

Ulrike Möntmann

Report of an Art and  
Research Project on Addiction  
and Spaces of Violence

THIS  
BABY  
DOLL  
WILL  
BE A  
JUNKIE

DE GRUYTER

edition: **'angewandte**

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# THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE

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Russian writers in the mid-nineteenth century explored the idea of “the superfluous man” with great zeal. At the same time there appeared in French literature the motif of the *poète maudit*, “the accursed poet”, a further myth of rejection, of exclusion—the American equivalent being the outcast, outsider, or outlaw. Although this was by no means confined to literature, in this period it was the art medium that was used to direct attention away from the bourgeois centre of society and toward its margins, which at the same time gave rise to a paradigmatic shift of emphasis. In Russia, established and less famous authors alike applied themselves to the task of describing people in exceptional situations, like Fyodor M. Dostoyevsky, himself addicted to gambling for several years, in his novella *Notes from Underground* published in 1864. The literary prototypes of “the superfluous man”—including *Eugen Onegin* (1833) by Alexander S. Pushkin; Mikhail Lermontov’s Pechorin in *A Hero of Our Time* (1837–1840); Ivan Goncharov’s *Oblomov* (1859); or Dostoyevsky’s Rodion Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* (1866)—are representatives of a way of life that is characterised by passivity, social isolation, and incapacity to engage in effective action, and frequently determined by alcohol, obsessive gambling, and drugs. These characters, the majority of whom are aristocrats, intellectual, eloquent, dandyish, and idealistic, founder on the morals of society. As they are of little use to society, these people are “superfluous”. The writers were, of course, working and thus not “superfluous”: “superfluous” were only the people they wrote about.

By contrast France’s *poètes maudits* of the same period styled themselves as failures, as victims of absinthe, alcoholism, and drugs as, for example, in Charles Baudelaire’s prose work *Les paradis artificiels. Opium et haschisch* (*Artificial Paradises*) of 1860. Baudelaire was not only one of the most important artists who paved the way for modern literature; he also pioneered poly drug use and propagated the idea that the intoxicated state is part of an artist’s self-image. He was one of the “absintheurs”, devotees of the Green Fairy, as were his fellow poets Paul Verlaine and Arthur Rimbaud.

Thus, the assessment by others of being an outsider, which was emblematically negative, grew into the euphemistic self-portrayal of a hedonistic bohème.

In the United States a simplistic image of the outcast developed, which lent itself to summing up and describing highly disparate ways of life outside the middle-class mainstream as constituting a social class. The vast majority of fictive portraits in literature, like Bret Harte’s short story *The Outcasts of Poker Flat* (1869) set in the American West, or Edgar Allan Poe’s tales of drunkard heroes, the author himself was rumoured to be an alcoholic and opium addict (who, incidentally, achieved fame in France through Charles Baudelaire’s translations of his works), as well as in the depictions of hobos and tramps living on freight trains and on the streets, feature male outcasts. The outcast women of the “lower” social classes were so “superfluous” that they didn’t even appear in literature.

And yet all these nineteenth-century narratives about being an outsider still keep a human face. The outcasts don’t go completely to the dogs and they are enabled to pursue heroic ways of life—forms of protest and forms of

resistance against the advancing industrial disciplining and exploitation of the individual. Outcast and bohème: although the connotations were partially negative, they were still a powerful symbol of the free individual and offered an outline of a liberated social life beyond servitude, the factory, family, and a standardised lifestyle.

In the twentieth century there followed a drive toward objectification. The outcast as a type was identified according to “scientific” criteria. It was necessary to define who were outsiders and who were foreigners. *Finis* means end. Thus to be defined means to be taken to a final solution, to an end. The outcast’s very right to exist was questioned, and ultimately his/her existence was literally finalised. Racism, eugenics, and other ideologies were nothing other than attempts to legitimise defining people as superfluous who were non-conformist and not prepared to surrender unconditionally to the state system. Superfluous lives were, of course, worthless, of no value. The ideas of racial hygiene, which provided pseudo-scientific definitions of “inferior” life and separated out so-called cripples, members of foreign races, coloureds, etc., was the radical formulation of a totalitarian, anti-humane programme to eliminate people with deviant behaviour; behaviour that had been exalted in the nineteenth century as bohemian. “Superfluous” life became worthless life and, therefore, it was life that could be extinguished. The escapist fantasies of the nineteenth century that identified other lifeworlds beyond the industrial production complex became reasons for locking people up in the twentieth. “Protective custody” was the perverse term for this imprisonment with no way out except death. The twentieth century’s achievement was to declare “superfluous man”, formerly a literary metaphor, to be superfluous in reality, and to annihilate them in the Holocaust and other genocides. This radical, inhuman escalation was captured by Giorgio Agamben in his term *homo sacer*; a human being in an extreme situation who has nothing and is nothing but a bare life.

The idea of “superfluous people” lives on in twenty-first century democracies. Instead of state racism there are now police raids on social outcasts. But it is the raids that actually make members of society into society’s outsiders. It is not the behaviour of people themselves that define them as outsiders; it is the law that defines them as deviant. “Superfluous people” today are, for example, young blacks in the USA, who are beaten up and killed by white police officers, applauded by hysterical crowds and elitist politicians. The U.S. judiciary condemns this racist police brutality only in a half-hearted manner, and on the other hand declares the people who protest against police brutality to be violent criminals. One of the few philosophers who engaged with and sought to understand this new dialectic of the outcast was Zygmunt Bauman: *Wasted Lives. Modernity and Its Outcasts*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.)

The dialectically formulated differentiation of marginal groups that was tabled in the twentieth century is the generally accepted model for denigrating outcasts and excluding them from social communities. The themes of *Le sacre du printemps* (The Rite of Spring. Pictures of Pagan Russia in Two Parts, 1909) by Igor Stravinsky have not been correctly portrayed by any of the myriad productions in the last 100 years because they touch upon a taboo and are thus repressed. *Le sacre* shows us the mechanisms that lead to the formation

of marginal groups, shows us the massacres perpetrated by communities that create victims, and shows us the underlying motivation for such acts. Claude Debussy rightly concluded that the true title of this avant-garde ballet is actually *Massacre du printemps*. The expulsion, exclusion from a group and the creation of a victim, their extinction, are the results of a process where by a group itself generates inner stability and seeks a scapegoat for its own contradictions. After the scapegoat has been sacrificed—the alleged cause of contention or strife—the system returns to equilibrium, to normal.

Humans lived in a hostile world ruled over by thousands of deities. Animism, the belief that animals, plants, inanimate objects, and natural phenomena possessed a living soul, was the basis of polytheism. Humans tried to please and appease their many gods by making offerings and sacrifices. They performed rituals to serve their gods. They built shrines to pay homage to the gods and to beg for protection, aid, healing, and so forth. They brought offerings of valuable objects and precious stones, and also sacrificed people to ask the gods for forgiveness and to atone for misdeeds and sins. One only has to think of the appalling Old Testament story of Abraham who allegedly at the behest of God is prepared to sacrifice his own son Isaac to Him. This mystical animism also underlies a key tenet of the Christian religion: God sacrifices his only son Jesus on the cross so that humans will be freed from their sins. Thus here sacrifice also serves to atone and to absolve from sin and guilt. The community or society, which at that time was still structured according to religious beliefs and not secularised, was only able to resolve its internal contradictions through sacrifice. Ironically, the co-authors of the scapegoat theory, the Jews, were declared scapegoats by Nazi Germany—they were the cause of social tension and bent on destroying the world (in the name of a fictitious Zionist conspiracy). And this is what Stravinsky’s *Le Sacre du Printemps* is about: the murder of an individual by the masses. The terrible record of the twentieth century is that the law system legally justified these massacres. The problems resulting from this system, which still exist and are in no way resolved—inhuman laws which produce victims and marginalised groups—are already leaving their marks on the twenty-first century.

Therefore, it is all the more important that there should be freedom in the arts and sciences to develop projects on their basis, which bring an analytical focus to bear on these traces, and which receive the necessary support. This is manifested in exemplary fashion by the investigations that Ulrike Möntmann has undertaken since 1997 in many years of theoretical and practical research, and which have received very significant support from the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), the University of Applied Arts Vienna, and the Mondriaan Fund, Amsterdam.

Ulrike Möntmann’s greatest achievement is that she has set the gender problematic firmly against the horizon of outsiders and outcasts. The characters in Russian and American novels about outcasts, outsiders, outlaws, nonconformists, refuseniks, and similar people (see *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street* by Herman Melville, 1853) were all men, as were the *poètes maudits* in France. For the first time, Möntmann focuses the attention of art and science on women as dropouts. Her empirical reports are shocking. They shed a new light on the literature of the nineteenth century. Her method

of confronting direct statements by the women involved with the commentaries of Accomplices and Experts provides new research perspectives and insights, and especially new beginnings for a new humaneness. Möntmann has researched the life of “superfluous women” to understand the biographies of female victims, dropouts, and outcasts, and to lay open the social mechanisms which produce psychological mechanisms that make people victims and perpetrators. To the social class of “superfluous people” belong women in the most dramatic way, the female so-called junkies. The tragedy is that many of these women—whose ages in this research project range from 16 to 50 years old—become drug addicts because of the social misery in which they grew up. Self-medication, such as the use of heroin, is an attempt to forget addictions and abuses, tries to help in surviving one more day. The drugs not only ruin their bodies. Continuing the destruction inflicted on them that began in childhood, which in later life leads to self-destruction, the women sell their bodies in order to finance their drug consumption: they systematically submit to mental and physical ruination again and again. Sexual violence in childhood repeats itself in the prostitution that follows. The sexual misery of men produces and exacerbates the social misery of the women, who are destroyed by society in various ways. As their numbers in prisons all over Europe are “only” between 4–14% of the total prison population, they are characterised legally and socially as a negligible phenomenon.

Alone through the title of her project, “THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE”, Ulrike Möntmann flags up the connection between drugs and prostitution, between sex and power. In eighteen biographies of women from five European countries, through visits to prisons and therapy facilities she tries to decode the social and psychological connections that have led to this social class of “Les Misérables” (Victor Hugo).

In the course of her fieldwork in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Croatia, and Austria, in collaboration with the so-called junkies themselves, and with partners from art, science, and politics, Ulrike Möntmann has clarified the conditions of the social systems that produce junkies. The findings from this research and interviews are stored in the original soundtracks of the women on audio media. These audio statements are installed in dolls made of porcelain, which are produced by the women prisoners. All of the Baby Dolls carry a label on their wrist which directs the reader to the Outcast Registration web archive. Each Baby Doll of a series represents one complete biography. The Baby Dolls are not only exhibited in the cultural institutions of the particular country, they are also “dropped off” in public spaces of the corresponding city; that is, in places which in reality or symbolically belong to the life or working location of each of the “junkies”. These Baby Dolls represent the discarded, the forgotten, and the abandoned; they refer to the real women of the biography and to the ability of each passer-by to intervene in the purportedly predetermined situation. Through this artistic intervention, Ulrike Möntmann issues a challenge to develop new terms of emplacement, new forms of artistic practice, new methods of morality and empathy, and new forms of intervention in social problems. The accompanying discussion forums (Expert Meetings, Accomplices’ Meetings) organised by Ulrike Möntmann, support these forms of art practise with theoretical contributions.

This interlacing of practice and theory is typical of the transgressive, transmedia, and transcultural art of the future. Scholarly research in the social field and art perspectives of observation signal the aggressive curves in the conflict among values. Between Foucault’s terms, such as parrhesia, biopolitics, and heterotopia, on the one hand, and old-fashioned values, such as solidarity, empathy, and humanity, Ulrike Möntmann uncovers the chasms that generate the antisocial societies of the twenty-first century, societies “with limited liability”, and in which untold victims disappear in distressing and piteous ways. This disappearance of the social victims into society’s hidden places Möntmann again makes public by establishing these sacrificed subjects as a matter of public concern; that is, she uses the tools of art to render them a *res publica* and stands for an attitude that gives the women in the project a way out of victimisation through art’s forms of symbolisation and resistance. The fieldwork, which Ulrike Möntmann pursues in society’s places for the banished, opens the doors to taboos, and thus she occasionally comes up against the opposition and resistance of individuals and institutions. Yet the fact alone that women drug addicts and drug prostitutes can only move around, live, and work in zones defined and controlled by the state—“drop zones”—amply demonstrates that society de facto decides on the life courses of these girls and women, and releases them into the junkie’s life of a dropout. Releases them into the vicious cycle where drug consumption leads to drug-related crime and prostitution leads to prison and then leads back to drug consumption—like a revolving door—is continually perpetuated.

PIGSTY

It stinks  
None of the pigs do anything  
One gets fed up  
and opens the window  
The others bite it to death.

(Because it's draughty)

Rebecca Mertens  
Women's Prison, Lower Saxony, Germany  
Vechta, 13 May 2002



1996–2001

# PROLOGUE

IN

AN ISOLATED  
SPACE

## ANONYMISATION

This book is about the lives, opinions, views, and experiences of convicted women drug addicts, and how they act both inside and outside of prison. Taken together, their individual life stories are a many-faceted collage that depicts a marginalised social group.

Although most of the women inmates and patients in therapy facilities who took part in the projects described here wanted their real names to be used in this publication, I have nevertheless used pseudonyms in order to protect their identity and privacy.

During and/or after the projects we did together, the women told me entirely of their own free will about the crimes they had committed that led to prison sentences, and talked frankly about their views on the penal system and treatment methods in therapy facilities. I see no reason to doubt the veracity of what they told me; however, I make no claim that the information is absolutely correct or exhaustive.

All of the projects described here, which have been taking place in various European prisons since 1997, were made possible because of the explicit endorsement and support of the prison administrations and their staff. I have replaced the names of staff members from some of the prisons with the official function within the system that they fulfilled at the time, because it is not my concern to single out any individuals working in these correctional institutions. The people working in the administration and management of the prisons and therapy facilities who appear under their real names gave their explicit consent.

My descriptions of carrying out the projects, of the prisons and therapy facilities, and times and dates are based on notes, records of the projects, correspondence, statements by project participants, and my memory. All information and details are to the best of my knowledge and judgement; in the very few cases where something was doubtful, I have opted for the most probable course of events.

Ulrike Möntmann

## LÜCKE [gap]

Project with 12 prisoners and 6 staff members of the women's prison in Vechta,  
Lower Saxony, Germany



“Lücke” [gap] is the term that Dietrich Bonhoeffer used for the void that arises when we are confronted by loss. Shortly before Bonhoeffer was executed by the Nazis in 1945, he wrote to his loved ones and tried to comfort them about his imminent death and beyond: “There is nothing that can replace the absence of someone dear to us, and one should not even attempt to do so. One must simply hold out and endure it. At first that sounds very hard, but at the same time it is also a great comfort. For to the extent the emptiness truly remains unfilled one remains connected to the other person through it.”<sup>1</sup> I create forms that look like human-size vases. First, I make an empty form from rolls of clay, fill it with liquid microcrystalline wax<sup>2</sup> and draw it off again as soon as a thin layer of wax adheres to the clay form. I repeat the process of pouring and drawing off until the wax layer is robust enough to stand up on its own without the form to support it. After removing the clay casing fingerprints on the outer surface of the wax form are visible that reflect the rhythm of my fingers when they pressed into the clay rolls. Inside the fingerprints there are traces of clay. The inner layer of the wax is smooth with a matte sheen.

