

In 1970 the conceptual artist Marinus Boezem interviewed Henk Peeters. It was the year between two major art exhibitions in the Netherlands: "Op losse schroeven" at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam (1969) and the visual art festival "Sonsbeek buiten de perken" (1971) in Arnhem. Boezem's work was included in both exhibitions, Peeters was absent as he had decided to stop making art and focus on education. It would take another four years before he decided to remake and exhibit old concepts anew. In the interview, he places an emphasis on the installations that were conceived between 1962 and 1965 for the ZERO exhibitions in the Netherlands. What Peeters puts forward in this interview, presents an image of a movement that was a pre-conceptual movement, but which arrived too early.

Interview by Marinus Boezem, October 9th, 1970, Imbos (NL), published in the MUSEUMJOURNAAL 16 (1970)

Now that the emergence of the current avant-garde, among which I regard conceptual art, is lately being explained more and more from ideas and works of American origin, including minimal art, I think it's important to interview you as an eye-witness and participant of the avant-garde at the end of the 50s and beginning of the 60s. Particularly so, because I find there are analogies between the concept of that avant-garde and the current one.

Yes, I also think it's about time to try and set things straight, in as far as they're not already overwhelmed by statements and explanations, which far from clarify matters. I think you have to clearly distinguish two things: that naturally art movements can always be explained by what precedes them. After all, it's a historic development for which you always need to know what preceded it, because, dialectically thinking, that's where the oppositions or conditions of the new lie. This can happen simultaneously, independent of each other and in different places. But with regards to the other side: without saying that what happens in America would be epigonic work of what had already happened here, there are of course correlations that came into being through personal relationships. At the beginning of the 60s many

Americans, youths, who were a little oppressed by the pop rage at home, came here and sought expansion for the lucrative business that had been built up over there in America. People such as Dan Flavin and Robert Morris encountered a completely different atmosphere here than they were used to at home. They were still completely into pop over there. When Morris came here, he was still making lead reliefs in the style of Jasper Johns. And the Americans don't really like to acknowledge their future art stars being influenced by those young Europeans who were exhibiting in New York around 1960. Andy Warhol probably gained a lot from Arman and Raysse, the latter of which especially had no chance at success in America. Their exhibitions went largely unnoticed by the official art world, Yves Klein didn't find the slightest approval, and Fontana was also hardly noticed. More people passed through New York in those days, and almost fell into a vacuum there. And American art dealers, who still came by my studio every so often then, clearly didn't see any money in it.

No, there wasn't a relationship in the least, apart from with some remnants of the old Bauhaus, some Albers epigones that were still there. But there was absolutely no one who did what we did. The only person I was in touch with was Ad Reinhardt. George Rickey came here later, and he was the one to later promote our work in America. A little too late perhaps. Howard Wise introduced Mack, Piene and Uecker and afterwards also Hans Haacke, who was married to an American. Hans is perhaps the only one who was able to develop his work further.

All in all, I believe a large influence came from our group, especially on the younger ones who saw a new alternative to action painting and pop art, which were in fact spilling over into each other there in America.

Could it be that there weren't enough people here in Europe at that moment engaged in the analysis of your group's ideas and that also didn't occupy themselves enough with the promotion of this analysis to the public?

No, we were in a very unfortunate climate here. There was nothing here in the Netherlands. It was put to us afterwards: yes, you had Sandberg with you. That's not true: Sandberg didn't see a damn thing in it. He only exhibited us because it was something new. A positive side to his museum policy, for that matter. No, we had to do that promotion entirely ourselves. I pretty much paid for the whole first Nul exhibition myself.

It ran into the thousands.

I even received the bill for the flyers and the catalogues. But [I] sent it back and proposed to

settle it with the proceeds from the admission tickets.

It was very sweet of Sandberg that he took one of my plastics to settle an unpaid bill for transport costs. In doing so, the Stedelijk became the first, and up to now the only Dutch museum to own one of my works. Great for mentioning in catalogues.

No, galleries didn't see the point of it either. We offered ourselves to Galerie d'Eendt, but they didn't buy into it. When Riekje Swart started, we thought it would be something for her, but she didn't even respond. The Germans benefited from Alfred Schmela, however they also made sure others weren't able to get a foot in the door, Manzoni included. Just Klein and Fontana, which they only profited from. Italy probably had the greatest number of people who were interested, particularly critics. Several in Switzerland.

Weren't there any people in the Netherlands in those days that did respond to it?

