
 And the want of love is upon me.
 Call me the need for eyes.

Call me the need for hills in my heart.
 For the land is so flat it is flooding.
 And the pestilence is sharpening its teeth.
 Call me the need for hills.

Call me the need for storm!
 A slant force of angry waters.
 Baring my breasts, laying naked my soul.
 Call me the need for storm!

Mahadai Das

Lucky

Down at the bottom of the river, the fish swirl around his ears. Lucky hunts for
 Away from the teeming world of city streets and crying wives, he meditates on God

The white man from England tugs twine on the water-hole of his mask. Simultaneously God tugs Lucky. An electric eel, smooth touches him.

A current moves like lightning from the back of the eel's head to his a "Ouch!" is torn from my father's lips. Lucky swims frantically up towards shore.

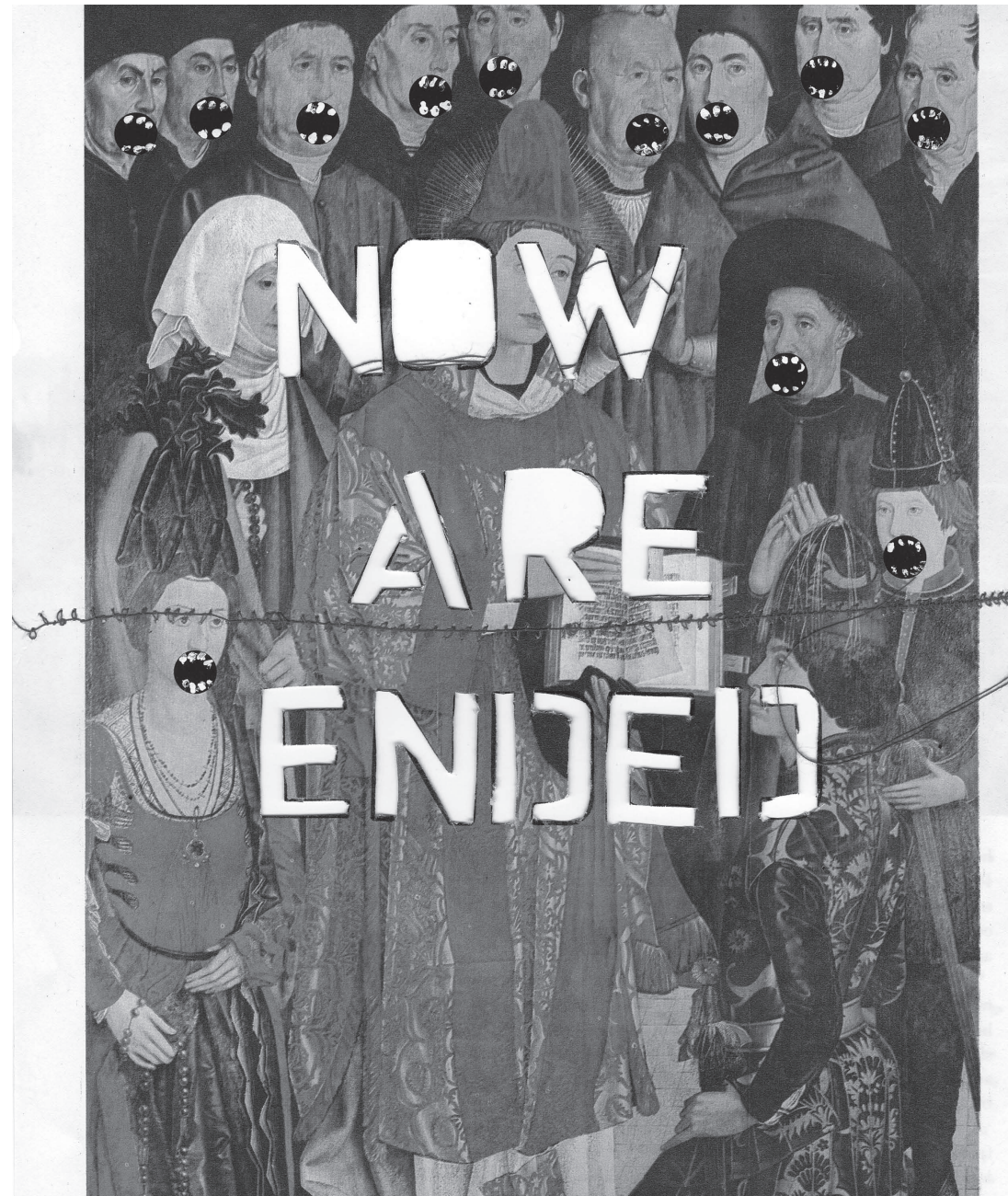
Lucky

Down at the bottom of the river, the fishes swirl around his ears. Lucky hunts for gold. Away from the teeming world of city streets and crying wives, he meditates on God and his world.

The white man from England tugs twice on the water-hole of his mask. Simultaneously, God tugs Lucky. An electric eel, smoothly, snakelike touches him.

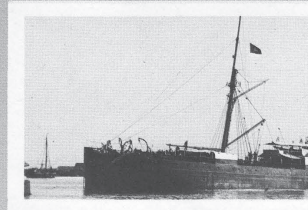
A current moves like lightning from the back of the eel's head to his ankle. "Ouch!" is torn from my father's lips. He swims frantically up towards shore.