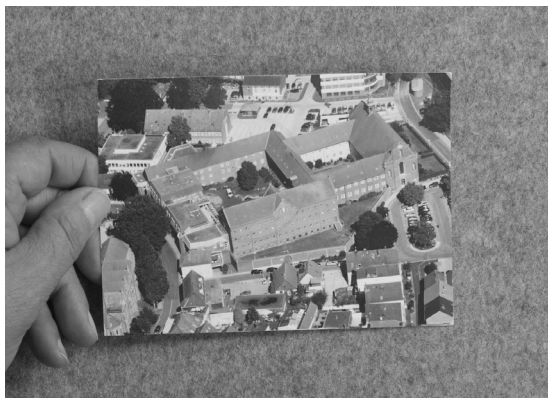
1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Auswahl*. Chapter on Widerstand und Haft 1940–1945, letter, dated Christmas Eve 1943. Munich 1964; English quotation <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/283627-there-is-nothing-that-can-replace-the-absence-of-someone> accessed 16.6.17.

2 Microcrystalline wax is an acid-free wax with a higher melting point than traditional types of wax and is less brittle than paraffin wax. It is used by bronze foundries, for example, in the process known as lost-wax casting.



# LÜCKE [gap] IN PRISON

I accept the written invitation of the prison director to visit the women's prison in Lower Saxony. The contact came about through my friend Michael Daxner,<sup>3</sup> who at the time was in discussions with the prison authorities about distance learning university courses for inmates. Daxner presented my art practice—and the LÜCKE [gap] series in particular—to the prison authorities as a supplement to the educational opportunities in prison. A dynamic exchange between the prison director and me developed over the telephone: Would it be possible to exhibit my LÜCKE [gap] works in their Art in Prison exhibition space<sup>4</sup>?



Postcard, women's prison in Vechta, Lower Saxony, Germany

<sup>3</sup> Professor Michael Daxner, a social scientist, was at the time President of the Carl von Ossietzky University (1986–1998) in Oldenburg. Daxner writes regularly about my work.

<sup>4</sup> Women's prison, Lower Saxony, on art in prison: "Artistic activity is viewed by the prison as an important component of treatment during a prison sentence. Art in the women's prison has many facets and is only possible in collaboration with external partners. There are many different forms this may take, for example, as courses that take place on a regular basis given by volunteers or part-timers. Since 1993 ARTi.G. (Art in Prison exhibition space) regularly organises changing exhibitions. Works by inmates as well as by external artists are exhibited; [http://www.jva-fuer-frauen.niedersachsen.de/wir\\_ueber\\_uns/kunst\\_und\\_kultur/kunst-und-kultur-109962.html](http://www.jva-fuer-frauen.niedersachsen.de/wir_ueber_uns/kunst_und_kultur/kunst-und-kultur-109962.html)

## WOMEN'S PRISON IN LOWER SAXONY, GERMANY

The women's prison is in Vechta, around 50 kilometres from Osnabrück where I was born.

Vechta is known as a solidly conservative (Christian Democratic Union) small town, with a strong presence of the Catholic Church in virtually all

public welfare institutions such as hospitals, children's homes, senior citizens' homes, and work with refugees and migrants as well as in the institutions of higher education.

Because of the many prisons and correctional facilities for men, women, women with children, and juveniles in Lower Saxony, "Vechta" has become a synonym there for prison: "Watch out, or you'll wind up in Vechta", "He's in Vechta, doing time" ...

The prison for female offenders is in the middle of town, and according to the deputy director, "you can't miss it". I park my car and follow the wall around prison—four metres high and around 50 metres long. The wall stands far enough away from the prison building, a former Franciscan monastery, to prevent seeing the women who live there: I can only see the top two of the four floors of the main building. Next to it is a lower wing adjacent to a church, which directly adjoins the monastery building. The old building has two more wings. Here there are no further signs that say it is forbidden to approach the prison wall; I continue walking, past a two-storey new building with windows that do not have bars, towards a large steel gate that is closed and through which lorries can drive in and out. In places where there are breaks in the old wall these are filled by lower walls of more recent construction topped by closely coiled NATO barbed wire to make them secure.

It occurs to me what Michel Foucault said about the function of walls around prisons and maximum security facilities: that the walls not only prevent escape from inside to the outside, but are also a shield that prevents people looking in and thus also obviates the necessity of continually engaging with the phenomenon of locking people up.

A little further on, next to a smaller gate for vehicles I find the entrance for visitors and employees higher up. It is very difficult to make out the officer behind the tinted safety glass; I hear his instructions via the intercom system: I have to put my ID and cell phone in the pass-through steel transaction drawer, and after my identity has been checked and my appointment with the prison director has been confirmed, I can proceed to the security gate: "Someone will come to get you." Now I can push open the heavy steel door without a handle and enter. I wait until the outside door has closed automatically behind me and then open the inner steel door. I am now in the prison, about four metres away from the next closed steel door without a handle.

Together with a warder I cross the inner courtyard which is flanked by the monastery annex, two new buildings, and two old ones with gables. Apart from the warder and me the courtyard is empty. I see well-cared for lawns and flower beds, a couple of dressed stone blocks, paved pathways, two benches, waste bins, and a swing. I hear the sound of many voices coming from the upper floors of the old building on the right but it is not possible to understand what is being said. This buzz of voices sounds different to that which one hears, for example, in youth hostels, hotel lobbies, schools, train stations, or airports. It sounds kind of urgent, hectic, as though something has to be negotiated and decided upon immediately.

Through the portal opposite, presumably the main entrance of the former monastery, we reach the corridor with the administration offices, including the office of the director, the secretariat, and the rooms of the employees

and officers. It is quieter here; the sounds of doors closing and voices behind the doors, the footsteps of busy people in the corridor, sound like any other workplace.

My meeting with the director and his colleagues lasts for several hours and becomes the blueprint for my learning process about “prison”. Beforehand, and in spite of our many telephone conversations I had at some point stopped trying to imagine what “prison” is. The prison director describes his reforms and plans, and now in a fragmentary way I can understand how something was before, why it needs to be changed and how it would be good but that is unfortunately not realistic, and how it could be a bit better within the actual possibilities. I hear why it is important to the prison director that the girls in the juvenile section should be able to sleep in wooden beds and not in the usual bunk beds of steel; why the old solid wooden doors of the monastery are preferable to new steel ones; why the length of the extremely long corridor is divided by a glass partition although the number of girl inmates from four German states is relatively small; that the age of criminal responsibility is 14 and thus the girls can be imprisoned; that girls are sentenced to prison for violent crimes more frequently than ten years ago; and what is new about the concept of a section for mothers and children—that a mother can only keep her child with her in prison if it will be younger than three years of age when she is released. Why it is considered disadvantageous for convicted offenders to be incarcerated in their home towns or cities; what exactly “easing” and a “two-thirds sentence” mean; why it is right to install a needle exchange machine instead of handing out sterile needles; who substitutes and with what; why no animals are allowed in prisons; what the difference is between housing the women on corridors and the prison section; why the women on the corridors carry a key to their cells and why women don’t run away—they don’t run away from situations or from prisons (which actually makes prison walls unnecessary). What a “revolving door-effect” is and that it can be assumed that 100% of the female drug addicts in prison experienced sexual abuse as children.

I hear that the majority of inmates in German and European prisons for women—besides defrauders, murderers, and deportees—are drug addicts and that there is a frequent and dynamic exchange of ideas between European prison directors, whereby the women’s prison in Vechta is considered a model institution in the context of the discourse about penal servitude for women. And I hear about the attempt to prevent non-addicts from becoming substance abusers during serving their sentence (the chances of this happening are high; however, such cases are not registered nor are any statistics kept).

The prison director regards detainees as wards. He attempts to ensure that the physical and mental state of the prisoners does not deteriorate during their period of detention. The change of government in Lower Saxony gives him cause to hope for change, for the reform of out-of-date systems, and that the elimination of current defects in prisons is on the agenda.

The deputy prison director is a qualified teacher. Her areas of responsibility include the training kitchen, where inmates with a health certificate can train to be kitchen assistants. A trainee place in the kitchen is the most prestigious of all areas of work<sup>5</sup> in the prison, as varied and with the prospect of attaining a certificate. In the canteen for the around 160 personnel there is

a choice of two menus each day at cost price. The deputy prison director also heads the Art in Prison programme, an initiative of the Press and Information Office launched in 1993 to give prisoners and guests the opportunity “to meet through the medium of art”, as the deputy prison director expressed it.

An A4 stencil on the wall that proclaims “Art in Prison” and the name of the artist whose work is currently on show tells me that I am now in the exhibition space: it is a wide corridor in the administrative wing, on the right are the doors of offices and on the left are windows with ledges. The walls between the office doors and the windows are the exhibition spaces; the easy-care PVC flooring can take tables and pedestals to present 3D art works. The corridor is conveniently located, visitors from outside can come into the space without having to enter the prison proper, and prisoners can be escorted by warders from one place to another without any risk of compromising security. When a new exhibition is opened, an extra table is set up and orange juice refreshment provided.

I enquire whether the exhibitions were well attended. Yes, the deputy prison director tells me, many inmates are interested. The question remains, however, whether the prisoners are interested in the art, the free orange juice, a slight change of scenery, or whether they are simply fed up with the company of their cell mate.<sup>6</sup> Further, some volunteers and people who are curious from outside come in ... but numbers are not large because most of Vechta’s inhabitants work for or are involved in some capacity with the prison and prefer to spend their free time elsewhere. However, she is of the opinion that it is very important to bring culture into the prison.

I don’t know what I expected when I was invited to exhibit my LÜCKE [gap] works in the Art in Prison exhibition space. I think I imagined it would be a building or a room belonging to the prison complex yet separated from daily prison life and exuding a certain autonomy. Or a space that functioned like an airlock—neutral, rather like the church in the Vechta prison complex, architecturally part of the prison but not representing it. Instead of this I found myself in a heterotopia<sup>7</sup> in the midst of another heterotopia: in the Art in Prison exhibition space, which is declared a free art space and ostensibly links the outside world with the world inside the prison but is de facto located within the deviant heterotopia that is prison, where “individuals whose behaviour deviates from the norm” are shut away. Both the exhibition space and the prison are subject to the same “system of opening and locking”.

I want to find out if and whether it is possible to establish real references between the exhibits, the viewer, and the public. And how the determination and meaning of the exhibition location can be rendered apparent and not bogged down—like now—in an attempt to imitate a public art space.

In my telephone conversations with the prison director I had already cautiously asked whether it would be possible to exhibit not my LÜCKE [gap] series of works in the prison “art gallery” but those that I would produce together with the women. Only LÜCKE [gap] works co-produced together with prison inmates are a meaningful approach to thematising sorrow about loss in this specific location. Anything else, including just exhibiting my LÜCKE [gap] works, would simply be tourism. After being exhibited in the Art in Prison exhibition space, these co-produced works could be shown in other places which have something to do with these kinds of LÜCKEN [gaps].

In these preliminary telephone conversations I naturally underplay somewhat the work and costs involved in such a project at a location the (im)possibilities of which I could neither imagine nor understand beforehand. Furthermore, this kind of collaborative project to produce LÜCKE [gap] works I found most appealing, and the only way to attain any inside knowledge about this place would be by working together with the women who live there.

The prison director supports my proposal and looks forward to seeing the results. The practical implementation of the project I should discuss with the deputy director and organise it with her: Where is there a room in the prison that can be turned into a workroom for n number of people? Both the prison director and the deputy director suggest the Seiler [rope-maker] corridor and we go off immediately to look at it. This corridor, 25 metres long, two metres wide, and six metres high was the monks' rope-walk where they used to twist fibre strands to form ropes. The corridor connects the monastery with the church and is used only as a route to accompany prisoners to the church for services. As the church is also used by the citizens of Vechta—obviously not at the same time as prisoners—the locking system will have to be modified if we are to use it: When one has passed through a door it has to be locked before the next one is unlocked.<sup>8</sup>

Although the somewhat narrow and dark Seiler corridor with just two windows is not exactly a pleasant place, its rather bleak aspect is suitable for a neutral atelier; it has no furniture and is thus not encumbered by attempts to suggest false cosiness via its furnishings that I have met with in the other potential workrooms we inspected. The concrete floor is an excellent base for constructing the hollow LÜCKE [gap] clay forms and pouring the wax into them. I try to imagine the conditions under which we will produce the works and estimate that the space available can accommodate narrow workspaces for a maximum of 16 people. For the pouring and drawing off of the wax there has to be ample space because the liquid wax can spurt up to a height of four or five metres at the beginning until lower levels of wax reduces the pressure.

A further advantage of the Seiler corridor is its access to the old monastery courtyard, a small quadrangle enclosed by walls with lawns, rose beds, and benches in the open air. There is no danger of prisoners absconding from there unless—they manage to get hold of a ladder that reaches up to the roof. The quadrangle is a pleasant complement to the workplaces in the dark interior and allows fresh air to come in when the wax is being melted.

The so-called Moonlight cell<sup>9</sup> which also poses no security risk could be used to make coffee and project participants could also use the toilet during the art production process—providing of course that it is vacant. The Moonlight is one of three solitary confinement cells in the D1 corridor which is only separated from the Seiler corridor by a locked double door, and this would be convenient for locking the women who participate. The door at the end of the corridor is locked anyway, and the corridor is hardly used at all for transferring prisoners. The only other rooms there are the consulting rooms of the chaplain and the psychologist and they are rarely occupied.

We inspect the Moonlight<sup>10</sup>. It is the “friendlier” version of solitary confinement: a small cell with a real bed and a normal toilet and washbasin that has a small ante-cell with a shower that can be used under supervision by a

prison staff member; further, the windows are heavily barred. To reach this corridor one has to go through six locked doors. The other two solitary confinement cells, called “bunkers” by the inmates, are also in this corridor. It is only possible to use their facilities when the cells are not occupied; they are also not particularly suitable for making coffee. In both cells there is a mattress covered in synthetic leather on the concrete floor and the walls are completely tiled. One cell has a stainless steel toilet and a mini washbasin with rounded edges in one piece in order that the prisoner cannot self-harm or hide any objects there. In the other bunker there is only a steel squat toilet.

In the afternoon I present my proposal to carry out my LÜCKE [gap] project with women imprisoned in Vechta at the weekly meeting of the women's group consisting of voluntary workers, the psychologist, and the catholic chaplain. The chaplain doubts whether engaging with such a difficult theme as loss should be inflicted on the women without the safety net of psychological support and accuses art, or rather the artist, of irresponsibility: You come here, confront the women with “loss”, and then just go away again.