Hardly. The only one to approach us after the first Nul exhibition was Martin Visser. But he only buys foreigners. He paid next to nothing for nearly everything he bought from Manzoni. Van de Wal bought an Aubertin, he thought Piene was too expensive. Ad Petersen was the only one in the museum to support us. No, you shouldn't expect any applause from that corner, they'll only believe it if it comes from New York or even Paris. Only colleagues really, very touching that only they understood what it is to be misunderstood. We had tremendous ideas, with Willem de Ridder, and with Stanley Brouwn, whom I regard as a truly great artist. A huge fashion show in the Stedelijk, of clothes lined with razor blades. Us constantly trying to help with our white coats and iodine and bandages. Oh, and also a very good idea for a farewell exhibition for Sandberg: we'd leave everything hanging that was already there. But magnify everything to four times its size through one of those cinema decoration studios. That would be just about possible, they hang everything so spaciouly anyway and there's such a high ceiling there. And everything would be just as smooth, an Appel as thinly painted as a Mondrian. Wim Schippers came up with that idea. And that exhibition with Ger van Elk in Fodor with that room of salt. A shame that the room with peanut butter couldn't be carried out. Together with Willem de Ridder we wanted to use Fodor for Fluxus, but the Stedelijk preferred to do it themselves. We had to wait a long time, but damn it, we got it in the end. Fluxus. Very good. I gave a lecture about it at the I.C.A. in London in '65, where it was still unknown. The only person who said something useful then – or perhaps the only one who understood my foreign accent - was David Medalla.

A shame, you don't hear much of him these days.

In Germany a man like Paul Wember had achieved a lot. Wember is perhaps the only man in the world who always has a nose for new things, simply because he has the right attitude to allow him to know what's going on. Sometimes he doesn't even support it, but he thinks that he must bring it. Klein, Tinguely, Soto; he showed them before anyone even wanted them. I believe he was fired for that on an annual basis in those days.

How did you respond to the “Op losse schroeven” exhibition that was held at the Stedelijk Museum last year? Did you think it was a deed of Beeren at that moment, or did you think it was something that should have taken place earlier? Did you also see analogies there with your own aspirations and ideas and those of, say, Manzoni and Klein?

Indeed, it had already been there before, in the sense that there was plenty to recognize in this exhibition of what had previously already been attempted by us, but which quite simply didn't get off the ground at the time. Still a very good exhibition though. Refreshing after all the optical gymnastics, the art of expert mathematicians, which we're gradually becoming sick to death of. But what we recognized in you was perhaps something you weren't even aware of. In that sense, I really don't want to dispute that what you brought was certainly original. With us these notions were usually just marginal phenomena. I now personally see them as being very central, but you simply don't know how you've shifted these accents through the course of history. With hindsight I now find the discussion we had with Sandberg in 1960 to be the most interesting aspect of the first Nul exhibition. We proposed the Zero exhibition to him then, just after the third – subsequently the last – Zero catalogue was ready. We sat there in his room underneath a painting by Géa Panter and a lid of a hatbox, in which an engraving of something that looked a damned lot like the Stedelijk's new wing. Jef Verheyen, Günther Uecker, Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, Armando and myself. Shortly afterwards, Manzoni also came over and so we came to the conception of the first Nul exhibition. Yves Klein also contributed to it, but he'd just had a falling out with those Germans. He sent a letter to Sandberg afterwards and proposed to let Pierre Restány put together an exhibition of the “Nouveau Réalistes,” which he apparently appreciated more than the Germans' increasing flirtation with constructivism. Armando and I were also far more on Klein's side. We were very much up in the clouds once the first Nul exhibition was in sight, and when we had to come back down to earth whilst setting it up, simply because we didn't have two pennies to rub together, a lot of what I had in my head went out the window and I found the exhibition itself to be a huge disappointment.

Klein had wanted to do something with this century's heraldry, with flags, symbols, rockets and the like. Piene was working on his light theatre at the time. Terrific ideas, but little has actually come of it up to now. It was unrepresentable, you had to have immense imaginative powers if you wanted to follow what was happening. Especially because the conceptions kept becoming more and more important, more and more absolute, just like with Klein exhibiting the "Void," or his sensation of "Space" through falling off a roof. I myself had a design for the "Four Seasons" for that exhibition. With "Summer," there would be a blinding light, everything bright white with glass beads. That was just new and was being used in traffic signs, it reflected nicely. And on the ground, first a thick layer of rubber foam and then loose silver sand, so that you were hardly able to walk through it, and then all of it underneath a searing heat from the lamps.