Mahadai Das



Patricia Kaersenhout

Naar Indië,
op zoek naar fossielen



Het gezin Dubois vertrok in oktober

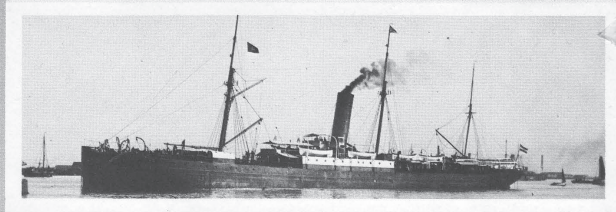


Voor hij met zijn vrouw, Anna, afreisde het Dubois zijn baard staan.



Dubois (boven)

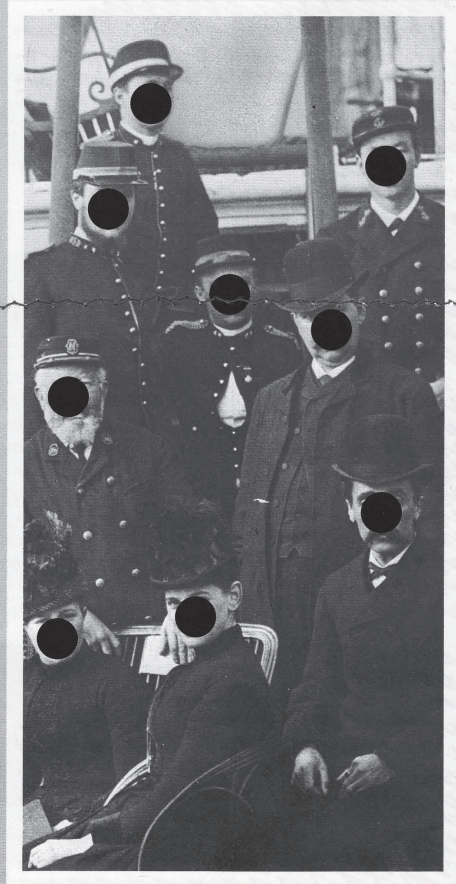
**Naar Indië,
op zoek naar fossielen**



Het gezin Dubois vertrok in oktober 1887 met het s.s. Prinses Amalia naar Sumatra.



Voor hij met zijn vrouw, Anna, afreisde liet Dubois zijn baard staan.



Dubois (boven links) en zijn vrouw (midden) beginnen de reis.

Patricia Kaersenhout

Dhiradj Ramsamoedj



Paramaribo's northern suburbs are orderly in their sprawl: streets laid out in a careful grid, neighbourhoods separated by drainage canals. The flat terrain with few large landmarks is confusing to visitors--even after several visits to this area I still feel like we're going round in circles--and apparently even taxi drivers can get lost.

Christopher and I are fascinated and puzzled by this topography. In most Trinidadian suburbs, you can guess when the land was developed by the predominant architectural style of the houses, which subsequent renovations and remodellings can't completely disguise. But here there is a sense of the temporally haphazard. On a single street we see an old wooden house on stilts--what Christopher calls a Guyana house--that could date back to the 1930s or 40s, right next to a 70s bungalow and a spanking new mini-mansion, then an empty lot overgrown with razor grass that to our sensibilities suggests "country".

After several wrong turns on the part of the taxi driver, we finally arrive at Pierre Bong A Jan's house, one of the new-looking ones, facing south onto a broad canal. Bong A Jan waves to us from an upper window, then comes down to escort us past a phalanx of excited big dogs. He is one of the younger artists we've met in Paramaribo, quiet and confident, with a scraggly beard, a necklace of wooden beads, and a series of blue-black tattoos on his left shoulder and upper arm.

The house is neat, airy, tastefully furnished. A large canvas, perhaps six feet wide, is propped against the wall of the front hallway. It depicts a monstrous semi-human creature pouncing on a nubile young woman. The creature's shoulder emerges from the canvas as a piece of wood carving. It makes me think simultaneously of comic book illustration and a stylised Erté poster. The painting is one of a series, Bong A Jan explains, exploring a figure from Surinamese folklore: the bakru, a half-flesh, half-wood forest spirit which does the bidding of its obeahman master.

Bong A Jan takes us up a flight of stairs to a spacious, light-filled loft that runs the full length of the house. This is his main studio, with finished paintings arrayed along one side, pots full of paintbrushes, and an airbrush compressor next to a draftsman's table. He shows us another large painting of a nude young woman, floating against a geometrical background. Both her shoulders are covered with tattoo-like markings, which on closer inspection turn out to be clusters of faya lobi, or ixora flowers--the national flower of Suriname. Beside it is a painting of pairs of eyes glowing out of a deep blackness, like a dream of being lost in the bush at night.

His second studio is a much smaller space, tucked beneath the loft. This is where Bong A Jan works at his day-job: he is a tattoo artist. He shows us his equipment, the padded table where clients lie, and the gun-like tattoo machine. I ask him who did the tattoos on his own shoulder. He smiles. He did them himself, he says--that's why they're on one side only.

Christopher asks to see some photos of his other tattoo work. Bong A Jan pulls up a slideshow on his laptop. Some of the images depict standard fare: pseudo-Celtic knots and the like. Others incorporate recognisably Surinamese visual elements, some derived from traditional Maroon carving. One spectacular large tattoo seems to combine Botticelli's Venus with a many-armed Hindu goddess. A few years ago, Bong A Jan tells us, most of his clients asked for standard images and forms you could pick out of any pattern book, but recently there's been more interest in imagery that speaks to a Surinamese identity. We can see how Bong A Jan's

work sets up a creative dialogue between these two media, painting and tattoos, at a meeting-point of conventional "fine" art and bodily adornment, folklore and science fiction, international youth culture and personal self-expression. How might we incorporate this dialogue into the wider conversation of Paramaribo SPAN? Bong A Jan wonders aloud whether he could build a temporary structure, part studio, part installation, and find someone willing to be tattooed in front of an audience--the tattoo as a performance, in multiple senses.