To be sure Bonhoeffer's attitude to loss—“One must simply hold out and endure it”—cannot be applied to every treatment of this subject. I want to guide the discussion in the direction of the possibility of debating the theme and away from patronising the women and denying their mental and physical capabilities and instead emphasising their capacity for self-determination and self-assessment.

Evaluation of the project threatens to polarise the group. The ideas about the effort and work involved that is necessary to implement the project range from “very taxing work” to “non-binding recreational activity” with coffee and cake. Obviously, I am not in a position to judge the women's ability to cope, but my instincts lead me to reject declaring a group from the outset as incapable of doing such work or of wanting to do such work.

My experience with collaborations, group work, workshops etc. may have been confined to my teaching work at universities and art academies, to doing projects with art students and colleagues, who without doubt overestimate themselves from time to time or the true difficulty of a task, but this does not necessarily mean that conflicts or controversies have to be avoided just because things might get difficult. To have solved a problem, in my experience is regarded in retrospect as a personal success. Why should one deny these participants such experiences before they even start?

In spite of their reservations the majority of the women's group are inclined to give their active support to my proposal and most of those present want to take part in the project. This is duly noted and it is decided to invite the prison staff to take part.

5 Further work areas include “plastics”, a section that fulfils orders for industry, producing plastic oil filter caps for Mercedes and inserting plastic caps in the legs of chairs and tables for IKEA. The income from this work make the prisons more independent because they wish to and are charged with introducing self-financing in order to relieve the burden on the tax collection offices. There is also the “textile” section where the Vechta prison's bed linen and tablecloths are repaired as well as for hotels. Inmates are also involved in renovation work on the prison; they assist with unskilled painting and carpentry jobs.

6 Most of the cells in Vechta are double cells.

7 “There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something



like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.” From: Michel Foucault, *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité*, October, 1984; “Des Espace Autres,” March 1967; *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec, <http://web.mit.edu/allanmc/www/foucault1.pdf> p. 3f. The best known heterotopias analysed by Foucault are psychiatry and the prison.

8 Responsibility for the smooth running of this lies with the two prison chaplains. Prison staff, no matter what their function and including chaplains, are always also guards and “turnkeys” or “screws” (UK), as the prisoners call all the prison personnel who carry keys. The prison church is regarded as a weak spot in the security system of the prison. Its proximity to freedom and the lack of a guarded entrance or sally port could entice the women to overcome this relatively low-grade obstacle.

9 This special cell is named after a prisoner whose name sounded rather like the English word “Moonlight”. It was set up after there were anonymous tip-offs that there would be an attempt to free the prisoner. Since then the cell has been used to isolate women, including to alleviate stress resulting from incarceration. Although the cell is roomier than the others, it is not popular with the women because there are rarely personnel outside in the corridor. The Moonlight and the other two isolation cells are equipped with bells, but the women say it takes too long for staff to come when they need them.

10 Luuk Kramer <http://luukkramer.nl/#architectuur>

AMSTERDAM AND VECHTA, MAY 1997

## ORGANISATION AND PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

From this point preparations and organisation for the implementation of the project take place in parallel in Vechta und Amsterdam. Production of the LÜCKE [gap] works with around 20 participants will begin in early September in the Seiler corridor. 1000 kilogrammes of clay are purchased with donations from two brick factories near Vechta. That should be enough. Tools, appliances such as electric hot plates, pots in which to heat the wax, huge ladles, work tables, and plastic sheets are located within the prison and collected together. The more pots and electric hot plates there are, the easier it is to pour the wax. I ask if it is all right to bring cutters, scissors, screwdrivers, files, electric drills and jigsaws, pliers, and so on into the prison. “Why ever not?” says the deputy director with a laugh.

The deputy director has organised an exhibition in the state parliament of Lower Saxony in the run-up to the project. There, in the hall in front of the plenary assembly rooms where amongst other things policies concerning imprisonment are discussed and decided, the LÜCKE [gap] works will be on show for a short period. A location where in a different form emptiness and gaps certainly arise. In the meantime I am getting rather nervous about all the things that the prison has promised to deliver while it is still not settled how many prisoners want to participate in the project. Five staff members are on the list of participants but not a single prison inmate. I ask when and how we

may reach the women, if there is anything I can do. “That will sort itself out,” says the deputy prison director, but she doesn’t say when or how.

In Amsterdam photographer Luuk Kramer<sup>10</sup> agrees to spend a day taking photos of the production process and of some of the exhibitions where the works are on show. Luuk Kramer is known for his exceptional photographs of architecture. He approaches his subjects—buildings, houses, and residential estates—as though they are people. Every one of his photographs has the aura of a portrait, even when they feature the simplest constructions entirely lacking in architectonic charm or refinement.

I suggest that the works could be installed in places chosen by the women, places where they feel that the LÜCKE [gap] belongs and which for them are associated with the loss. The works could be taken to specific addresses or locations given by the women and photographed there.

A further important question has not yet been settled; namely, the question of how to pay for the expensive microcrystalline wax required. I don’t broach this topic with the prison administration because I fear that if I mention how much it costs, the project will be in jeopardy. The Shell oil company, who manufactures the product, politely declined to sponsor it. On the basis of 20 LÜCKE [gap] works which could be produced realistically during the project week at the prison, I will need 100 litres per work and that means at least 2000 kg of wax: 7000 Dutch guilders.

AMSTERDAM, JUNE 1997

## FUNDING

To apply for a grant from Amsterdam’s Fonds voor de Kunst foundation,<sup>11</sup> I need to have confirmation from a semi-public venue in Amsterdam whose parent institution agrees to exhibit the project; that is, my own eight LÜCKE [gap] works plus those that are created in the prison.

Now I have no alternative but to integrate the LÜCKE [gap] works in my Dutch art production although in terms of form, size, materiality, and thematic they do not fit into the work for which I am known in the Netherlands at all. It seems impossible to reconcile these objects, which look like tall vases, with the aesthetic principles to which I have adhered thus far. Trusted colleagues have already reacted critically to the new objects in my studio. When I describe my planned project in the prison, the reaction is: Are these works still art or shouldn’t I consider re-training as a social worker? I am at a loss for the vocabulary and arguments to make a convincing case for why I want to accept this challenge and enter an unusual, non-public field of work. None of the aspects of the planned LÜCKE [gap] project in a German prison conform to the standards that are applied to art, or at least those I learned in the 1980s in The Netherlands during my sculpture studies at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy: the goal is an autonomous work of art. An art work that is created

in collaboration with others (non-professionals even!) using a pre-defined method cannot be considered an autonomous work. Such cases are at best occupational therapy where it is not about the autonomous character of the end result. Thus the question as to whether something is art or is still art is answered in the negative when the product is created in a cooperative effort.

In her book *But Is It Art?* about 1990s activism in the USA, Nina Felshin<sup>12</sup> makes it quite clear in her introduction that she is not seeking to redefine art, but rather to see it as a possibility of overcoming the barriers that are operative within societies. In my planned prison project, the overcoming of societal barriers is present in several respects: by entering this isolated place where an engagement with art will take place, acting and operating in this place, and transferring the products to the public realm. I am aware that the entire project can throw up misunderstandings about authorship and thus of autonomy, but this is a risk one has to take when one gets involved with others—whereby it is an open question whether a dialogue between all participants will arise at all.

The search for a semi-public venue in Amsterdam to install the LÜCKE [gap] works is a new challenge. A misunderstanding is inevitable: when the LÜCKE [gap] works created in a German jail are exhibited at a Dutch semi-public venue there could be a deliberately negative national judgement which might feed prejudices. For the planned project in Vechta I have undertaken to operate and observe within a secluded social system, a system that most of us don't know and we will only get to know its political and cultural contexts and effects during the project. I feel it is right for me to develop a social critique in the land of my origins, to express it, and carry it into other societies. I certainly do not intend to support imprudent opinions and prejudices about Germans and all things German, like those I have been hearing for the past 17 years in the Netherlands.<sup>13</sup> I have no idea what conclusions I shall draw after my experiences in a German prison for female offenders. If I draw any at all I shall only be able to judge after the project if the conditions there are specifically German or generally characteristic of the European system, which I regard as a union of democratic societies organised along similar lines.

I look in Amsterdam and the immediate vicinity for semi-public institutions which would be suitable for an exhibition and half-heartedly consider using a cemetery. All Christian cemeteries, of whatever denomination, are overflowing with carriers of Christian symbolism; each one is dedicated to the memory of a particular person and in between them there is no space for gaps or emptiness.

In the Zeeburg district I find in the Flevopark the remains of a Jewish cemetery, the only one in the city. From 17<sup>14</sup> to 1942 around 100,000 people were buried here, the majority being poor members of the Hoogduits-Joodse Gemeente.<sup>14</sup> The planned construction of a road led in 1956 to reburial of most of the remains in the Jewish cemetery in Diemen district. 200 grave-stones remained and since then are a part of the Flevopark; crooked and tilting they stand in long grass between trees and bushes. I try to find someone I can ask about the memorial site. The city administration says I should contact the Joods Historisch Museum (Jewish Historical Museum (JHM)<sup>15</sup>) in Waterlooplein.

At the museum I talk to the curator Hetty Berg, who explains that traditionally Jewish graves are not decorated, they must remain empty. Therefore, the cemetery is not a possible location for the exhibition. We discuss the various meanings of adornment and the different and similar concepts of *Lücke*/gap for Bonhoeffer and the Jewish representation of loss through death.

Hetty Berg and another curator, Daniel Bouw, visit my studio to see the LÜCKE [gap] works. They are both working on outreach strategies to increase the museum's audience diversity and view the inclusion of the visual arts as an important component and suitable medium to engage with Jewish culture and its history. We discuss the stigmatisation of Jews as a marginal group, as not belonging to society, and that this was one of the preconditions why they could be made into victims.

We observe the same phenomenon today with other sections of the population, who are excluded because of deviating from the norms of the middle of society. The women prisoners who I work with on the LÜCKE [gap] project are also members of a stigmatised group and remain on the margins of society.

My studio in Amsterdam at that time is on Nieuwmarkt in the former Jewish quarter. During the Nazi occupation the Jewish ghetto was here. Thus the curators and I are actually neighbours, and we meet regularly in the museum or in my studio to continue our dialogue. The curators are interested in the project planned for Vechta as part of the overall LÜCKE [gap] project; for them it is part of the context of "grief work". Our dialogue arrives at the question of whether—in spite of our different positions—we want to, can, are allowed to exhibit the LÜCKE [gap] works in the JHM.

The museum director at that time was not exactly enthusiastic about bringing art into her house that refers to a quotation from a protestant theologian and is created by a German expatriate and the inmates of a German prison. It takes a lot of further negotiations before I can inform the Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst that the exhibition space for the LÜCKE [gap] project will be in the JHM: I am the first non-Jewish artist to exhibit her work in the *Sjoelgasse*, the former Portuguese synagogue.

11 Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst (AFK) supports art on public view in Amsterdam.

12 Nina Felshin (ed.), *But Is It Art? The Spirit of Art as Activism*. Seattle 1995.

13 In 1997 there still existed in the Netherlands a deep-rooted hatred of the Germans. Not only I, actually born after the war, but also my children were regularly insulted by calling us MOFS, the Dutch term of abuse for anyone even vaguely of German descent. So far, nobody in the Netherlands who has used the word MOF has been able to explain to me what it actually means. This is symptomatic of the failure, both in the Netherlands and in Germany, to engage and come to terms with our disastrous common history before and during World War 2. MOF is the abbreviation for Marine Ohne Flotte [navy without a fleet] and refers to the loss of the German navy in World War 1.

14 The main entrance of the approximately 15-hectare Jewish cemetery is on Googweg in Muiderberg. Amsterdam and Muiderberg are relatively far apart with the consequence that in 1714 the new Jüdischen Friedhof Zeeburg was laid out, where mainly children, poor people, and those who had died shortly before religious festivals were buried.

15 The Joods Historisch Museum was founded in 1932. Since 1987 the museum is housed in four former synagogues of Eastern European Jews, a complex dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

“What sort of women do you need then?” asks the deputy prison director when I ask her for the umpteenth time about the state of the participants’ list. To my hesitant reply (“All inmates are welcome ... it would be good if they were sensitive and intelligent ...”) she reacts promptly and practically: “Then we must take the junkies; they may be unreliable and lazy, never finish anything, but they are sensitive and most of them are intelligent.”

What an enchanting prospect—tackling a mega-stressful project with five civil servants, a griping chaplain, and bone idle junkies.

Junkies were a fixed feature on the streets of my part of town, Nieuwmarkt, the red light district on De Wallen and Zeedijk, where from the 1960s to the 1980s Europe’s most notorious drug scene had established itself, according to the statistics. Here two Amsterdam phenomena could be observed: the presence of junkies which was taken for granted and the public which took these “damaged” people for granted who were brazenly shooting up heroin in public.

When I arrived in the Netherlands in 1980 I was taken aback by this: very different groupings existing side by side, mutually tolerating each other, personal freedom seemed possible. One didn’t speak of “junkies” or “normal people” but of “users” and “non-users”. And the dividing lines between the groups blurred; it was normal for a great many working people of all ages to smoke an after-work joint just like Germans drink a beer or a glass of wine. You could ask an Amsterdam police officer for a light for your joint without being arrested. Word soon got around that there were as many “coffee shops” as bakeries where hashish, marihuana, *Nederwiet*, and perfectly rolled joints were on sale. By the mid-1970s, however, the flood of international drug users into Amsterdam had placed an intolerable burden on the city’s social and medical services. The ever-increasing, high number of drug-related deaths aroused concern internationally and thus became an image problem for the Netherlands. The Medisch-sociale Dienst Heroïne Gebruikers (MDHG) an interest group for drug users founded by doctors and intellectuals, who in the 1960s regarded the use of soft and hard drugs as a culture and a mind-expanding experience as well as a rejection of capitalist performance principles and in general resistance to the establishment. MDHG introduced the free distribution of sterile syringes in certain pharmacies to prevent the transmission of potentially deadly infectious diseases. The Junkie Bond, a union of intravenous drug users, put up banners on buildings, for example, before Easter to warn the masses of incoming German drug tourists about the much stronger Amsterdam dope: GERMAN JUNKIES—AROUND HERE THE RULE IS: FIRST THE OUTPATIENT DEPARTMENT, AND THEN THE POLICE.

At the end of the 1970s, however, citizens’ groups were founded which were against the prevailing policies on drugs, because residents were simply fed up with the large number of junkies hanging around in their neighbourhood. One of these groups from the area around Nieuwmarkt bought two decommissioned transport ships which were anchored at the top of Zeedijk Street to provide the users with an alternative place to shoot up heroin—forerunners of the later “safe rooms” for drug users.