Of all of these plans, only a freezer display case remains, which I was able to borrow from a fridge freezer company who had long since realized that my "Winter Room" with heaps of snow and ice would be impossibly expensive. Now, only a few icicles remain of all of these splendid ideas.

Yes, when you put it to me like that, then it really was an exciting period and incomprehensible that it was never concretely manifested. Was this due to the characters that were involved in this type of work at the time, was it perhaps also due to your own character? Wasn't there an awareness of: we must push this through, we must convince people of the significance of our ideology, or was this less present at the time? You see, I know that an awful lot was pushed through during the preparations of "Op losse schroeven." That we kept wanting to convince people again and again through means of photographic material, anecdotes, correspondence, et cetera. So not only with artistic accomplishments.

You really have no idea how different things were at that time (Of course we were different characters, because everything was different). The response was far more aggressive, have a read of art critics' reviews from those days. You're laughing now, but it could have cost you your head then. They even tried to fire me, egged on by a paranoid museum director from the provinces. I have Sandberg to thank that these fun and games didn't carry on. You really have no idea how carefully you had to play the game and that you therefore had to water down the wine to such an extent, in order to still actually be able to make something of it. You allowed yourself to be bullshitted far too easily. I remember the conversation with Sandberg; we

wanted to cloak the entire museum in fog. Good idea, right, Breitner, Mondrian, Appel, there's no difference anymore. Finally one big art.

It was a collective idea, because we'd arrived far too late in Amsterdam due to an enormous cloud of fog. We thought it would be nice if we were able to isolate this event. And what is a museum in effect, besides a means to isolate? Fog as an exhibition is a tremendous kick. We did some serious research into how this would be possible, with cooled air or vapor from paraffin wax. But then Sandberg very cautiously said: guys, would you kindly remember that I have some Van Gogh's hanging upstairs for my successor?

And those flames on the street. On the pavement we wanted to have huge flames coming out of the ground for Yves. Endless talks with the gasmen and the guys from bottled gas, because the gas company wasn't able to keep up with such huge demands. And who pays for this kind of joke that no one wants? You just became sick and tired of it in the end. I also would have liked to have had searchlights at various points in the city, all of them bolt upright and converging in infinity. Splendid, infinity now exhibited vertically. But searchlights are army property and those guys are the last to be susceptible to these sorts of things. A few years later I saw that it was realized during the jubilee parties in Moscow. Very good. We'll just have to wait till we have our own red army here. Then everything should be possible.

But, once again, how did you actually respond to the "Op losse schroeven" exhibition? You must have realized then that these kinds of matters were suddenly possible in a museum setting. Was that a disappointment to you, did you say: I see a tremendous number of ideas here that correspond with what we wanted and thought? I don't mean this in terms of the materialization of ideas, but of the idea behind the work, let's say the ideology. Was it a bitter pill to swallow? I would imagine it was. Or did you say: this is still a new step, albeit made by another group?

I really have to separate it, these two feelings. You touch upon both of them. The first feeling is naturally one of frustration. That all of a sudden it's possible now.

I can say that after the last Nul exhibition I thought: I'm never doing this again. Armando even walked away before the opening, he wanted absolutely nothing more to do with it. Since then we've disintegrated into small groups of art producers scrapping over a piece of the market, whipped up by public taste and the urge of trade, and several of us experienced this as: we've been driven into the wrong corner. This is the frustration that you now perceive in many of us and it's also my big problem. Of not having fully processed these failed ideals. But on the

other hand I do think that, what's happening now and particularly what you're doing now could be another blow, unless you allow it to be driven into the same corner again. We certainly didn't give the first blow, you have to look for that one during the First World War. I mean that what Dada did, still hasn't been surpassed. And then 1917; the October Revolution. From that moment on we've found ourselves in a revolutionary situation. A revolution which is far from over. What we did and what you're involved with, doesn't coincidentally run parallel to other revolutionary movements. But as soon as you allow yourselves to be neutralized by the museum and its very much elitist cultural politics, however left-wing museum directors may be (you even have left-wing bank managers these days), then you'll paralyze yourselves again, and that will make your next move more and more difficult. This is the rather tiring feeling I have now. Your "Losse Schroeven" was of course another jab. But the "Telegraaf" is still the biggest selling newspaper. I'm just saying: how in God's name do we get a little further? An awful lot of people explain it as though art is something that stands above society, or is even a precedent to its development. Those politics, to turn the matter around, are there to allow everyone to think that we keep on seeing a further development in art. That we keep on moving forward, that our culture is alive and kicking. But I think it's stone dead, because the social structure doesn't change. Therefore, the changes that can be seen in art are illusionary changes, because social relationships remain the same. No matter what they say: art remains the realm of the privileged class. Even though they say that by having a car, the working class have also become owners. But by saying this they're just trying to disguise the actual oppositions. As long as you don't see this opposition, or in other words you don't accept class struggle, you'll remain in this state and you'll find barely any difference in everything that has happened after the revolution, or, if you will, everything that has occurred after Dada. They're just nuances, nothing more. Nuances, like with the new Volkswagen models. Only a small group of insiders who see that there's now a little grid behind the windows. Nothing more. I have the feeling, that we hugely overestimate these so-called tremendous developments in art. And then you get the feeling that you're being misused if you participate in this mock development. Because it [is] to the advantage of a small group of rulers that the rest thinks that things are indeed developing, that we continue to move forward.