"It won't be me," Christopher says, laughing.

Meeting Pierre Bong A Jan **tatu**

Nicholas Laughlin

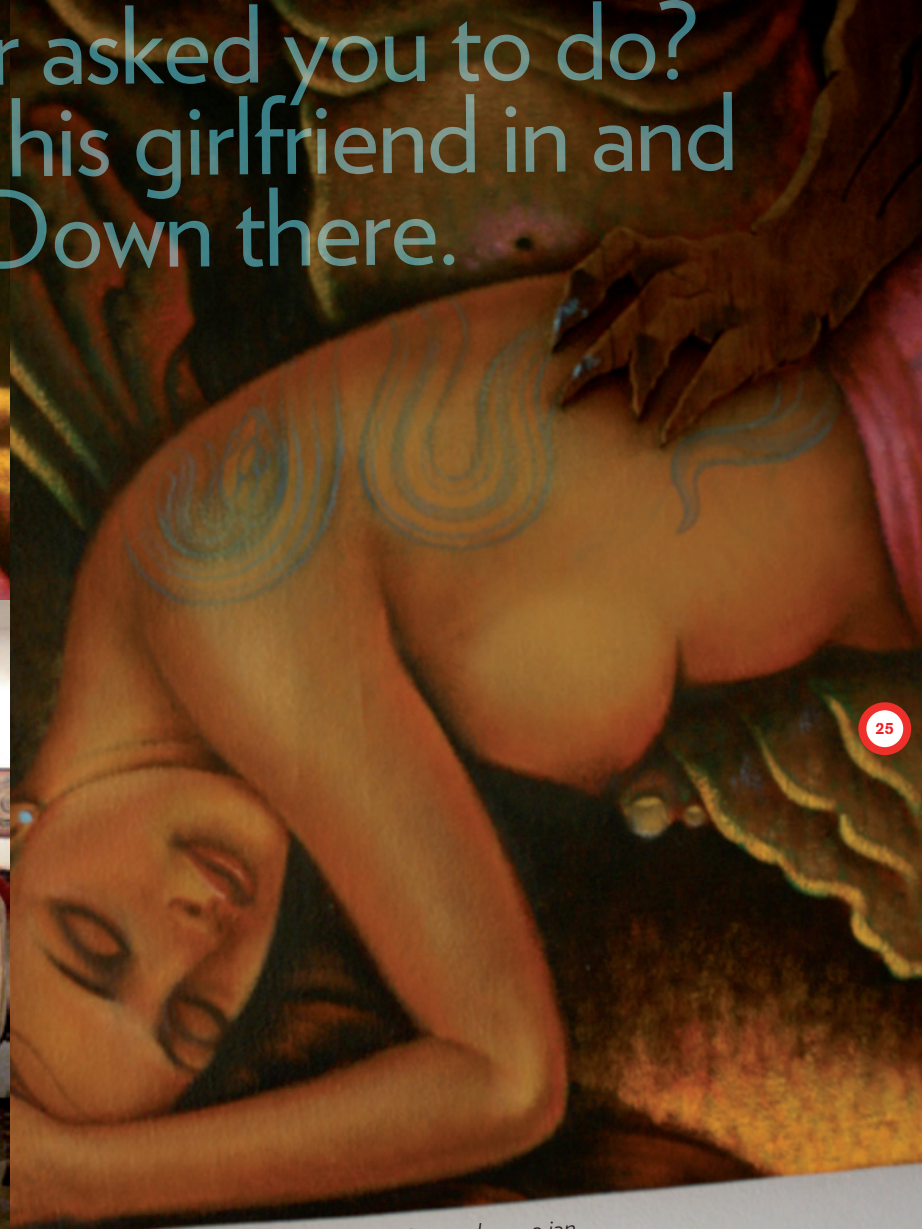


span makandra/oil paint on multiplex, 2010/ pierre bong a jan

nl: Hey Pierre, what's the weirdest tattoo anyone ever asked you to do?
Pierre: An american guy came in once and he brought his girlfriend in and wanted me to do a lawnmower man on her, you know. Down there.
nl: So did you?
Pierre: Heh, Yeah I did
But it took a while...



The opening of the Paramaribo SPAN exhibition included a four-hour tattooing session by Pierre Bong A Jan. Looking on is President of the Republic of Suriname, H.E. Dr. Ronald Venetiaan.



detail tatu bakru oil paint on jute , 2007/ pierre bong a jan

MOI

WANA

86

Moiwana '86 monument commemorates the Maroon settlement that was massacred in 1986. Moiwanawas located in the District of Marowijne, approximately 128 km to the east of Paramaribo, the capital of Suriname. During Suriname's mid 80's civil war members of the National Army of Suriname massacred about fifty innocent Maroon civilians, including children, (pregnant) women and the elderly at Moiwana on 29th of November 1986. These killings were (and still are) the most serious human rights violations ever to occur in the Suriname history.



'It's got to have an effect. It must move you'
marcel pinas

marcel pinas/ jurgen lisse/2010



Jurgen Lisse is a young filmmaker based in Paramaribo, working as a cameraman and editor for commercial projects — music videos, documentaries — while pursuing his own creative experiments. (He was recently commissioned to edit a series of short films for Art of Survival, an exhibition on Maroon culture that opened at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam in November

things through my mind/ jurgen lisse/2010



Paramaribo span other point of view/ jurgen lisse/2010



groe/ george struikelblok /2010





fatu bangi — literally, “fat bench” — is a piece of roadside furniture commonly found along major thoroughfares in Suriname, especially outside Paramaribo. Often made from rough planks or pieces of scrap wood, the fatu bangi is a location for relaxation, conversation, observation.