Historically, the image of the Netherlands as an open society can be attributed to its character as a seafaring and mercantile nation that was above all interested in earning money. To remove obstacles and adjust the laws to this end was the task of the state. What was apparent on the surface was the non-problematic coexistence of a colourful mix of ethnic groups in its seaports. This image may have contributed to the fact that the Netherlands were idealised all over the world for its openness. Yet the 1960s and 1970s were really a period of new departures in which new forms of living together were tried out. Parallel to the liberalisation of drug policies, from out of the Provo and the Kabouter movements<sup>17</sup> the Kraakbeweging developed in the late 1960s, which claimed the right to squat empty houses to prevent property speculators from forcing up the property prices and rents. These and other activities were covered by the specifically Dutch practice of *gedogen*. *Gedogen* means toleration or sufferance and should be understood as a procedure that results from need, situation, and adaptation and is not governed by law. In the grey area of *gedogen* social issues such as abortion or assisted suicide can remain for decades until a customary right has become established. The state proceeds on the assumption that the citizens of the Netherlands do not wish to be told what to do with regard to ethical issues.

The Netherlands’ famous tolerance has less to do with idealism and more with its practicality but the effect is the same. In this country it is possible for different ethnic groups to live side by side, it is practised, and it has also left its mark on me.

That in a prison extreme differences exist in the assessment of the clientele, in this case the junkies, both within the prison management and within the prison staff—officers, warders, chaplains, psychologists, and voluntary workers—is only logical. In this a prison is no different to any other involuntary community like a factory or a school. At least “screws” and “cons” address each other as Mr. or Mrs. So-an-so, which for outsiders at first tends to veil the natural hostility that exists between those doing the guarding and those being guarded.

Now that I am in the prison on a regular basis I endeavour to be as neutral as possible and to take up a position that will allow me the greatest insights into this microcosm. As an invited artist I have very little authority; I can merely state what I need and when. Moreover, the view that art is a serious activity is not subscribed to by the majority of the staff. After being there a while I can gauge the level of my acceptance among the staff by how fast they walk when they have to accompany me through locked doors.

I attend the opening of exhibitions in the Art in Prison exhibition space and other events at which I am one visitor among many and can at last talk to individual prisoners or small groups. Most of them know that I am “the one from Amsterdam who will do art here”. To live in Amsterdam is greeted by envious enthusiasm on the part of the inmates—a reaction that is repeated later in all of the European prisons I visit. My attempt to describe recent developments in Amsterdam and to correct notions of its being an Eldorado for drug has little effect, but at least it starts off a conversation and results in a surprisingly open exchange. I get to know the women, I can tell them about the project, invite them personally to participate, and in this way I get the first direct and definite acceptances of my invitation.



At these exhibition openings it seems to me that I only talk to drug addicts; the 30–40% of the prison population who are not users I cannot identify or rather I cannot distinguish them from the guests or prison personnel. It's a great relief finally to have personal contact with potential participants. I note one name especially: Anna Leer; she says participation is inevitable with her name—nominative determinism. The deputy prison director takes note of me sounding out the women but does not share my enthusiasm.



Nieuwmarkt Amsterdam, 1970s. In: *30 jaar scoren 30 jaar drugscene 30 jaar MDHG*. 1977–2007, published by MDHG aid association for drug users, 2007

16 As agreed with the women participating in the project, I use here and in the following text the informal term *junkie* (1920s U.S. English) for a drug addict. All of the common terms used in connection with people who consume drugs, like addiction, substance dependence, drug abuse, drug use, drug-related disease, etc., are problematic because in the main they are suggestive and contain a valuation or determination.

17 Provo was a protest movement in the 1960s, whose goal was to provoke violent reactions from the authorities through non-violent actions. The disbanding of Provo in 1967 and the discontinuance of the Provo magazine were the result of Provo's local political activities being institutionalised. At the last local government elections Provo had won a seat on the Amsterdam city council and launched their "White Plans". The most famous of these was the "White Bicycle Plan", which aimed to improve Amsterdam's transport problem. All over Amsterdam bicycles painted white were left and could be used free of charge. Text based on the entry in Wikipedia, accessed 19.6.17.

SCHWICHTELER, SEPTEMBER 1997

## PREPARATORY SEMINAR AT KLOSTER SCHWICHTELER

HILDEGARD HOLKEMANN

CORNELIA KNEIER

BRIGITTE MÖSER

CORNELIA ROSENBERG

MARLIES SCHRÖDER

KARIN SCHUMACHER

CHAPLAIN

DEPUTY PRISON DIRECTOR

PRISON OFFICER NO. 1

We plan to hold a three-day preparatory meeting at the nearby monastery in Schwichteler, at which women with easing of detention conditions<sup>18</sup> can also take part. Even women on opioid substitution therapy with easing of detention conditions can take part because the deputy prison director is a qualified pharmacist's assistant and she is authorised to take methadone from the prison and administer the daily doses outside.

She informs us only shortly before our departure which of the registered participants will be attending the seminar; apparently, Anna Leer and Andrea Bachmeyer have had their easing of detention conditions rescinded, so they will not be coming. I had not bargained for the fact that things can change so quickly. I ask one of the officer participants about this and she gives me to understand in no uncertain terms that there is no discussion about making exceptions where sanctions are concerned. And in addition Anna Leer and Andrea Bachmeyer are confined to their cells.<sup>19</sup>

Top priority for the prison administration is obviously making sure there is compliance with the rules and upholding order in the prison. My project is of secondary importance. The deputy prison director is charged with penalising the women for breaking the rules regardless of the consequences of the sanctions for the project. As project leader she expects me to take the same attitude; I should assume a leadership role in conformance to the prison regulations. It is irrelevant with whom I produce the art works; the only important thing is that I carry out this project in this prison together with inmates and prison officers.

I don't yet know all of the women who have permission to attend the seminar. A tall redhead emerges from the sally port grumbling vociferously; her vest has been forgotten on the inventory of her possessions and she is afraid that when she returns to the prison she will run into difficulties and the vest will be taken away from her. The chaplain calms her down and promises to sort out the problem with the officer concerned. The deputy prison director distributes the women among the cars available; in my car I take a prison officer, the redhead, and a further inmate—the two prisoners are both called Cornelia.

At the first round of talks the prison inmates Marlies Schröder, Hildegard Holkemann, Cornelia Kneier, Cornelia Rosenberg, Karin Schumacher, and



Brigitte Möser introduce themselves, followed by Prison Officer No. 1, the chaplain, and the deputy prison director. With the exception of Brigitte Möser all of the women have been sentenced for crimes related to the procurement of drugs.

In the following days we address the theme of *Lücke*/gap both theoretically and practically. The term turns out to be ideal to speak about personal loss and grief yet without divulging too much that is very private. The chaplain suggests utilising her “flashlight method”: at the beginning and end of each day all the participants should briefly describe how they feel; the others will not comment. This proves to be a useful method of informing each other about the effects of the ground we have covered thus far.

The participants practise focused seeing and feeling of the surface structures of ordinary things around the monastery and its gardens by making rubbings.<sup>20</sup> Take a very good look at structures, I say by way of encouragement, and be just as attentive to a manhole cover as to the paving of a path, a leaf, a tree-trunk, or a fruit. Patient and exact observation and focusing on pattern school the perception and influence the way in which the clay rolls will be constructed later so that an individual rhythm will emerge in the form.

“What does your LÜCKE/gap look like?” I enquire, “How much hollow space does it need; how tall, broad, or narrow must it be? How thin or thick are its walls? Where does it belong, in what place should it be installed?” The women make cardboard cut-outs of the forms of their LÜCKEN [gaps] to scale and try out installing them at various points in the courtyard and gardens. We also practise constructing a form out of clay rolls. A trial wax casting demonstrates how different the rhythms of the fingerprints are and how easy it is to assign them to a particular person. The group’s focus and concentration during discussions, as well as one-to-one conversations, as well as the ensuing practical exercises is optimal.

MARLIES SCHRÖDER is at 40 years of age a so-called old junkie; at the seminar she is a quiet loner who is at pains not to reveal anything private. She tells me that custody of her eight-year old daughter is at risk; that she cannot afford to make any more mistakes in her life nor does she want to. In the prison she is already in a monitored room in the new wing which signifies that she will shortly be released and up to now her conduct has been good. She has been advised to avoid contact with women serving regular penal sentences. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be installed on the new housing estate where she lives with her daughter, in front of the red brick wall that she could see from her living room before she had a relapse.

HILDEGARD HOLKEMANN, who calls herself “Hilde the wild one”, is in her mid-50s. The prison administration terms her a psychiatric patient who is minimally responsive. She lives in an illusory world with dolls and a dead cat, which she talks about in a cloudy and incoherent way. She tends to have abruptly occurring, extreme fits of rage; occasions for this have to be avoided at all costs. How this can be done is an open question, but everyone lets her do as she pleases and Brigitte Möser has clearly set herself the task of keeping Hildegard calm during the seminar.



BRIGITTE MÖSER is in her mid-50s. She was married to an officer and insists on maintaining her social position which she considers to be upper middle class. She collaborates for preference with the officers, the chaplain, and me, speaks of our appreciation of art, our cultural common ground, our higher awareness, and so on. Junkies and their addiction habits she finds repellent – one can surely restrain oneself! She speaks discreetly and self-confidently about her “case”, which attracted a lot of attention in Germany because at issue was whether she had committed the crime with premeditation or not. In her endeavours to define her LÜCKE [gap], she wavers between clarifying the situation and the consequences of her act, whereby she spares neither herself nor the husband she killed from critical judgements. Her husband is her LÜCKE [gap], and it should be placed and photographed in the bunker. Thus she has chosen the severest of all the prison cells as the location for installing her work because in her opinion her husband is as guilty of the crime as she is. He belongs in prison, at least part of the time.

The prison staff at the seminar find themselves in a double role: they are both participants and responsible for the good running of the event. I notice that they are all nice to each other; as yet I am unable to distinguish conformist communicativeness from openness.

The DEPUTY PRISON DIRECTOR brings a developed concept for the form of her LÜCKE [gap] with her. It will be a mega-size cylinder that will be photographed at her parental home.

The CHAPLAIN is in her early 30s. She studied theology and works at Vechta as a Catholic chaplain. She has very definite ideas about the shape of her LÜCKE [gap]. In drawings and rubbings she searches for a form that is in keeping with relations characterised by inequality. Where her work will be installed remains open for the time being.

PRISON OFFICER NO. 1 looks for fineness of structure and form. Her commitment and contributions to the project are accompanied by many words, questions, and statements. Her LÜCKE [gap] is about her family and fateful events in connection with the death of her brother. The universe would be the right location for her work. As a proxy she chooses the gate of the cemetery where her mother is buried to install and photograph the work.

KARIN SCHUMACHER is in her early 20s and as an alcoholic she is a rather uncommon subject in the prison population. The signs of her self-harming are striking: these range from extreme ravaging of her skin to the complete decay of her teeth. She tells me about her four children and what they say and do when she goes for a walk with them. The prison officer informs me that all of the children, two of whom were born in Vechta prison, were taken away from her at birth. During discussions in the group she is extremely timid and unsure of herself, and the junkies take every opportunity to put her down. Although with each activity she groans that “I can’t do anything like that”, she does one drawing after another with very faint lines and carefully constructs a graceful structure of her LÜCKE [gap] in clay with fingers whose nails are

bitten down to the quick. Her work will be photographed in the prison hospital ward where her children were born.

CORNELIA ROSENBERG is in her mid-20s, a Romany, and mother of three children. Cornelia doesn’t just work; she slaves away at whatever she is doing, whether it’s her contribution to the project or clearing tables. She does all the exercises with precision and seriousness which can also be seen in the deep worry lines on her forehead. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be installed and photographed in the prison chapel for her children.

CORNELIA KNEIER is in her late 20s and she is an angry young woman through and through. Throughout the entire work process she remains active and desperate, creative and enthusiastic. She visibly reinvents herself each day and broods over optimal solutions for every challenge she encounters. Nothing she does is automatic; each operation is laboriously worked out until an interim result makes sense. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be installed on a traffic island. She likes the Dutch word for it, *vluchtheuvel*, literally: escape mound. On the photograph the traffic lights should be on amber, not red or green.

The two Cornelias do everything together, and work almost fanatically on studies of form and structure. While clearing up they can’t find their rubbings but then discover them in the paper bin. An officer and I watch them as they flatten the huge sheets of paper and then take them to a safe place, like trophies. Both women are in the methadone program and are in excellent spirits during the three-day seminar; they see perspectives for the future and I say in passing that the prognosis for the two of them is good—the officer does not reply. The common expectation that junkies one day could or should live a life without drugs I suddenly realise is a typical trap inside my mind into which “normal” non-addicts fall.

18 Easing of detention conditions can be granted for good conduct, which is seen as facilitating achievement of the goals of detention; namely, to enable the offenders to live a future life free of crime and to assume social responsibility. These measures include, for example, permission to leave the prison accompanied by an officer, attending external events and functions, and unaccompanied leave for a certain period of time.

19 Confinement to cell is a sanction imposed for breaches of rules. For a certain period the prisoner can only leave the cell to spend one hour in the courtyard under supervision. Contact with others is not allowed.

20 A rubbing (*frottage*) is a reproduction of the texture of a surface created by placing a piece of paper or similar material over the subject and then rubbing the paper with something to deposit marks, most commonly charcoal or pencil, but also various forms of blotted and rolled ink, chalk, wax, and many other substances. Wikipedia, accessed 20.6.17

## INTRODUCTION AT THE PRISON

After the seminar I finally arrive at a concrete concept of how to implement the project at the prison and of the people I will be working with. Before we start I want to give a short introduction at the prison, and a brief summary of what we have discussed so far, in order bring Anna Leer, Andrea Bachmeyer, and other participants who could not take part in the seminar up to speed. When, where, and with whom this will take place proves difficult to organise and is regarded as a nuisance. The prison staff of various sections will have to exempt the participants from their work duties at short notice, heads of departments and managers of the work sections have to sanction this, and the prison administration has to authorise them to make these exemptions. When all this has been done, the prison officers who will escort the women back and forth have to be designated.

Eventually, the addiction treatment specialist, the only man who wants to participate in the project, declares that he will assume the responsibility for supervising a one-hour meeting in a room of the prison's education department. Eight women, who are under the influence of drugs and in a very poor condition including Anna and Andrea, are brought there. They frequently slump down in their seats and are barely responsive at all. Other women want to know what the rules for telephoning will be during the project, for visiting times, meals, their shopping times, and how they will be paid.

I don't know the answers and promise to find out before the project begins. The general mood is awful; the women are either very agitated or not responsive. Unlike the seminar in Schwichteler here there is zero concentration and there is no time to do any practical exercises. Can these be done at a later date? My concept for the project proves futile and, confronted with this real situation of daily life in a prison, my plans suddenly seem out of all proportion and megalomaniac.

Only the addiction treatment specialist remains positive ("They're in a pretty bad mood today"). He is going to procure ten rubber hammers that we need to soften up the much too dry clay donated by the brick factories at the weekend before the project begins.

With the deputy prison director and the heads of the various sections I clarify that the women will be exempted from regular work duties and receive their regular pay. At that time the women earned around DM 150 per month from which they received DM 30 as pocket money. Once a week they can go shopping in the mobile shop in the prison yard without using money (basic foodstuffs, tobacco, cosmetics). The pocket money can also be used for cashless purchases of sweets from machines in the prison corridors. During the period of detention it is forbidden to possess cash. The rest of the women's earnings are paid into a savings account which the prisoners receive as start capital upon their release.