In that sense, I have once formulated that ultimately art should always be more or less dictatorially put from the artists' perspective, because that way the biggest chance remains that you can actually change something in society's outlook.

From art?

Yes.

Really?

Yes, I think that you should just accept that art is intrinsically authoritarian and that you don't have to be scared off by it, that you can simply accept this. And through this authoritarian way of putting things, which must happen with a certain conscience, you'll also gain more power in the state of affairs within museums and galleries. The whole art scene therefore becomes a situation that can be better manipulated by the artist, whereas now the power is actually out of the artist's hands.

But just look who you're aiming this at! It's a handful of privileged people, the better classes and a bunch of intellectuals who happen to think they're part of it. The snobs. What kind of influence do they have on the development? On the contrary. You're preaching in the wrong church. No, if you want to change things, you'd be better off heading to Rotterdam's harbors or to the strawboard factories in Groningen. In a roundabout way, Fré Meis means more to the progress of art than all those exhibitions at the Stedelijk put together.

Yes, but I believe that precisely by making it authoritarian, you'll no longer be aiming at that primary influence on the surrounding society, but that you'll in fact gain a secondary influence. This very same audience is one that you will keep. But a secondary influence is certainly possible. The “Op Losse Schroeven” exhibition wasn't an exhibition for the Stedelijk Museum and its visitors, but this exhibition has had a secondary effect through the authoritarian manner in which it has taken place. The effect lies in the fact that this has been much discussed, both negatively and positively. So no longer within the museum where the work is displayed, but in everything that communicatively surrounds it and what it gives rise to. And in that sense I think that things are still happening in art.

Yes, but once again, my frustrations are probably the cause of my impression that absolutely nothing's happening. But then we must first define what we actually understand under “happening.” We had nearly a thousand people a day with the first “Nul” exhibition, it was

booming. And boy did we get press, I've still got about a square meter of criticism. 99% of which was a flood of abuse and blah blah and idiocy, nobody responded in a normal manner. It was one clump of repulsion. Wasn't this the effect then? Well, maybe one or two people will start to doubt the values they once thought were sacred. But is this really the large group that you need? And if art is to change, then something needs to happen with our society first. Then you must target this large group, which is deprived of everything. And they never came. No, the front lies somewhere else. It lies far more in the social injustice within our society. These are the things I want to get worked up about. Art is not a weapon. You can't bullshit them with art.

That brings me to the following question: Would you then be able to formulate an alternative to allow such a recent movement as conceptual art, for instance, to be able to function. So, just beyond the museum and the gallery for a moment, and then I'll take it up from what you yourself have to say.

Yes, I also see it as the only answer to: well, I have to do something. You can't just stay on the sidelines. I can quite well understand it, because it's actually the only thing that you still can do, if you don't want to compromise yourself. For I haven't taken part in any exhibitions for the last five years and I'll be damned if I'm going to make more paintings. All around me I see what it means to allow yourself to be encapsulated and to constantly have to produce the same paintings until you're sick to death of it. Without mentioning names, plenty of examples. Sometimes I do feel like responding to that art industry. For instance, I was particularly annoyed by demonstrations such as the Sonsbeek exhibition in Arnhem and thought about holding an alternative exhibition in the district of Klarendal. A place where thousands of people suffer in slums, while the bourgeoisie go scot-free and occupy themselves with building palaces, such as a provincial government building, a flashy town hall or yet another police station and a tremendous tax office. And a Sonsbeek-type exhibition also has its place on this list. But then afterwards I think: who would I actually reach with this? Because this art audience won't lose a night's sleep over all those thousands of guilders, now paid by the community for their private pleasures, could in fact have been better spent on a decent existence for the people, who ultimately ensure that these cents are brought in in the first place.