Project: Fatu Bangi by Roberto Tjon A Meeuw

Christopher Cozier

Roberto Tjon A Meeuw's SPAN project is a series of fatu bangis positioned in and around the chief SPAN exhibition venue, the Surinaamsche Bank building on Henck Arron Straat.

On my first visits to Suriname, I was taken by the design of these benches and the way they allowed people to spend the evenings looking out at the cars and other people going by. Is sitting on this bench sleepy indolent native behaviour, or is this active and agentive identification and engagement of community and the world around us?

Roberto's fatu bangi becomes part of our vernacular visual vocabulary. He articulates this through his T-shirts and through his found-object sculpture.

I was intrigued by their modest and practical design. But the last place one would expect to see a fatu bangi is downtown in front of the bank. Placing a fatu bangi here relocates the bank and the bench. It talks about the bank's relationship to contemporary experimentation and enquiry and the everyday. It alters the value we place on this type of bench by seeing it in this location. One looks out at the world from a fatu bangi. Maybe also to be span.

The artist works with what we either discard or disregard. His work taunts or makes fun of our self-conscious and conservative tendencies; our limited notions of respectability and self-important seriousness. A fertile tension between the formal and the informal plays out in his work.

On the surface, this may look like good old boy-fun, prankish and irreverent, but on another level it is a serious investigation of the relationship between our ideas of artistic expression and the popular.

Look out, Rotterdam.



Roberto Tjon A Meeuw THA BIGG BOSS HIM SELF ZET ZIJN TEK.....OP MN FATU BANGIE



Ken Doorson's Tipple Box project is a series of three-sided red plexiglass boxes — illuminated from within and etched with the suggestive silhouettes of women — intended to be installed on the streets of Paramaribo. A motion sensor atop each box triggers the internal light as pedestrians or cars pass by, alerting both ordinary passers-by and those with less innocent intentions that they have entered one of the city's red-light districts.

On the opening night of the Paramaribo SPAN exhibition, one of the Tipple Boxes was nestled rather incongruously in a grove of flowering shrubs in the DSB Bank garden, its red glow ceaselessly activated by the crowd of wine-sipping and hors d'oeuvre-nibbling guests. Near midnight, as the party wound down, a few of us decided to search out a companion box we knew was installed on one of the streets north of the Palmentuin. As we strolled through the neighbourhood, we were almost run over by an SUV full of determined-looking men, making a U-turn in the street to pull up next to a scantily clad young woman.

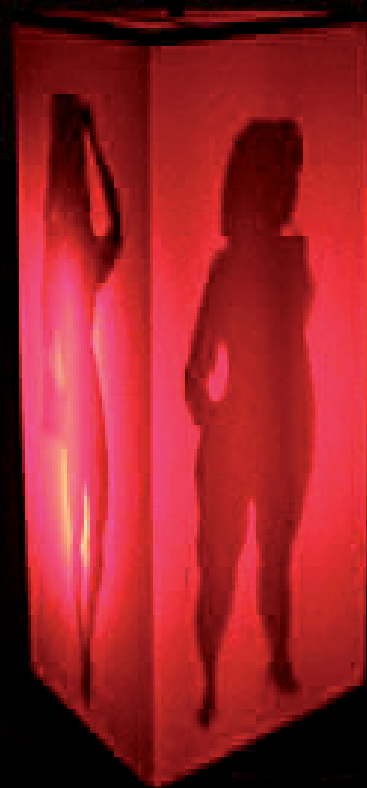
We found the Tipple Box on Van Sommelsdijckstraat, a block from the Torarica Hotel. On a corner outside an anonymous commercial building, it unexpectedly blended in with the illuminated signs for bars and nightclubs further down the strip. Doorson was DJing in a small bar just across the street. We stopped for a drink, and sat at a table outdoors, where we could keep an eye on the box and note the reactions of pedestrians.

Looking for the **RED** lights

Nicholas Laughlin

Most kept their distance, perhaps wondering what it was advertising. But one young woman — dressed for a night out and accompanied by an older companion who could have been her mother or aunt — was intrigued. She stopped, stared, then tried to imitate the pose of the silhouette on the box: handbag over the arm just so, hand raised to caress her hair, weight shifted to her right leg. She was happy to be photographed, and gave us the name of the nightclub she was heading to.

SUVs cruised past.





Een Lekkers

Nicholas Laughlin

Ellen Ligteringen's Een Lekkers project occupies two small rooms adjacent to the kitchen in the DSB Bank greenhouse, the main SPAN exhibition venue. In the scullery, she has set up a gedachtafel, or "table of thoughts", a sort of recreation in miniature of her studio, displaying the weird objects she makes from chicken leather. In the small pantry next door is a makeshift confectionary shop, with chocolate bonbons — concocted by Ligteringen, with cocoa she harvested herself — displayed in a refrigerated glass case.

Visitors to the exhibition are invited to sit down, taste Ligteringen's chocolates, and register their reactions via a special questionnaire. Small digital cameras mounted on four sides of the room record their facial expressions and body language. An audio recording in the reassuring voice of Odette de Miranda — one of Suriname's best-known radio announcers — explains the process to the wary. The project is documented on Ligteringen's website, Tan Bun.

"Chicken skin. I'm experimenting with chicken leather."



Of all the artists we have met on this trip to Paramaribo, Ligteringen is the one working with the oddest materials, and in the most open-ended, process-driven mode.