The women are allowed to receive telephone calls once or twice a week or ring someone up themselves. The project participants are held to give up this "telephone time" for the duration of the project, as well as receiving visits once or twice a week, because of the disturbance it creates. As far as I am concerned,

I have nothing against them taking these small individual breaks. Participants will take lunch together in the Seiler corridor; the deputy prison director will sort out the arrangements and suggests, to everyone's surprise, that once a week lunch will be delivered by the personnel canteen, very stylish with three courses and tablecloths, etc.

## MATERIAL CLAY PREPARATION IN THE PRISON

We have to use the weekend before the project starts on the Monday to soften up the clay which is far too hard. We work from the Seiler corridor and use the lawn of the quadrangle to douse the clay with water. All the participants are called upon to help, prison personnel and prisoners alike. Some arrive and survey the scene with gloomy expressions and folded arms: 1000 kg of clay that has to be softened up by beating it with rubber hammers.

One of the officers organises hosepipes, reams of plastic sacks, and tables. The hosepipes are connected to the taps in the Moonlight and Bunker cells and passed through the windows to the outside. I demonstrate to everyone what has to be done: sections of clay are put into the plastic sacks and watered until they are soft; then together with chunks of dry clay plastic sacks are packed with the clay each weighing 5–10 kilos. The plastic sacks are then hammered so long until the clay inside is uniform and malleable.

Anna and Andrea retire to a corner of the quadrangle and invent their own system of watering and hammering. Brigitte Möser complains of backache and how nasty this all is, but nevertheless produces mini-portions of malleable clay with her mini-hammer. Karin Schumacher also complains and stays near Brigitte Möser. Cornelia Rosenberg again works like a demon, but without Cornelia Kneier, who doesn't feel well but intends to come next day. The prison personnel and the chaplain, who have a free weekend, send their apologies.

In the afternoon we are able to stack the first packages of ready to use clay in the Seiler corridor. For the next day we wrap chunks of clay in wet cloths and put them in improvised basins made of plastic sacks so that the clay can absorb water overnight but without becoming too mushy. All according to the trial and error method; an advantage is that the participants are increasingly knowledgeable about the properties of the material.

On Sunday, a 14-year-old girl called Sheila is sent to me from the juvenile unit. The head of the unit thinks that she should participate in the project. Sheila does not look as though she agrees with him. I take her into the Seiler corridor and arrange a workplace for her so that she can make drawings of her LÜCKE [gap]. I request Marlies Schröder, who is rather withdrawn this weekend, to explain the project to Sheila in more detail. During the course of explaining, Marlies writes the LÜCKE [gap] quotation by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

with charcoal on a long wooden bar fixed high on the corridor wall, and together with Sheila, puts up the drawings underneath. Sheila draws really well; using strong lines she produces around ten exciting shapes. Sheila doesn't fancy hammering clay but does it anyway, whereby she moans continually and thereby provokes the others. I have to smooth down differences continually so that today's good working atmosphere doesn't evaporate.

By Sunday evening we have processed most of the clay. After the prisoners have been transferred to their cells at 18:30 hrs, an officer and I work on until midnight to prepare the Seiler corridor: construction of the LÜCKE [gap] works can begin tomorrow morning.

The officer and I will collect the women from the various sections of the prison each morning and take them back when the cells are locked for the night. Our first stop this morning is the juvenile unit, where we find Sheila sitting, or rather lolling, ready and waiting for us. I offer her the choice of either participating in a positive spirit or not at all. She decides not to take part, is relieved, and stops grouching at once. Super, no hard feelings.

Our second stop is Cornelia Kneier. I talk to her alone in her cell; she is still not well and asks for another day of rest. This tall woman sits on her bed crying, there is no trace of her boisterous energy. She is so sorry. I try to comfort her and assure her that she can join the project at any time when she feels able to. She promises to come tomorrow.

# PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION IN THE PRISON

SILVIA ALTMANN  
ANDREA BACHMEYER  
CONNY FREDEMANN  
HILDEGARD HOLKEMANN  
CORNELIA KNEIER  
ANNA LEER  
BRIGITTE MÖSER  
ANNETTE NOTE  
CORNELIA ROSENBERG  
KARIN SCHUMACHER  
MARLIES SCHRÖDER  
ZUZANNA SCHULA  
ADDICTION TREATMENT SPECIALIST  
CHAPLAIN  
DEPUTY PRISON DIRECTOR  
PRISON OFFICER NO. 1  
PRISON OFFICER NO. 2  
PRISON OFFICER NO. 3

In the first week 18 LÜCKEN [gaps] are constructed in the Seiler corridor, under bizarre circumstances and conditions in one of Germany's 184 prisons. I get to know the inmates at Vechta through their modes of working, speed of working, and the intensity with which they engage with the theme and form of their LÜCKEN [gaps]. I see the concentration with which they apply themselves to the task in hand in which there is no trace of the expectation that they won't finish anything, as was frequently prophesied in the run-up to the project. The inmates work from the early morning right up to when they have to leave for locking up time.

The participants who are prison personnel interrupt their work frequently—for various reasons. The inmates regularly help them out because the construction of the form from rolls of clay, the pouring and drawing off of the wax, are all operations that have to be done without any longer interruptions for the clay only stays malleable for a limited period of time; that is, material useable for a mould. When the clay becomes brittle due to the heat and weight of the molten wax, the form loses its stability and an unstoppable river of ± 100 litres of hot wax flows out of the mould. Cornelia Rosenberg especially works so fast that she is able to help others who work more slowly, both inmates and staff alike.

On the third day Cornelia Kneier returns to the project and creates the complex form that she had designed in Schwichteler.

Towards the end of the production, I am surprised at the very different sizes of the works. I had assumed that like my own LÜCKEN [gaps], the participants would produce human-sized forms. The decisions of most of the women to produce waist-high shapes cannot be explained by either lack of time or lack of material.

The LÜCKEN [gaps] of all the prison officers but only four of the twelve inmates are approximately the size of a human being. When I broach this subject I am told that it is important not to lose the insight into the LÜCKE [gap], and at the same time to register and portray the height of one's own life.

At the daily "flashlight sessions" we learn about the effects of the project on the participants: it is hard work, both mentally and physically; causes insomnia; it is a challenge, an eye-opener; and it is unexpectedly a confrontation with the unconscious. I had noticed especially during the work on the project how strongly the women were focused on their object, how serious they were about engaging with the theme, and their ambition to master the work. Over the course of the project there emerged a positive, if not collegial tone in their conversations.

The chaplain is dissatisfied with her LÜCKE [gap] and one night she uses my sabre saw to cut it in half.

ANNETTE NOTE, mid-20s, I only meet her on the first day of the project implementation. I only know that she is a junkie. She works quietly by herself. Her LÜCKE [gap] is to be installed in the garden of the prison officer who was always so nice to her.

SILVIA ALTMANN, 18, is only temporarily in the juvenile unit and will be transferred to another prison, but when is not certain. Until then she wants to work on her LÜCKE [gap]. She is a drug addict, and her child lives with a foster family. Until she was arrested she lived in a sect. The form of her LÜCKE [gap] is a





satanic symbol of her religious community. Most of all she wants to install her work in the cellar of the prison where there are allegedly ancient cages in which people were tortured in bygone times.

CONNY FREDEMANN, mid-20s, is a drug addict and was sentenced to prison for repeated petty theft. She works unobtrusively on her LÜCKE [gap], which should stand forever in the Seiler corridor.

ZUZANNA SCHULA is in her early 30s, comes from Poland, and is one of the few drug addicts with an academic education. She is a translator and speaks four languages fluently. She worked for a while in Greece, where – as she puts it – something went wrong. She prefers to ask questions than to give out any information about herself. She is interested, for example, in the brands of the clothes I wear. She wears the prison uniform, which I only notice because very different women wear the same knitted jackets, jeans, and shoes. When talking to her it is very difficult not to look at the two huge scars on her carotid artery, which she tries to conceal as far as is possible. Zuzanna is a resolute worker; she knows exactly what the form of her LÜCKE [gap], will look like. She is the only one who scrubs the clay residue off the surface of her work and washes it in the quadrangle until it is as white as snow. Her LÜCKE [gap] is to be photographed in the prison chapel.

ANNA LEER is in her mid-30s and was sentenced to several years' imprisonment for attempting to rob a petrol station. At the time of the crime she was in withdrawal and the attendant at the checkout was able to take the gas pistol away from her quite easily. Her LÜCKE [gap] belongs in the former drug scene in Osnabrück's Schlosspark.

ANDREA BACHMEYER is in her early 30s, a welder, and was sentenced to several years' imprisonment for attempting to break into a safe in a car dealer's in Osnabrück. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be photographed in her mother's living room where Andrea grew up. Mother and daughter rave about their trips to Amsterdam, in particular about eating pancakes there and buying drugs.

CORNELIA ROSENBERG is in her mid-20s and serving a sentence for repeat petty theft offenses. She left home at an early age. Her three small children live with their fathers or their fathers' families. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be photographed in the prison chapel.

MARLIES SCHRÖDER is in her mid-30s and serving a sentence for fraud. She works very concentratedly and tries her best to keep out of the usual petty squabbles; however, she hears exactly what is said and has her own opinion about it. She is clearly annoyed about the constant bitching of some of the participants. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be photographed in front of a brick wall on a new housing estate in Vechta.

CORNELIA KNEIER is in her late 20s and is serving a prison sentence for petty theft. I meet her again a fortnight after completion of the LÜCKE [gap] works

as a prison officer is accompanying her across the prison courtyard to her cell. The officer who is accompanying me tells me that in the days before she had swallowed 80 tranquillisers and is unable to work, which carries the penalty of solitary confinement. Cornelia is desperate and inconsolable and cries on my shoulder. After Cornelia has been led away the officer remarks to me "Here are the dregs of society". Cornelia's LÜCKE [gap] will be photographed on a traffic island in the centre of Vechta.

KARIN SCHUMACHER, is in her early 20s, and has been sentenced to prison for repeat offences of petty theft and failure to pay fines. As she is pregnant in nearly every new term of imprisonment the option of sterilisation is discussed. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be photographed in a room of the prison hospital which is very similar to the one where her children were born.

HILDEGARD HOLKEMANN is in her mid-40s, heavily in debt, and failed to meet the payment deadlines. Further fines were imposed which she also cannot pay. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be photographed in the Seiler corridor.

BRIGITTE MÖSER is in her early 50s. She was convicted of premeditated murder but after a retrial she was found guilty of manslaughter and her sentence was commuted to three years in prison. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be photographed in the Bunker.

The ADDICTION TREATMENT SPECIALIST is in his early 40s. His LÜCKE [gap] is huge and awkward. It can be photographed in the prison courtyard; it is not important to him where it is installed.

The CHAPLAIN thinks her LÜCKE [gap] has turned out badly and wants to construct a new one in my studio at a later date.

The DEPUTY PRISON DIRECTOR is in her early 40s, and during the implementation of the project she is pregnant with her second child. During her absence we photograph her LÜCKE [gap] in the front garden of her parents' house, not in the living room as originally planned.

PRISON OFFICER NO. 1, mid-40s, wants her LÜCKE [gap] to be photographed in front of the cemetery where her mother and brother are buried.

PRISON OFFICER NO. 2, in her early 40s, is a senior prison officer whom the inmates call "the bronze key". She chooses the location for her LÜCKE [gap] with great care: it stands like a trophy on the staircase in front of the double door that leads to the administration department.

PRISON OFFICER NO. 3 is in her late 20s. Like all the other prison employees she takes part in producing the works as often as her leisure time allows. Her LÜCKE [gap] will be photographed in front of a city map of Cuxhaven, her home town, which hangs in her office.

Towards the end of the project, the prisoners Anna Leer, Andrea Bachmeyer, Cornelia Rosenberg, Conny Fredemann, Marlies Schröder, Zuzanna Schula, and Prison Officer No. 1 all work on the uncompleted work processes after they have finished their compulsory work.

Anna Leer's parting words to me:

If you plan to do any more projects of this calibre, you must decide with whom you want to work, with us or with them. With both it doesn't work.

LOWER SAXONY, OCTOBER 1997

## PLACES AND IMAGES

To install the LÜCKEN [gaps] in the locations designated by the project participants I organise a three-day shoot with several teams in several vehicles. Photographer Luuk Kramer wants to photograph all the objects *in situ* in two days. Participants with easing of imprisonment conditions are permitted to accompany me, a prison officer, and some colleagues from Amsterdam. On the first day we take the objects in a transporter to the private addresses and to the destinations that are public places in Vechta, Osnabrück, Oldenburg, and environs. On the second day a team installs the LÜCKEN [gaps] which are then photographed by Luuk Kramer and his assistants. On the second and third days a further team collects the LÜCKEN [gaps] and takes them in Vechta's Black Maria back to the prison.

I only see the photos of all of the LÜCKEN [gaps] in their "natural" environment when I get back to Amsterdam. Although I was sitting next to Andrea and her mother on the living room sofa, and was with most of the other women in the hospital room, the chapel, the solitary confinement cell, or the public streets while the photos were being taken, it is only now that I see on the photos the *impact* of each and every installed LÜCKE [gap]. The pictures capture the space and the object, they show connection and non-connection; one appears to log in to its surroundings and becomes part of the scenery, another remains a foreign body in a non-compatible environment. In all the cases there emerge interactions between location, the moment in time, and the object. The project participants confirm that they see in the photographs that their intentions regarding the installation have been realised.

Are thus the *in situ* photographs the actual result of the project then? I suspect that the emotionally charged photographs will not be surpassed in exhibitions of the autonomous objects. Although photography has been established as a medium for autonomous art at least since the 1980s, I think of Walter Benjamin's "aura"<sup>21</sup> as his criterion of "authenticity". Where then is the aura here? Around the LÜCKE [gap] object, in its photographic reproduction, or is it in the action, because the object was created in a prison, or rather was transported out of the prison and into the world outside? In these cases I would locate the aura within the jail LÜCKEN [gaps] themselves, precisely because they carry the

actual, innumerable fingerprints of the creators who made these unique objects and who have combined their individual truths and concerns in every single piece. Virtually no other bodily metaphor indicates the identity of a person, both in a criminological and an art historical sense, like the fingerprint.

In 1936 Walter Benjamin understood "expression" as a medium, as an attempt to transcend mere signifying by "naming the name". Through describing the facts of the case truth becomes apparent and in this lies the actual provocation of art for philosophy, which engages with the content of aesthetic and art sociological works. The confrontation takes place where philosophy rises up upon the "ruins of history".<sup>22</sup>

To discuss experiences with projects in prisons I visit Wolfgang Zingg in Vienna, the initiator of WochenKlausur,<sup>23</sup> a group of artists who do not confine themselves to producing art objects, but use the potential of art "to make small but very concrete suggestions of how social deficits can be alleviated and to put these suggestions into practice. In this artistic design is not understood merely as a formal act, but as an intervention in our society."