And then you realize again how limited you are in your means as an artist. I'm also doing a bit of filming at the moment. With film you can reach further than the museum. For I often feel

like a cobbler. He also doesn't have anything to do these days, nobody gets their shoes mended anymore.

Okay, so I can conclude that you think the current avant-garde is actually also at the same point as where you were at the time with regards to the influence it could eventually have on events outside of the museum. You actually don't see a substantial renewal in this?

Well, I do believe that you continue to move forward, but then in spite of those artists. The system weakens ever more and of course you should not fail to do anything which may help to speed things up. You have to keep on disarming them. That's why what Gerry Schumm does with his "Fernsehgalerie" is damned interesting. That the means which the operating system of power uses for its propaganda and intimidation also become unsettled. I'm completely in favor of people doing this, but I'm looking for something that works more effectively. I just can't bloody find it. That's why I'm doing a bit of tidying up at the moment. I'm currently working on an exhibition about Alexander Rodchenko, a man from the beginnings of Soviet Art. And Kloetsjis, an unknown suprematist who used to be Lenin's bodyguard.

What kind of role do you play now in the renewal, the revival of ideas from those days? How have you processed this in your present artist's life?

No, I don't live like an artist anymore, so I don't have to play a role anymore either. Fortunately. But I haven't processed it. I can't say that I've given it another form. No, it stays with me like a kind of reserve. I'm searching for a form that's more adequate. I'm just doing a bit of freewheeling at the moment. And I'm busy writing, such as recently about Manzoni. It was very important that a man like him was depicted well. He should be glad he had an early death, just like Yves Klein. Because Piero Manzoni in particular could have been completely forgotten through ill-fated circumstances.

Yes, when you put it like that, how can this then be reconciled with the fact that you were probably aware of the preparations for "Op Losse Schroeven" and aware of this new avant-garde, but at that moment in time you were unable to pinpoint the ideology in Europe at the start of the sixties and write about Manzoni's ideas and his past. Because I think it would have been very illuminating for the situation in Europe at the time, as it

had developed towards this conceptual art. I can recall that during the preparations for “Op Losse Schroeven” I had frequent contact with Beeren and De Wilde and I'd pointed out the usefulness of a referential framework to them. I then mentioned the names of Yves Klein and Manzoni. Partly to provide some background information to this exhibition so that it would come across better to the present audience.

Perhaps it's better that this didn't happen.

Would you like to elaborate on this?

Well, I'm just thinking in analogies. We thought the same thing during the Nul exhibition when we wanted to hang Malevich's “white cross” or Mondrian's “plus minus” for example. That would have been really stupid, because everything would have been wrongly explained through relationships in form.

Yes, that's why [in] this respect I'm not talking about relationships in form but relationships in ideas.

I still think it's better the way it happened with “Op Losse Schroeven.” Presenting it completely on its own. Just everything that appears as phenomena at that moment in time. And to simply await interpretation, because this is something that you can misjudge terribly.

Do you think you could ever belong to an avant-garde again?

Well, in that respect I think like Constant.

I use that term so that we're able to understand each other. You could pin a whole definition to it, but let's just stick to this word.

Then it only applies to me if my points of view no longer depend on the art world.

Do you have an idea as to how it could become?

Different to how artists think it should happen.

So art and the artist aren't functioning at the moment?

They keep something going that is in the act of disappearing.

But you've chosen a new role, the role of educator and of tutor at an art school, where once again you're trying to prepare people for a similar task. How do you process this?

With much difficulty, which provides me with some very big problems. Because the way it is now, is that art education is of course also heading downhill. Yet, we must carry on. With my ideology in an art school, you may well imagine that I often feel like a tutor of prayer in a seminary. No, an art school is still a world, wrapped up in newspapers. And then also newspapers they haven't even read. Reserves of dying romantics. Victims of a bourgeois ideology that they've grown up with. It's a sorry state of affairs, you know. Big modern buildings in which you're all alone. Because your students are still lying in bed or sitting in a café. Even though there are so many important things to be done. No, I'm deeply saddened in that respect.

Do the deaths of Manzoni and Yves Klein also have to do with your current points of view in art? Because I've noticed that it's precisely this relationship, that was there then, which was very important to you.