Like George Struikelblok's Groei — a sculptural enclosure in which he is rearing two hundred chickens — and Pierre Bong A Jan's live tattooing session on the opening night of the exhibition, Ligteringen's project involves an installation of objects and an element of public performance, but it is also a process of investigation. She calls it research, and takes the whole thing seriously enough to have recruited the help of a professional psychologist in drafting the questionnaire to which her audience is subjected.



Monique Nouchchaia Sookdewsing



“art fatu”

Readytex Art Gallery



Courtney Martin speaking to Rodney Tjon Poen Gie



Founded in 1993 by Monique Nouchchaia Sookdewsing, the Readytex Art Gallery in downtown Paramaribo is Suriname’s leading commercial gallery. Many of the artists participating in the SPAN project — including Sri Irodikromo, Kurt Nahar, Marcel Pinas, Dhiradj Ramsamoedj, George Struikelblok, Rodney Tjon Poen Gie, and Jhunry Udenhout — show their work at Readytex or are represented by the gallery. As SPAN co-curator Christopher Cozier remarks, Readytex — on the second floor of a large commercial building on Maagdenstraat, also occupied by other branches of Nouchchaia’s family business — is an obligatory stop on Suriname’s art circuit.

The programme of activities on the Paramaribo SPAN opening weekend includes several events outside the main exhibition venue at the DSB headquarters, all intended to broaden SPAN’s conversation about the contemporary art scene in Suriname. On Saturday 27 February, the Readytex Art Gallery hosted an art “fatu” — an informal gathering — for the participating artists and organisers, visiting critics and curators, and other invited guests. Works by a range of contemporary Surinamese artists were on display, and Nouchchaia discussed plans for the new cultural centre she would soon open .



Christopher Cozier and René Tosari founder of Waka Tjopu art collective.

‘the entire project , the SPAN project...the approach, entire approach...cause it’s huge for Suriname, it will loosen something in the community’

-Monique Nouchchaia Sookdewsing





Suicides

Ravi Rajcoomar's SPAN project proposal is an installation commenting on a painful social issue. He explains:

Suicide is a worldwide problem that seems to have no end. Some people take their own lives with hate, then you have terrorists who do it to kill others, and some do it to solve their problems. In recent years there have been many suicides and suicide attempts in Suriname — this is maybe one of the countries with the most suicides. It happens all over the country, but especially in Nickerie.

Everybody keeps talking about this. It got me thinking about what I could do as an artist to get people to reconsider their thoughts of suicide. My idea is to create an installation to encourage discussion.



A few examples of Dhiradj Ramsamoedj's Adji Gilas cups are placed on the red-oxide-coloured floor of his studio. This is a typical painted floor for a house in Kwatta, west of central Paramaribo, and this looks like a typical cup. We could be in Trinidad or Guyana. He is explaining to me that "adjie" means maternal grandmother, and that these aluminium mugs were from her once-active business renting wares for festivities and other events.

project: adjie gilias

Christopher Cozier

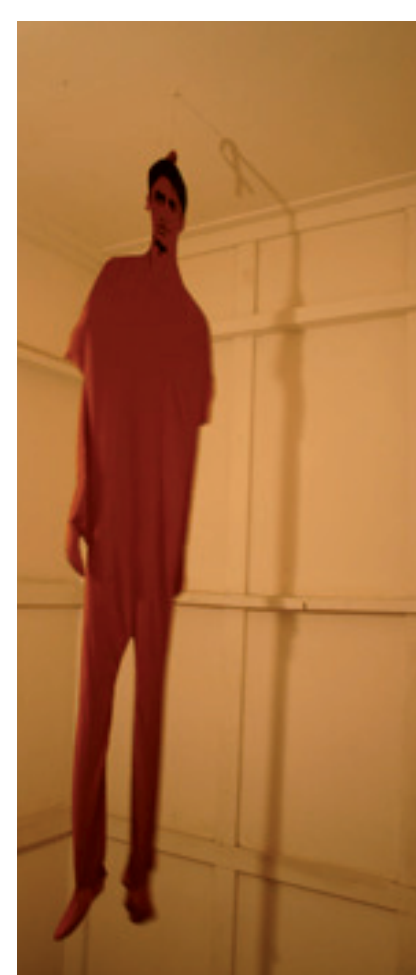
Dhiradj points out that the cups still have an "R" written in enamel paint underneath. There are approximately forty of them left. The artist has transferred onto them graphic images derived from early photographs of his grandmother. So this is not just a typical house, or a typical cup: it is Dhiradj's. We are looking at this work in his grandparents' home, which has now become his studio or site of investigation. This is a very personal navigation of his experience — his own memory and relationship to family and place.

We are on the inside of his process, and this location is not just a sight to be rendered — not just an image to take to the market, as we see in local art galleries throughout the Caribbean. Most forms of representation in the Caribbean would render the house and the location from a viewpoint across the street, for the touristic or cultural brochures, saying that this is the typical Asian household of this part of the country. It would be a static silenced sign of national diversity or of cultural otherness, accordingly.

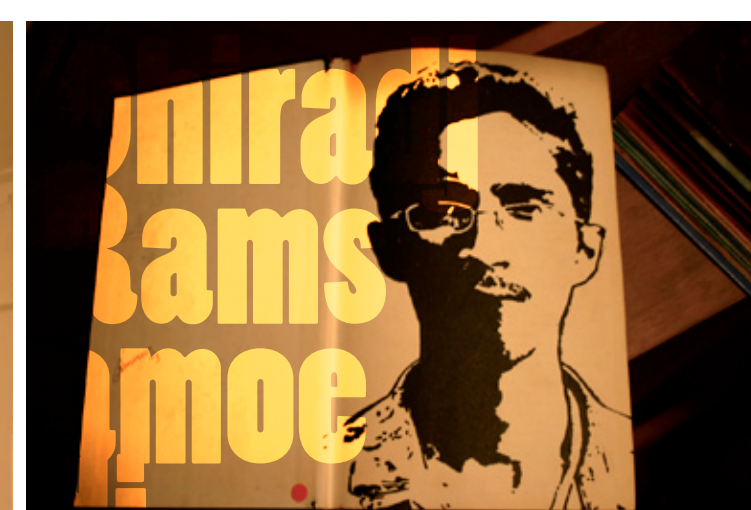
But this is Dhiradj's active site of investigation, of developing personal vocabularies towards sovereign ways of articulating his own lived experiences and stories, from the inside looking out.