Jochen Becker: *Es gibt viel zu tun*. DIE KÜNSTLER / INNEN-INTERVENTION 8WOCHENKLAUSUR, KONZEPT-KUNST UND DER NGO-BOOM. In: *Kunstforum International* 132: 1996

In 1996 WochenKlausur opened "a coordinating agency at the Salzburg Police Detention Centre that provides social and legal assistance to inmates detained pending deportation [...] conditions in deportation detention<sup>24</sup> are significantly worse than they are in any correctional facility. [...] In the end, the talks [with key representatives from politics, the media, scholarship, the churches, police authorities, the Ministry of the Interior, and relief organizations] regarding

conditions in deportation detention led the police chief to allow the establishment of a social service agency in the facility.” In 1994 WochenKlausur established “a shelter for drug-addicted prostitutes [...] For six years, the facility provided a place to sleep for women who needed to get some rest during the day.”

We are in agreement that “the self-contained aesthetic object” should be “replaced by open spheres of signification and actions in which plural and multiple references can be generated by the viewers”, as Peter Weibel also formulated it in his invitation to WochenKlausur, Christine and Irene Hohenbüchler and others to participate in the Austrian pavilion at the 48th Biennale in Venice. Weibel understands direct intervention in contemporary problems of society as a logical continuation of the critical transformations that have been taking place in art since the 1960s. When in the new economy manufacturing production decreases and immaterial production, for example, service industries, increases, this corresponds to the artists who also understand themselves as service providers. The separation point lies in the new definition of the concept of an object away from the definitions of concept art. This does not mean that artists should not produce objects any more, only that their production is not of primary interest.<sup>25</sup>

21 See Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* [1936], in: *Illuminations*, Introduction by Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn, London: Fontana Press, 1973, p. 215f.

22 See Walter Benjamin, *Das Passagen-Werk* [English title: *The Arcades Project*], in: *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. V, eds. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser, in collaboration with Theodor W. Adorno and Gershom Scholem, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982.

23 <http://www.wochenklausur.at>

24 At that time women whose asylum applications had been rejected and who did not name their country of origin, were held in separate units in Austrian and German prisons. The authorities attempted to determine country of origin by the language they spoke with the result that the women hardly spoke at all.

25 Peter Weibel: *Ein Museum ist kein Hotel*. Conversation with Vitus H. Weh. In: *Gespräche mit Ausstellungsmachern, Kunstforum International*, vol. 145, 1999.

## DOCUMENTATION

My gallerist Maria Chailloux sets up a meeting with the Amsterdam printers Rob Stolk. Rob is one of the founders of the Netherlands *Provo* and *Kabouter* movement mentioned above. He agrees to produce and sponsor a small exhibition catalogue which he will deliver to Vechta prison in good time for the exhibition.

HANOVER, VECHTA, AMSTERDAM, DECEMBER 1997–AUGUST 1999

## EXHIBITIONS

Hanover, 8–12 December 1997

The first exhibition takes place in Hanover, in the Lower Saxony Parliament. Three women with easing of imprisonment conditions are permitted to attend the opening in the morning accompanied by a prison officer and me. The 18 LÜCKEN [gaps] preside imposingly over the vast hall in front of the plenary rooms. I had expected to encounter a great many people going about their business in this centre of political activity, but the plenary rooms are empty and apart from the doorkeepers and cleaners nobody else appears to be in the building. A couple of regional journalists put in an appearance, take photos of the women and their LÜCKEN [gaps], ask obvious questions, but do not stay for Anna Leer’s critical presentation that she gives to the around ten people present.

Vechta, 9 January–6 February 1998

The next exhibition takes place in Vechta prison. I request the deputy prison director for permission to install the LÜCKEN [gaps] also in the solitary confinement cells, and not only in the Seiler corridor and hallways of the administration department, that is, the area belonging to the ART in Prison exhibition space. In spite of my pages of arguments why it would be important to also exhibit the works within the prison proper, my proposal is rejected. The solitary confinement cells must remain free so that in case of need they can be occupied immediately.

A couple of hours before the opening Michael Daxner comes to the prison to look at the 18 LÜCKEN [gaps] that we have installed in the Seiler corridor, the corridor of the solitary confinement cells, and the hallways of the ART in Prison exhibition space. In his opening speech he responds to Anna Leer’s introduction. She tells the audience about how important the project was to her as the first work activity of her own choice, about practical problems and problems relating to the theme that arose, and how she experienced these problems and found solutions. She describes her thoughts and feelings and the effect that constructing her LÜCKE [gap] had on her own personal grief work.

Daxner adds that imprisonment should not touch this resumption of grief work in any way for then it would attack the step taken from surviving to living. “In the enforcement of prison sentences the state enforces its rules on behalf of society. Even when they are accepted these rules are only a fraction of what has been lost: dignity, love, a person, a need—something that we don’t know about or just think we know about only too well.”

Amsterdam, February 1998–January 1999

The original LÜCKEN [gaps] that I had constructed are exhibited in the *Sjoelgasse* of the Joods Historisch Museum in Amsterdam.<sup>26</sup> By request of the museum the exhibition is extended for a further six months.

26 See *Project LÜCKE* <http://jck.nl/nl/tentoonstelling/project-lucke-8-vazen-van-was-van-ulrike-montmann>



JANUARY 1998–DECEMBER 1999

## LÜCKEN [gaps] ON TOUR

The twenty wooden crates for the LÜCKEN [gaps] that were constructed in the men's prison long before the project started have to be modified by me and the participants in a series of small sessions either because they are too small or too large and impractical. We also replace the too flimsy aluminium wheels with solid rubber wheels, which are sponsored by one of the prison officers.

In the years that follow, the Embassy of the Netherlands in Berlin's dark blue transporter often stands in the prison courtyard to load up or unload the crates. The embassy sponsors many of the transports of the exhibition to locations all over Germany.

tasks. He discounts the running joke of the prison staff that the women were all so enthusiastic about the project because they were getting drugs from Amsterdam from me.

I compare the regular work of the prison inmates with the variety of work processes during and after production of the LÜCKE [gap] works. The reputation that the junkies have of being lazy does not appear to derive from them shying away from hard work; in my opinion this preconception has to do with the fact that they have no relationship with the stereotyped work processes and their products. If one seeks to bring about changes in the lives of drug-addicted women prisoners with and through work, then one must find work for them that is challenging and produces results with which they can identify. The possibilities are endless, I muse: handicrafts, building, gardening, cooking, sewing, and so forth. I maintain that I could perform any sort of work together with the women successfully that has something to do with their lives and that offers them the possibility to contribute their own ideas and solutions. I could even create something so absurd as prison uniforms with them.

"Then do it", says the prison director.

## RETROSPECTIVE VIEW

The prison director and I talk about the work that was done, speculate about possibilities and risks of this or similar projects in the future, ponder over why there was such strong motivation to participate in the LÜCKE [gap] project, revisit the chaotic start, hammering the clay, the hindrances associated with pouring the wax. We discuss the working operations that were necessary but we hadn't made provision for, such as modifying the crates and lugging them around for the transport, work which was accomplished voluntarily and without pay after the inmates had completed their regular mandatory work. In contrast to the prison staff most of the inmates regard the project as their thing, their responsibility, even now after completion of the works.

Even now the prison director is still amazed at the remarkable willingness and ability of the junkie participants to get involved and perform the necessary

## MULTI-AUTHORSHIP

My contention that artistic work in prison can have an emancipatory effect—although meaning and intention of the place would seem to run counter to this—was confirmed by the LÜCKE [gap] project. That the prison staff wanted to construct their works together with the inmates was an interesting experiment within an institution with a strict hierarchy. The results of the project consist of twelve works by inmates, six by prison staff, and my eight LÜCKEN [gaps]: it is a multi-authorship project.

After the touring exhibition ended, there was the problem of what to do with the objects, what should happen to them. How can or should the products of "unequal" people be handled "equally"? If some of the participants claim their objects as own private property, then elements will be broken out of what was a collective endeavour. The imprisoned junkies section, in whose lives there is no private sphere at the moment, rely on the whole remaining intact and complete; that the starting point and targets of our collective actions within the social context remain identifiable and documented so that this can be passed on.



Oldenburgische Volkszeitung, January 1998





Karin Schumacher, LÜCKE in a prison hospital room, Vechta  
60 × 90 × 40 cm



LÜCKE [GAP]

Cornelia Kneier, LÜCKE on a traffic island, Vechta,  
130 × 60 × 50 cm. All photographs of LÜCKE: Luuk Kramer

## PRISON WEAR COLLECTION—PWC

A collaborative project with fashion designer Anneclaire Kersten and eight women serving custodial sentences in Vechta women's prison, Lower Saxony, Germany.

The concept for the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION (PWC) developed from observations and questions that arose before, during, and after organising and completing the LÜCKE [gap] project.

In this collaborative project, I only invite drug addicted prisoners to participate and not prison staff, following Anna Leer's recommendation that having different interest groups involved in the project should be avoided.

My throwaway remark, that with the women I could actually make any kind of prison clothes, even out of the hated, scratchy, jail blankets, was entirely spontaneous: it was to illustrate my firm belief in the women's capabilities to master seemingly impossible challenges posed by work processes when the work and the product directly touch upon the women's lives.

Once I had announced this project proposal, I immediately saw its possibilities for using the motifs of "prison" and "clothing" to explore my assumptions about the lives of female drug addicts in prison: when one is incarcerated in a prison, this must be first and foremost a physical experience. It is an absolute necessity not to lose one's identity during imprisonment, and this is expressed most manifestly in the women's desire for style, whereby they do what is possible in their constrained environment: colouring one's hair a new shade every week; giving oneself and others piercings and tattoos;<sup>27</sup> making jewellery for themselves and as barter objects; and getting hold of clothing, shoes, and accessories that are evocative of "outside".

The need to make oneself recognisable as an individual through particular styling, the need for a distinct image, is more or less a trait common to all human beings. However, in a place where people are treated uniformly, where the rhythms of eating, drinking, working, sleeping, and relaxing are governed by rigid directives, and where every expression of one's personality is met by suspicion rather than approval, this need is almost physically palpable. The way in which the women style themselves is reminiscent of Jean-Paul Sartre's prisoner of war in his *Les chemins de la liberté* (The Roads to Freedom) trilogy<sup>28</sup> who is grimly determined to try and stay well-groomed—clean and shaved—while all around him men are letting themselves go. If he stopped caring about his appearance, he feels it would be tantamount to capitulating to his warders and his own desperation. Condemned to a state of physical unfreedom, all that he can do to demonstrate his independent spirit is to maintain and care for his outward appearance in order to radiate identity and pride.<sup>29</sup>

What was called “prison wear” in Vechta in 2000 has absolutely nothing to do with convicts' suits, but refers to the set of basic, durable, and utilitarian clothes issued to the junkies, who are often destitute and very down-at-heel when they arrive in prison. The few clothes of their own they possess are looked after very carefully and only worn on special occasions. Women on parole, like those who took part in the preparatory seminar in Schwichteler, accompanied us to photo shoots, and to set up the LÜCKE [gap] exhibitions, wore completely different clothes to those they wore in prison—always the same shapeless trousers, knitted jackets, and shoes. Designing and producing a PRISON WEAR COLLECTION (PWC) will enable us to thematise life in prison.

27 Although piercing and tattooing is forbidden in prison because of the risk of infection, it is difficult to prevent. The women tattoo with devices and colours they make themselves.

28 Jean-Paul Sartre, *The Roads to Freedom* [1945–1949], London: Hamish Hamilton, 1947–1950.

29 From the text by Louise Schouwenberg in the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION exhibition catalogue, 2000.

## “WHAT COSTS NOTHING, IS WORTH NOTHING”

I had financed the LÜCKE [gap] project with funds awarded in support of my work as an artist. Without this money, the project would not have been possible. I wanted to try to achieve “something” using the tools and resources of art; something that for the participants had perhaps begun as just a change from everyday prison routine, but over the course of the project had then become a collective experience that would resonate for a long time to come. In order to create a level playing field from the outset for everyone involved in the PWC, I immediately inform the prison administration about the actual costs and do not in any way play down the sum required, which in the previous project

had resulted in a false estimation of the material and artistic value. Thus I cite the real costs which are only covered in part by Dutch grants provided by the AFK and BKVB.<sup>30</sup> The prison director can and will support me in every possible way—from organising a load of prison blankets from various prisons in Lower Saxony (which is not easy at all as every “improper” use of state property has to be justified and answered for) to housing all the project collaborators in the prison's guest house. With regard to the fees for the artists and the assistants as well as a contribution to the costs of the material needed, the prison director will contact the ministry of justice.

30 Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst, Fonds Beeldende Kunst, Vormgeving en Bouwkunst, Amsterdam, Tijlfonds (Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds), Amsterdam.

S'-HERTOGENBOSCH, OCTOBER 1999–JANUARY 2000

## KNEIER AT THE EUROPEAN CERAMIC WORK CENTRE

I use my artist residency at the European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC) to create life-sized figures which will function in the Prison Wear Collection project as symbolic and as actual models of the clothes. The mission of the EKWC<sup>31</sup> is to provide a laboratory where work is conducted on different applications of ceramics. During a period of three months artists can develop and realise experimental projects supported by a professional team in excellently equipped studios. Participants and the team discuss needs, questions, and problems during the regular daily meetings held in the studios.

In the selection process of the centre's artists in residence, previous experience or knowledge of ceramics does not play a role at all; on the contrary, the centre welcomes artists working in other genres whose approaches may lead to other applications of ceramics. The challenge is to tackle novel work processes in ceramics, to master them if possible, and thereby generate new knowledge. In other words, the centre conducts practical arts-based research.

This rather courageous undertaking—to offer creative people who may have no specialist knowledge working spaces where they can develop their own projects with unfamiliar material and working methods—has proved highly successful; advantageous for both artists and the centre. Here I see certain parallels with my work with the women in prison. With a project where there is a defined common goal yet freedom to interpret and formulate one's own individual approach to the work and the support and guidance of experts is given, it is possible to achieve results that none of those involved could have achieved on their own.

31 [The centre] has a history that goes back to December 7, 1969, when the Ceramic Work Centre (KWC) opened its doors in Heusden [the Netherlands, founded by ceramicist Jan Oosterman and curator Bernadine de Neeve (Museums Boijmans Van Beuningen)].



The centre moved to 's-Hertogenbosch in 1991 and was transformed into the excellently equipped European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC). In 2010 the centre underwent another transformation: it opened a Cad/Cam studio and launched a new name, Sundaymorning@ekwc. In 2015 the centre moved to a former leather factory in Oisterwijk, in a building that holds enough space to also welcome the public, higher education and industries. As an artist-in-residence centre Sundaymorning@ekwc annually welcomes about 60 artists, designers and architects to experiment with ceramics for a continuous or phased period of three months. Source: <https://sundaymorning.ekwc.nl/>

## KNEIER PRODUCTION 1–4

I take my antique processional figure of a madonna, photos of Cornelia Kneier, and my PRISON WEAR COLLECTION concept to the work sessions in the centre.