Yes, when they died I thought they'd just chosen the wrong moment to do so. Because now only others have profited from them, the followers have taken all the credit. Especially those unimaginative yet very ambitious and incredibly diligent Germans, who after all had almost won in '45 because of their diligence. They took from it what was there, while the people who had brought it were no longer able to take anything from it. There's also a bit of self-pity in this. For instance, there's no one here in the Netherlands who has ever bought one of my paintings. A few colleagues have exchanged something with me, like Schoonhoven, Struycken, Citroen (no, he did actually buy one), Westerik or Jurjen de Haan, and internationally Manzoni, Soto, Uecker, Fontana, Calderara, Getulio Alviani or Nusberg. And Rickey. But here not one museum, and that can bug you years on end when you see that they keep coming to you to borrow and exhibit, until the younger boys come who do exactly the same. And then, goddamn it, you see the same paintings hanging, but then with other names underneath them.

And those guys earn very well indeed from it. No, Manzoni and Klein were spared much. With hindsight I'm also glad that I didn't get involved anymore, that I've remained untarnished, that I haven't compromised myself. And I also wish that upon the people from "Op losse schroeven." Because you only have to do one concession and you'll never get those stains off your soul.

To come back to "Op losse schroeven," the exhibition was indeed the consequence of this situation. This had to happen; whether it happened too early or too late, is quite another matter. Chronologically means, of course, one year after the other, but you can also see the development by arranging the facts afterwards. But the fact which still has to come, is of course unpredictable, although with hindsight it turns out to be a logical conclusion. But anyhow, that's my profession isn't it?

You always have to try and ground what's still hanging in the air in some way. Nevertheless, there's something important that's changing these days, apart from the development I was just talking about. And that's perhaps the essence of new art, not other forms, but of looking in another direction. Armando has said: "a new art needs to come," to which I would like to propose: "no, a new audience needs to come." That's my problem. And that new audience is already there. Just look. We just don't speak their language yet. Because that is our problem: we speak the language of the bourgeoisie. They think others don't have culture. Look, do you think that people in the fourth and fifth centuries knew what Christian culture or Christian art was? Everyone would tell you: come on man, Christianity is something completely different. Those Christians don't have art. And that was true at that moment in time. But Christianity is certainly an important phase in our development, without Christianity no Marx, no Lenin, no Castro. That's why now in the same way you could say: "what actually is socialist culture?" Because it's nonsense to say that it doesn't exist, there is indeed a socialist culture even though you don't see it in exhibitions. It will be something completely different, something that's based on totally different values than on making paintings that can be traded. And in this regard, conceptual art is the solution to the problem of the artwork as an asset. For this is surely a hugely important factor in our society: being able to buy, to collect, the museum.

It's precisely in conceptual art that I see one of the essential characteristics, being that a work like that can be spread through language alone. In the past you had to be in the presence of an artwork if you wanted to consume it, whereas with conceptual art it comes into being through relating about a work, through evoking the same sensation as was possible by means of confrontation with the work itself. And that of course is a

breakthrough. It reaches an x amount of people, something that can neither be foreseen nor predicted.

Yes, a delightful idea that the only thing to remain of Van Gogh was that he cut off his ear, that Rembrandt had an unmarried woman in bed or that Elisabeth Bas is a good cigar. Something very different comes across than what you think. In this case, you'll see that people from completely different disciplines do things that have a much stronger effect than the previous means have had. You also see this in the theatre, where visual artists have produced the actual renewal. Just think about what Yves Klein did, or the significance that happenings have had, and not to forget the Japanese. What's nice in conceptual art is that the same thing happens as in verbal media.

They suddenly pass on an event, so strong that all those professional writers are unable to match it. Then quite unexpectedly it turns out that a very large group outside of the literary audience is susceptible to the word and will then suddenly see things. I recently played the film "Land Art" by Gerry Schumm and then someone said: "Oh for god's sake, if you don't know it, you don't see it, it's only once you know it, that you see it." Very good isn't it, if you don't know it, you don't see it. He said: "Well, I could also get on a train and see plenty of Land art." That's bloody true and all. Now you see it. And this in spite of modern literature.

So you do see a secondary effect on this society through the current avant-garde.

Constantly enlarging people's focus, that's what you're doing. You keep pricking more and more holes in the blinds.

Well, then that's a quality that still sticks to art!

No, the effect takes place beforehand. It's important before it becomes art. Art is a way to render it harmless, that's what I find so troubling. As soon as one declares it art, it's finished. That's why I'm not doing art. But living, yes I certainly do that.

| Translation by (ask Fred Wagemans)