I associate these old types of mugs or cups with adjie, because she always drinks out of these types of cups. I have decided to pay tribute to adjie during the Paramaribo SPAN exhibition since the presentation of my work will take place in her home. In a combination of two techniques: screen-printing and stamping, I have placed a portrait of adjie as an identifying mark on every cup.



Painted passages in novels inspired by memories form a diary. Books are used all over the world to document. Every human being has had some sort of experience with books. Experiences can also be documented in books as can memories because memories are simply experiences from the past. - dr



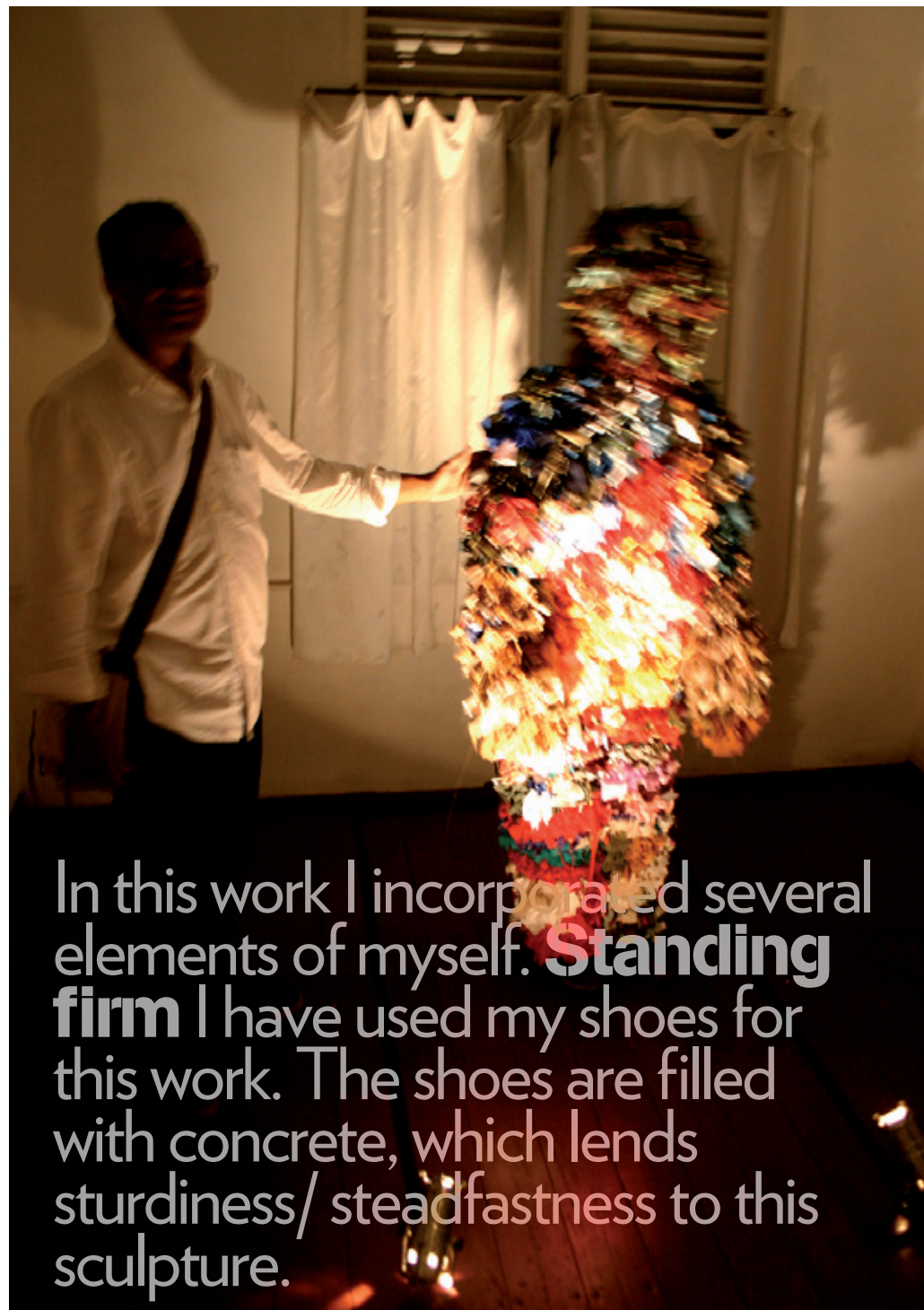
I ask him if the work should even leave this site, as the work, the process of minding (caring for) and mining (investigating the symbolic agency of) these intimate elements, this series of actions, resonate within this actual space. They transform the space, which both contains and amplifies their intent. They take on a site-specific implication, and the artist's actions become differently performative and enabling — not just to me, the viewer, but also to other artists like himself working in places like this everywhere. This is more than just cultural display. This about the artist working his way through what he knows and can understand.

I would like to argue that within this transactional space or moment of exchange we are all transported or altered. So where is Kwatta now within this moment?