Cornelia Kneier, Seiler corridor, women's prison in Vechta, Lower Saxony

In Roman Catholic countries the church organises processions in which figures, for example, of a madonna, are carried through the streets for hours, high above the heads of the spectators. Some of these processions, like those in the South of France, are famous. Because the weight of these figures is considerable, they are hollow, bald, and the arms are not attached. The holy figure is dressed ceremoniously for the procession, and wears a wig and a crown. The arms are inserted through the sleeves of the clothes and moved by rods to greet the faithful.

## PLAN

Based on my processional madonna figure, which looks androgynous without clothes, I model a larger than life<sup>32</sup> figure in clay and give it the facial features of Cornelia Kneier. Thus the model unites the features of the most revered woman in Christendom and those of one of the most despised, a junkie. I want to make four copies of the figure for the PWC project—three in fine porcelain and one in ordinary terracotta.

<sup>32</sup> The figure measures 2.22 m. The finished porcelain figure will be the same size as Cornelia, approx. 1.85 m, because porcelain shrinkage during firing is around 15%.

## IMPLEMENTATION

When porcelain<sup>33</sup> is fired,<sup>34</sup> there is shrinkage of around 15% and deformations may occur. Unlike earthenware, when porcelain is fired in the kiln it becomes unstable at 1260° and resembles chewing gum or pudding. As large objects of porcelain like my figures had not been produced at the centre before, the technical support team tested various methods and compositions of the porcelain mixture for weeks. Various materials were added, including Molochite, flax, and toilet paper.<sup>35</sup> The most suitable mixture that we found I then produce using dough mixers; I need 140 kg porcelain clay per figure.

From my solid “original” figure (positive) of modelling clay I use plaster of Paris to make a mould (negative) consisting of eighteen sections. The parts are mortised so that they can be joined securely together. The sections of the mould have to follow the form of the model in such a way that they can later be removed cleanly from the resulting press-moulded porcelain figure.

I reproduce the original clay figure by pressing the porcelain mixture into the mould, starting at the bottom of the figure. The porcelain has to be of a consistent thickness and when starting on the next adjoining section care must be taken that the porcelain and the plaster mould both have the same degree of moisture. As the plaster draws moisture out of the porcelain mixture, it is essential to press it into the mould as quickly and precisely as possible. In the space of twelve hours I press 140 kg of porcelain mixture into the plaster mould without a break, finishing with the section at the top of the skull. The eighteen sections of the plaster mould are held together with clamp straps.

Removal of the sections of the mould starts around the level of the chest. At the points where the stumps of the arms are located there is the greatest danger that the porcelain will not come away cleanly from the mould. Each section that is removed reveals the pale grey porcelain underneath and after two days a raw porcelain Kneier<sup>1</sup> stands in my studio—without supports. This transformation from soft to hard is fascinating; the fine skin of the figure bears every small detail present in the original clay model. The technical support

team<sup>36</sup> are satisfied with the porcelain formula for the time being. Kneier1 is put into a drying tent<sup>37</sup> made of thin plastic sheeting so that it dries slowly and uniformly. I do not remove the traces of clay adhering to the plaster mould after removing each figure; thus each Kneier will retain visible traces of the one that was moulded before.



EKWC, 's-Hertogenbosch, Kneier 1–4

While Kneier1 is drying, I press terracotta clay into the mould (the robust type of clay that is also used for flower pots) for Kneier2. It is easy to work with and only shrinks by about 6% during firing. This figure is easy to remove from the mould, no problems with sticking or tearing. From this figure I remove the marks left by the seams of the mould's sections; later, every operation performed on the leather-hard<sup>38</sup> surface of the clay will be clearly visible. The press-moulded terracotta figure is also put into a drying tent. As each day passes the material of Kneier1 loses more and more of its raw and wet appearance; the figure gets progressively whiter—it is soon ready for firing.<sup>39</sup>

In the meantime the schedule put up for the largest kiln in the hall carries the firing date and programme for Kneier1. It touches me to read her name on an official notice board and that here her name has become an everyday term for an artwork. I make a documentation of the work process and send Cornelia descriptions and photos.

Next to the kiln there are already wooden pallets piled high with ceramic supporting elements. When Kneier1 is driven at a snail's pace to the kiln by a special forklift truck for sensitive goods, the team and all the artist colleagues stand by, like at a procession. The casing of the kiln opens hydraulically—a spectacular, almost theatrical procedure.

Building the support frame with the material to prop up the ceramic figure takes an entire day. Its construction makes allowance for the shrinkage of the porcelain during firing; the head and the arm stumps must be precisely supported so that the puddingy-chewing gum-like mass doesn't collapse at the sintering point (1260°C).

Two days later the team opens the kiln while I am not there; the colleagues telephone me to say that although the figure has a very lovely skin, there is damage. The chest and the skirt are cracked, as I see for myself later. The head is leaning forward by about 10°. The fired figure is completely different to the raw porcelain version; the material is unremittingly hard and stiff. Peter, one of the technical staff, joins me and points out again how beautiful the skin is. For ceramicists a damaged piece is worthless, kaput, even a small crack

changes the bright sound of porcelain. Only amateurs consider making repairs. Peter says that that doesn't apply in this case, I have to think about the Kneier project as a whole and whether one of the figures can be impaired or not: "Look how poetically she holds her head". I have a hard time trying to see this *misbaksel*<sup>40</sup> with such sentimental pathos. Matthias, the expert for reproduction techniques, advises me to stabilise the figure as soon as possible with resin inside it, otherwise it will likely fall apart. We do it. She stands in my studio, the smallest figure next to the massive original model, Kneier2 is in the drying tent, and Kneier3 is in the mould. Kneier1 can stay as she is, somehow she is herself.



EKWC, 's-Hertogenbosch, Kneier 1–4

Kneier2 doesn't need any supports in the kiln—she comes out of it flower-pot orange with white flecks of porcelain from the figure that was press-moulded before, undamaged, and almost a head taller than Kneier1. For Kneier3 I mixed red pigment with the porcelain. The support frame in the kiln has been

modified in the light of experience with Kneier<sub>1</sub>. In spite of this the seam across her chest splits; an error in calculating the height of the arm supports. The poetic inclination of her head is missing.



EKWC, 's-Hertogenbosch, Kneier<sub>3</sub>.  
All photographs at the EKWC: Peer van der Kruis

Before press-moulding the porcelain clay into the mould to make Kneier<sub>4</sub>, I clean it. She should be spotlessly white. The supporting framework has been recalculated and should now be O.K., says the kiln master. He also intends to reduce the temperature considerably, to 1230°C. Kneier<sub>4</sub> comes out of the kiln undamaged, not deformed, and white as snow. The lower temperature influences the firing such that the melting of the minerals—typical for porcelain—is less intense. Unfortunately, this also means that the specific vitreous character of porcelain is lost.

A few months later, Kneier<sub>1–4</sub> are brought to Vechta prison by the specialist artworks transport company Gerlach in a *Super de Luxe* lorry with extra pneumatic shock absorption and temperature equalisation for ceramics.

33 Porcelain consists of kaolin, feldspar, and quartz. Porcelain manufacture requires firing at higher temperatures (1260–1400°C) than earthenware and stoneware. Shards of porcelain are dense and white and the material has low permeability and is very tough and resonant. The firing process at such high temperatures leads to vitrification. Deformation of the porcelain object during firing is possible.

34 During firing the starting mineral products are heated until they turn into a water-insoluble substance (ceramic, porcelain). The clays that go through these thermic processes after cooling are permanently transformed into stable, water-resistant material. Such processes that cannot be reversed are termed irreversible.

35 Molochite is made by firing raw low-iron kaolin at very high temperatures and it can be added to the raw porcelain mixture. Together with small quantities of finely shredded flax, paper fibres from WC paper soaked in water, and bentonite clay a mixture is produced that has a better firing quality.

36 EKWC Team 1999/2000: Artistic director and organisation: Xavier Toubes and Joop van Wingaarden; ceramic support specialists: Anton Reijnders, Peter Oltheten;

firing: Rob Ruimers; glazing analysis: Andrea Wach; reproduction equipment: Matthias Keller, Marc Kohlen; staff responsible for facility management, secretariat, and the library.

37 The modelled object has to dry out slowly before firing because a lot of water is trapped between the clay particles. The temperature should remain constant during this process because heterogeneous drying results in partial contraction that gives rise to cracks.

38 At this stage the clay cannot be modelled any longer, but because of the residual moisture one can work on the surface.

39 A piece is ready for firing when it feels dry and warm to the touch (reduced conductivity).

40 The Dutch expression *misbaksel* derives from the manufacture of bricks; it refers to fired bricks with flaws. *Misbaksel* is also a term of abuse for bad or “flawed” people.

VECHTA, JULY–OCTOBER 2000

## PRODUCTION OF THE PRISON WEAR COLLECTION

MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

NICOLE FRISCH

A. G.

ANGELIKA HUTER

WERONIKA MAZUR

REBECCA MERTENS

MARI NJIE

ELLEN SALZER

The participants design and produce clothing with the intention of making a statement about life in prison. The basic material is sixty prison blankets bearing the logotype design of the Lower Saxony prison plus 1000 metres of Velcro tape and a selection of Italian faux leather Skaï and silk cloth. The women work as required and according to personal preferences with the sewing machine or by hand; they knit, crochet, smock, weave using strips of blanket, and spool knit on an outsize spool with a diameter of 60 cm. Anneclaire Kersten provides paper patterns to size.

Kneier<sub>1–4</sub> serve as oversized dress-up dolls for the participants; this enables them to think outside of their own body and own clothes. Kneier<sub>1</sub> with her dramatic split rib cage and slightly inclined head is the most popular model.

The project's workrooms are again the Seiler corridor and the courtyard. Work on the project goes on for several months. The prison has not imposed any restrictions on how we organise the work or a timetable of when the production should be finished.

Anneclaire and I work for one week, sometimes two, with the women and then drive back to Amsterdam for a week, where I organise the presentation of the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION at the Supreme Court of the Netherlands, the Arrondissementsrechtbank, prepare a catalogue with contributions from several art theorists, and write applications for funding.





Seiler corridor, women's prison in Vechta, Lower Saxony, Kneier 1–4

During the time we are not in Vechta, the women do their regular jobs or attend classes. From time to time we get letters from some of the participants in which they tell us about the success or failure of the sewing that they have taken back to their cells. They give much serious thought to the clothing they are working on; amend, concretise, or discard what they have in mind or the materials they are using in their designs.

A prison officer coordinates the administrative correspondence and communication, which enables the various phases of the project to run smoothly. From his desk each work phase is agreed with the prison director, the heads of sections, and the management of the guest house. He allows the participants and me to use the fax for our correspondence and delivers my answers personally to the women in their cells.

Being together every day under conditions that have been laid down and are always the same encourages us, as a group working together, to develop

optimal concentration: inventing, learning, and acquiring new skills all serve to develop the individual models of the clothes. The question as to how life in prison can be visualised through a piece of clothing, leads directly and indirectly to participants describing life outside of prison, before their first term of imprisonment, and after each successive term. Initial clichéd images featuring bars and tears give way to a more specific, sober, and bolder consideration of the life histories that led to prison. Nearly all the participants think that it is their own fault they are in prison; they regard their series of prison terms not so much as a penalty for their offences, but rather as a logical consequence of the lives they live and have lived. The designs gradually develop into a quest to find a connection between life and punishment.

We spend most of the time working in the courtyard, with only one prison warder in attendance. Anyone looking down on us from the windows of the administration, from the corridor with the sections for punitive detention and custody pending deportation, will see the idyllic—and unusual—picture of a group of women sewing and talking together. When the prison director and around ten heads of section visit us, the women confidently give a slide presentation about the various developmental phases of the work, demonstrate methods used, present work in progress, and describe the further work steps.

The opinions of prison personnel about doing such a project in prison are extremely divergent. When they come into direct or indirect contact with the project the majority of the staff do not hide the fact that they find it extremely disconcerting. This reaction could be due to a general mistrust on their part or they find it unsettling that the clarity of the respective positions that they are used to is lacking. Junkies, who are doing this work confidently and independently, who reflect on their lives in prison, appear—at least for a while—to have taken away their warders' power over their lives.

MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER comes from Hanover, is 42 years old, and in prison terminology counts as an old junkie. She has been sentenced to prison for the umpteenth time for not paying fines incurred for loitering,<sup>41</sup> for petty theft, and other criminal offences. The small sums have accumulated and now Magda has to serve one day for every ten D-Marks she owes. She is in the prison's methadone programme and complains about the side effects such as putting on weight, lack of interest in everything, and lethargy to the point of apathy. However, she does experience a kind of tranquility because the compulsion to procure drugs has ceased. She cannot inject drugs any longer because after twenty years of chronic drug use her veins are sclerotic. Magda started to use drugs at the relatively late age of 22. Her two children were two and six years old when she became addicted and since then live with Magda's parents. Gomez Ferrer is the surname of her Spanish husband, the father of her son. After the couple opened a restaurant in Hanover, they both began to occasionally use hashish, LSD, cocaine, heroin, and pills. As of 1984 Magda is on hard drugs and starts to inject heroin. As of 1986 she is arrested regularly for drug-related crime, goes cold turkey in prison, tries to stabilise herself with methadone, but after every release she has a massive relapse. Only in 1997 does she succeed in adjusting to methadone while serving a long prison sentence. Since then she has severe headaches, but is calmer mentally.

In prison she is quite active, takes part in pottery courses amongst other things, and helps school age juvenile prisoners in the facility's school. She is politically active and initiated publication of a prison newspaper. She writes well, with pleasure, and on a regular basis. In her articles she treats themes such as new prison regulations, detention pending deportation, and a trades union for junkies and prisoners. From time to time she publishes one of her poems. Her now grown-up children do not want to have anything to do with their mother; her son is unstable and her daughter is a successful businesswoman. Magda's parents tell her about what the children are doing when she asks after them.

With her contribution to the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION, Magda wants to make a statement about the repression of sexuality in prison in the form of incomplete human figures made of golden Skai which hang on a huge chain – a charm bracelet. All of the figures are missing a vital piece of their bodies: an arm, a leg, the head. She sews at least fifteen of these figures and all of the chain links by hand – and that with hands whose fine motor skills do not function properly any longer. But she does not want any help. After finishing the work she decides that the material is not the right one for her; gold doesn't suit her. She makes the same charm bracelet again but this time using prison blankets; she now allows others to help her.

Magda will be released after the first phase of the project has ended, but she doesn't know where she should go. Applications for admittance to a care home for senior citizens have been made, but she has a horror of living with old people at the age of just 42. She would like to return to Hanover but is scared of being a burden to her parents.

LÜSA<sup>42</sup> in Unna agrees to take her. LÜSA is one of two exceptional facilities in Germany which take in old junkies – drug consumers and those on substitution – until a long-term solution is found for their housing and living situation. LÜSA is the place for junkies considered untreatable, for “hopeless cases” as Magda interprets it. She asks the prison director if she can stay in prison until she has found something herself. Serving time as a preventive measure against possibly incurring more fines, so to speak; anything is better than being a hopeless case. The next time we meet, at the end of October in prison, I ask Magda if she would like to hold the introductory speech at the opening of the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION exhibition in Vechta on January 19. She accepts with pleasure and we agree to talk about details in the coming weeks.