Is it in the critical space shaped by his intent, his investigative process, dislodged from narratives of nation, of culture, of cultural display and otherness? Is it an action within the critical space we call the Caribbean, which is just another space where an artist, a creative individual, struggles to understand the world around him- or herself?

After I meet with Dhiradj, he sends me an image by email, in which he arranges the cups — “gilas” — on the internal structural beams of the wooden house, often used as shelves in traditional Caribbean homes. In that single gesture, he weaves together the structural investigations of Remy Jungerman with, of course, Mondrian's. They are all fair game within his investigative moment.

It is not my intention to create an imbalance, but more to look at the work of Dhiradj as someone whose approach is derived from the current range of influences available to him. This processing and reconfiguring defines the current moment in which many contemporary Surinamese artists are proceeding.



In this work I incorporated several elements of myself. **Standing firm** I have used my shoes for this work. The shoes are filled with concrete, which lends sturdiness/ steadfastness to this sculpture.



Flexible
This sculpture can stand up to a little impact, which will cause it to wiggle and fro with great flexibility. On the inside I wrought iron which gives the structure its flexibility.

Mild-mannered
Textiles were used to build up the skin of the sculpture. I prefer textile because it is a soft material and because of that it also symbolizes a mild-mannered character. I also grew up in surroundings where there was continuously worked with textiles, because my grandfather was and my mother is a tailor.

Colorful
The colors in the work are a reflection of Surinamese society and as such also represent a Caribbean identity which is the result of a mixture of several cultures. - dr



when death stares you in the eyes, what can you do? installation /2010 kurt nahar



let them talk digitally manipulated photoprint | 2009/risk hazekamp

Risk Hazekamp is a Dutch artist based in Rotterdam and Berlin, and one of the participants in the ArtRoPa project. She offers some thoughts on one of the works inspired by her residency in Suriname in 2008.

I use photography to explore issues of identity, and in particular the way in which gender and identity intersect. By evoking and drawing upon mass media and popular visual language — fashion, advertising, and movie genres — I question the construction of (gender) identities.

In this image I place myself in the position of the exotic, the “stared at”, using an eclectic image language that will be read differently depending on the individual luggage of the viewer. At the same time the “stared at” takes back power by staring back at the viewer, and thus also becomes the active one.

For me, this picture contains a lot of personal thoughts and feelings. It functions as an expression of my encounter with Suriname (which is still going on). To highlight a few details/elements:

Let Them Talk is the name of the specific angisa (headkerchief) in the photograph. [The angisa incorporates a form of visual language: the pattern of knots conveys a specific message, after which each angisa is named.] In Suriname, the angisa is mostly used to express personal feelings, but is it also used as a political tool?

The angisa in this image is made from newspapers that were published the day after [Dutch politician] Pim Fortuyn was murdered. We can recognise him on the front of the angisa. The bandeau is made of the Surinamese newspaper De Ware Tijd (“The True Time”).

The picture is a self-portrait, showing me, with my biological female body, dressed as a drag queen: a man performing femininity. It refers to Pim Fortuyn being a very outspoken, flamboyant homosexual individual, which in my opinion contradicts with his extreme, right-wing political points of view.

The showing of intimate parts of the body is a statement in itself. Not only do I show here the “real” white skin of my body, my breast, against the artificially white skin of my face; in doing so I try to emphasise the fragility, the instability, and the fugacity of the human body.

One of the intellectual frameworks of this work is a book by the social and cultural anthropologist Gloria Wekker: *The Politics of Passion: Women’s Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora* (2006). Wekker writes:

In Sranan Tongo ... there is a plethora of terms to make statements about “I”, pointing to the multiplicity and malleability of self...

One of the striking features of this scheme is that it is possible, irrespective of one’s gender, to make statements about self in one of three ways: first, in singular and/or in plural terms; second, in male and/or female terms.... In addition to these different terms, there is a third mode to make statements about self in terms of third-person constructions, i.e., in terms of one’s Winti....

With this photograph I want to express the crux of my work, which is that identity should not be understood as a logical and coherent thing, but as something that is dynamic, fragmented, and a changeable process that is constantly moving.



Risk Hazekamp





op het randje va legaal en illegaal / jeroen jongeleen

The Rotterdam-based artist Jeroen Jongeleen, one of the participants in the ArtRoPa exchange programme, spent several weeks in Paramaribo in late 2007 and early 2008. Here the Dutch critic Siebe Thissen describes Jongeleen's work in Paramaribo, in an excerpt from a longer essay in the Paramaribo SPAN catalogue.

Jeroen Jongeleen's work in Paramaribo staged an encounter between street images and the visual arts. Jongeleen plastered graffiti slogans in the city where he had spent his youth. With not a little irony, he sprayed the words "art in public spaces" on a neglected little concrete structure in the Palmentuin [Palm Gardens] — a nocturnal haunt for Paramaribo's junkies.

Jongeleen also added a monumental feature at the corner of Wanicastraat and Sophie Redmondstraat, close to the US Embassy. UNESCO may have declared Paramaribo's old, well-preserved city centre a world heritage site, but small wooden workers' houses, many of which have been neglected, do not enjoy that protection. Jongeleen painted one of those unlisted houses completely white, with window frames in light blue — the colour of UNESCO. His action introduced a new element into the visual culture of Paramaribo: "culture hacking", or the power of art to react to and comment on the surrounding visual culture.

culture hacking

<http://paramaribospan.blogspot.com/2010/02/project-jeroen-jongeleens-culture.html>



Painted house, wanicastraat 59 paramaribo suriname, 2008
photo courtesy the artist.



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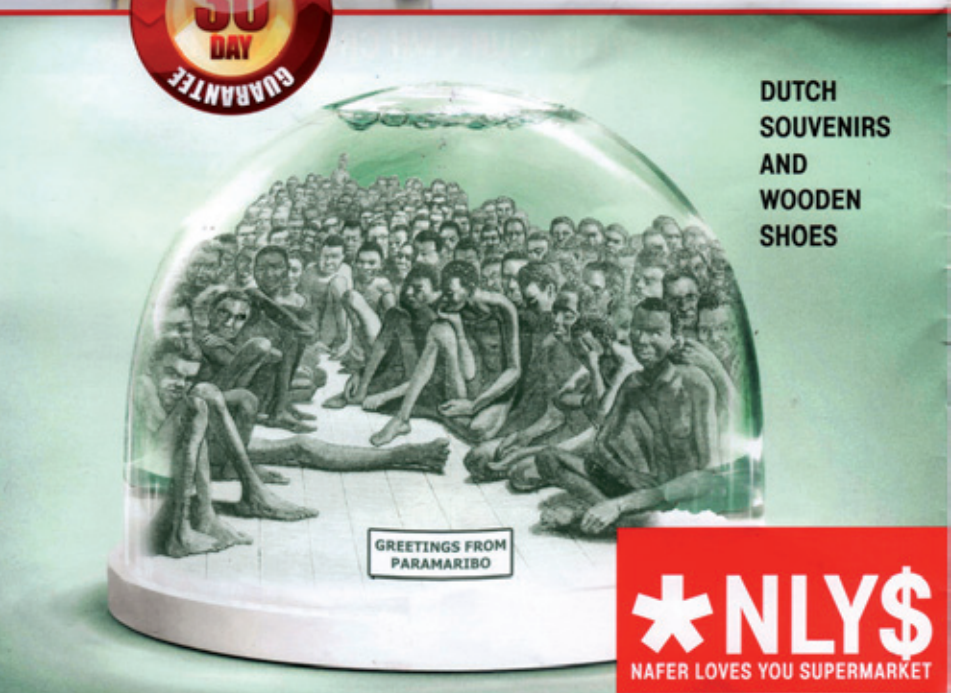


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steve ammersingh /rotterdam wereldstad [rotterdam metropole] video/ 2009



bas princen /rosebel | /lambda print | 2009



republiek/oil on canvas /2009 daniel djojoatmo

The SPAN programme includes four Art Conversations—public discussions of issues surrounding the exhibition. The first one, the day after the opening, included four art critics with an interest in the Caribbean and transatlantic dialogues: Julieta Gonzales (Venezuelan, based in Puerto Rico, consultant in Latin American art for the Tate), Courtney Martin (American, art historian and curator based at the University of California, Berkeley), Annie Paul (Indian, based in Jamaica, writer and editor), and Leon Wainwright (British, art historian based at Manchester Metropolitan University).

An Afternoon in the Garden.





STENCILS

ALICE

Visiting Suriname at the end of February for the Paramaribo SPAN exhibition, Alice Yard collaborator Richard Rawlins was inspired by artist Roberto Tjon A Meeuw's Fatu Bangi project. On his return to Trinidad, Richard set about his own bangi project at Alice Yard.

He writes this note:

"Wow," I said to Sean Leonard, chief architect of Alice Yard. "I want one." That desire and inspiration would basically see me through the fourteen-hour residency project of building Trinidad and Tobago's first ever fatu bangi with my partner Mariel Brown.

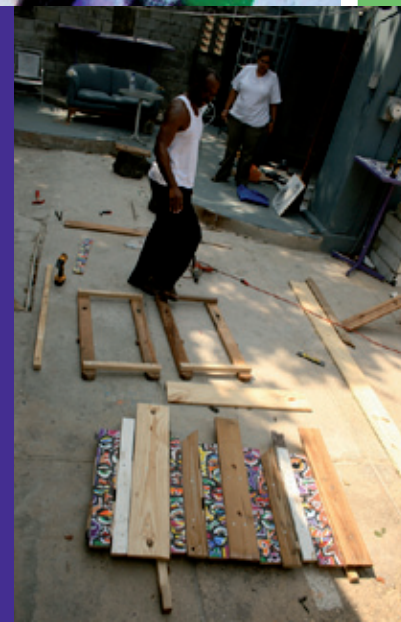
My recent trip to Suriname left me buzzing with an incredible amount of ideas and creative energy. My first fatu bangi experience in Suriname was the work of artist Roberto Tjon A Meeuw outside the DSB Bank in Paramaribo, and later his other humungous creation inside the bank's compound.

I've called my interpretation Alice Bangi, after the yard of course. The Alice Bangi actually breaks into two sections, to facilitate easy movement of the piece as it traverses round the yard. It also allows for additional back rests to be created from time to time.

This Alice Bangi is meant to be a major participant in the life of the yard.

The final touches on the Alice Bangi, which will take place over time, are 3x3-inch stencils recording every major occasion, show, or artist's project that passes through the yard. *The first stencils record initiatives like free+three, Erotic Art Week, 12 the Band, INDIgroove TV, Draconian Switch, Jemima Charles's Cones project, and others.*

BANGIE



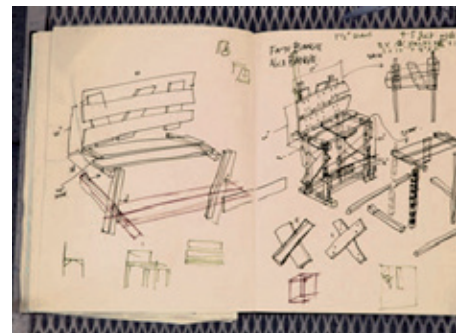
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NOTES



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