In December Magda visits the facility in Unna; she writes

it's more like sheltered housing than therapy. I hope so much that I will be able to work out my problems; apart from that, there are lots of rules there and one doesn't get much money ...

NICOLE FRISCH is 16 and the youngest project participant. She was sentenced to prison for a violent crime and is one of the 12 prisoners in the juvenile detention section. Before, her mother had placed her in a home after Nicole had been sexually abused by her brother at home when she was eight years old. In the children's home she had attacked an attendant by kicking her and had severely injured the woman's knee.

Nicole is small; possibly her growth is stunted. There is evidence that maltreatment in childhood leads to developmental disorders, for example,

stunted growth as seen in Nicole and many inmates who were victims of violence and neglect in early childhood.

During the months of work on the project Nicole gradually casts off her pubertal behaviour, or rather she gives up her resistance to working. She develops a plan for her clothing object, learns how to do smocking, and makes a dress for the Kneier2 model out of six prison blankets; she later declares this a sleeping bag.

While bending over her needlework she asks me about my views on motherhood; both practically and hypothetically she wants to know what my attitude toward imprisoned juveniles is. When I am doing some handiwork on the courtyard lawn, Nicole simply lays her head on my lap and stays like that. At some point she asks me the question that appears to trouble her the most: Would I visit my children if they were in prison? Neither her mother nor her brother visit her or write to her.

In the phases between working periods she writes to me and tells me how much sewing she has done and that I will be astounded, it will be a big surprise. She is bored in the juvenile section and is looking forward to the next work phase in which the last objects will be completed. Shyly at first she made friends with my daughter Saramarie, who is the same age as Nicole, and who accompanied me for a week on the project. In the P.S. to her letter Nicole says I should not forget to bring Saramarie with me to the next phase of the project.

Shortly after the end of the first PRISON WEAR COLLECTION work phase Nicole is to be transferred to a therapeutic living community for juveniles in Braunschweig. I had asked her to write and tell me her impressions after her visit to the facility with the head of the juvenile section.

Nicole sends me a report and it is very obvious that she had taken great care to write the letter in her best handwriting. On the fax I can still see the traces of the lines pencilled in and then rubbed out under every line of the letter.

A. G. is 17, and like Nicole an inmate in the juvenile section. She was sentenced to four years detention without probation for causing grievous bodily harm. While under the influence of party drugs at a discotheque, she stabbed her girlfriend in a fit of jealousy, inflicting life-threatening injuries. The seriousness of the offence and the fact that she did not show any remorse led to this sentence which is extremely long for a juvenile. Prison sentences for juveniles are adjusted according to age, and are usually restricted to a “manageable” length.<sup>43</sup>

Before committing the crime A. G. had worked as a model, encouraged and accompanied by her ambitious mother, who visits her regularly and brings her loads of the latest expensive clothes, jewellery, and footwear. The head of the section then decides what she may keep with her and the rest is then stored with her other personal effects.

As this case was reported in the media all over Germany and A. G. hopes to work again as a model after she is released, she is the only one of the participants who wants to be known simply by her initials in all publications about the project.<sup>44</sup>

In the PRISON WEAR PROJECT A. G. liked working with Weronika Mazur best. A. G. learns various skills fast and her favourite is needlework that is particularly labour intensive. Together, A. G. and Weronika accomplish





Weronika's Golden Baby project and a pair of Velcro shirts: one shirt is composed of Velcro strips with the hooks and the other of Velcro strips with the loops. When two people wear the shirts they can "hook up".

When I bring my eight-year-old daughter Akke to the project A. G. looks after her like a younger sister.

She sends us greeting cards and a long letter to Akke in which she asks about all the things they had spoken about together. In her contacts with the small girl she is very attentive – quite different to the hardness and detachment which she displays towards the majority of grown-ups.

After completion of the first PRISON WEAR COLLECTION work phase A. G. is transferred to the women's prison in Alfeld.<sup>45</sup>

ANGELIKA HUTER is in her early 30s and has received a prison sentence for drug-related crimes. She wants to participate in the project under the condition that she doesn't have to talk about herself or say anything. Angelika has a daughter whom she wishes to concentrate on and who she wants to get back as soon as possible. She doesn't want to make an own clothing object, but will help Ellen to make her dress. This she does and in the process makes an important contribution, both by finding technical solutions to problems and supporting production. Before, Angelika worked in the textiles department where she repaired endless numbers of sheets on an industrial sewing machine. She was dismissed because of a conflict with one of the warders. She does not take part in the last week of the project because she is not allowed to – she has broken another one of the rules.

MARI NJIE is in her mid-40s and has been sentenced to four years' imprisonment for dealing and other drug-related crimes. There are higher penalties for offences classed as violations of the law on drugs than petty theft to procure drugs. Drug dealing seems to be a family business and continues in prison. Mari and her father are caught smuggling drugs during visiting time. Her father conceals drugs under a bandage on his finger, and only after some months have passed do the warders notice that the bandage is sometimes on his right hand and sometimes on his left. At the time of the project both of them are awaiting trial. Her family name Njie is the name of Mari's African husband whom she married in return for payment so that he could keep his German residence permit.

Family appears to be important to Mari, although in general she does not talk about her parents or her children. I go looking for where my eight-year old daughter has got to, and find her and Mari in the bunker, which is unlocked so we can use the toilets. She is explaining to Akke how one should treat children, and what the key issues in upbringing and education are.

Mari calls the project "the course"; she sees no significant difference between "our project" and "this course". It doesn't matter to her whether it's about an account of her life, or about carrying out assigned tasks. She prefers the latter.

She is in the methadone programme.<sup>46</sup> The high dose she is getting makes her sluggish and tired. When she is not working on the project, she usually just lies in bed; she has been declared unfit for work because of her

wretched state of health. In her section, they refer to her as "grandma" and even address her as such. Women like Mari are called "methadone corpses" by younger junkies, and they don't take her particularly seriously. Despite her severe fatigue, she produces one piece of clothing after another; she crochets and knits – with broomsticks and using the mega-spool knitter – without a break and for as long as the others cut up the jail blankets into strips for her, because that is far too fatiguing.

Mari's handwriting in her letters is very difficult to decipher, and it takes a lot of imagination as well to follow her mental leaps.

ELLEN SALZER is in her mid-30s, and has been sentenced to a long term in prison for dealing on a large scale and offenses against the Controlled Substances Act. She became addicted to drugs relatively late; over the course of the relationship with her boyfriend she adopted his drug habits, but it was she who earned money through drug dealing. For a few years now, she has left the care of her two children to her mother-in-law. After Akke's one day visit, Mari shows me photographs of her children, and thinks that her daughter amazingly resembles Pippi Longstocking. She views herself as a successful businesswoman, and keeps up the corresponding affectations, even in prison. She doesn't shoot in her arms, but in the groin,<sup>47</sup> so that the puncture marks remain hidden. She has firm moral opinions, and she distances herself vehemently from junkies who prostitute themselves to finance their drugs, and condemns lesbian relationships that develop in prison, which in her opinion, are only pursued during the time in jail because of the acute lack of men. She doesn't see herself as a junkie. Her prison sentence is an occupational hazard.

She wishes to design her piece of clothing as a very literal statement about life in prison: she drapes her body with bars. Ellen is the only participant who designs a dress on her own body; all the others prefer the Kneiers as models. In prison contact with the outside world is suspended, the only reality is being locked up behind bars. The bars extend beyond the size of a human being, who rotates or stands still on one spot. The bar-dress is 2.4 metres high, and should rotate slowly in a circle. After his visit to the project, my son Salan designs and builds a rotating table with a mount for the dress.

For the bars, narrow tubes are sewn from jail blankets, and boning is inserted. Green Velcro tape is sewn on top of and under the corset's tubes to bring the bars into body-shape through the Velcro-taping together of the vertical and horizontal bars. Highly concentrated on her work, Angelika Huter makes nearly all of the tubes needed from the prison blankets.

REBECCA MERTENS is 24, and has been sentenced to prison for the fourteenth time. She has been addicted to drugs since she was 16, and has been regularly incarcerated in this prison since she was 18. The first time she was in the juvenile section from which she escaped with a self-built ladder over the outside wall of the prison courtyard. Because at the time she was still a juvenile under law, she not include anyone else in her escape plans, and had not threatened anyone in order to make her escape, she did not face any new charge when she was caught ten weeks later; this would have extended her existing juvenile sentence of nearly two years even further.

Although she – like most of the participants – has no affinity whatsoever to sewing, she is wildly determined to participate in the project. She had heard of the LÜCKE [gap] project, and wishes to quit using drugs during the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION project. Her openness and honesty (towards everyone, even the prison staff), her desire to understand what is happening to her, and to express this as precisely as possible in verbal or written form, are remarkable.

Tomorrow morning I shall start the Nemexin [equivalent is now Naltrexone] programme, so to me this means it's getting serious now! Now it's down to me to swing it! I know, though, that I can do it, because I want to!

she writes immediately after her first period of work. During the course of the project she gets clean. This medication causes a type of biochemical blockade in the brain, where it occupies the docking points of the heroin and stops the activity of the opioid. Every three days she receives a dose in the presence of a doctor; only once she doesn't swallow it but spits it out, because one of the other inmates has some heroin and Rebecca wants to keep it open whether she will accept an invitation to use it together. She applies for a place in the Loxstedt<sup>48</sup> therapy facility and to the health insurance and social services that they should pay the costs. She also applies to the prison administration to be allowed to go into therapy after serving two-thirds of her sentence.<sup>49</sup>

Oh boy, another two months, then it's finally time. A new start, the first one I've ever had. I am a little scared, I mean I do expect a lot from the therapy, and from myself of course, too.

Her first piece of clothing is intended to express her desire to unify thinking and feeling. In a normal state, she suffers because they are separate. She explains to me the effect that heroin has on her, and rubs her hand against her chest:

Heroin makes it warm here. When I used heroin for the first time, I immediately knew: this is my thing, this is how feeling and thinking come together.

In the process of selecting materials, Rebecca looks for opportunities to express her situation. She talks about the various "layers" within which she finds herself: The outside layer made of prison blankets represents the outer walls of the prison; the inner layer her life in prison. The inner layer is so highly complex that she is unable to give it a form. Mentally, she understands very well what is going on in her life; feeling-wise she doesn't manage it, though. Together, we try to give her theme a visual shape. The initial result is a cap made of layers of prison blanket material with pink Velcro tape on the inside, which looks rather like the structures of the brain. The peak of the cap she can fold up or down, depending on whether she wishes to face the world or wants to withdraw from it.

Rebecca's white Velcro tape dress represents her self-view; it is woven on Kneier<sup>4</sup> and she traces her tattoos and piercings on it with black Velcro tape. The dress is lined with pink Skai. With Luuk Kramer, who is documenting this project in photographs, she lays it out on the floor of the D1 corridor in front of a cell door, and gazes at it. She never wants to fall by the wayside again, she says.

The costs for her therapy at Loxstedt and her early release from prison that she applied for are approved. For a few months now Rebecca has been clean of her own free will for the first time – with the exception of Ellen's invitation

to share her drugs, which she accepted. Nevertheless, Rebecca still turns up for the last period of project work, and apologises later on in a letter:

And I'm not doing well at all. I went full out again as usual. That was my farewell to this place, to everything. Unfortunately, the point in time was the worst imaginable. I am sad.

WERONIKA MAZUR is 23. She comes from Poland; her mother is Polish and her father German. Her mother seemed to be unable to cope with a child; after the divorce, she sent Weronika to her father in Germany when she was 13 years old. From the start he used his daughter as a drug courier for cocaine between Germany and Poland. A young girl, travelling on her own, who the border police do not suspect, she is very successful at it. She begins to smoke pot, and use cocaine.

For six years Weronika has been HIV-positive, and she is now five months pregnant. On the first day, she turns up with her personal mug; she has knotted a piece of red string around its handle so that nobody needs to worry about getting infected. She is clean – not taking any illicit substances – and no longer needs HIV medication. She belongs to a growing group of HIV-infected persons, who for some reason as yet poorly understood have not developed (or not yet developed) AIDS. Although her immune system had once contained less than 200 helper T cells,<sup>50</sup> it is recovering after medical treatment. She stops taking the medication as soon as she feels better.

Her first child, who in the meantime is five, is healthy. The father has enforced sole custody of the child, and Weronika fervently hopes that the new baby will be allowed to stay with her. Her greatest wish, in spite of addiction, illness, and prison, is to give birth to a healthy baby. This is what she wants to express with her jail-dress, her hope for good fortune and happiness. Her theme is the "Golden Baby". On the first day of the project, Weronika and A. G. sew a baby made of golden Skai, which from then onward lies on the lawn of the courtyard except when someone is playing with it.

Anneclaire makes a complicated sewing pattern for a silk dress on Kneier<sup>4</sup>. On the front, the baby bulge of the stomach is allowed for, and on the inside is a horizontal opening from which the golden baby – like in the upcoming caesarean operation – can be taken out.

Superficially, Weronika seems to insulate herself less from life in prison than most of the other women. All of them, including me, are always fully dressed. In spite of the fact that it's summer and the weather is good, a woman does not show much bare skin in this place. I wear dresses with long sleeves or long trousers, as well as jackets, boots, and hats; at most the women have bare arms and bare legs from the knees down. Weronika doesn't. She turns up in a mini-skirt, a midriff-baring spaghetti strap crop top, and sandals – an outfit for a day at the beach. She is an exceptionally beautiful young woman, and there are no visible traces of her drug usage. She is the only one of the adult participants who doesn't have missing or damaged teeth or wear false dentures, nor does she have the typical grey skin colour of hard drug users.

Her style of clothes, though, does expose many scars. Upon my inquiry, she tells the story of every single one, an appalling series of abuses and accidents: in the beginning by her mother, and later by partners, clients,



and friends. We count 86 scars on her body, and draw them on a diagram – *Mapping Scars*. 70% are located on the front side of her body. Weronika almost forgets to mention a scar on her head, a large one, hidden under her thick mane of hair. This one also was done by her mother, who had hit her five-year old daughter hard on the head with the heel of a high-heel shoe.

Shortly before the completion of the project, Weronika is transferred to the HIV/AIDS aid organisation in Oldenburg where she has been going for regular check-ups and treatment for years now. The aid organisation arranges a small apartment for her and additional medical and social care until the eighth month of her pregnancy, when she will be admitted to a local hospital with a department for HIV-infected pregnant women.

We write to each other. Anneclaire and I visit her in Oldenburg. Her three-room apartment is fully furnished and decorated with exotic plants. Only the light is not yet hooked up to the electricity supply, so there are tea lights everywhere, even on the washing machine. Weronika has cooked for us, something she had already enjoyed doing in jail. We sit a little low down on the sofa at the dining table, with the plates at eye-level. Weronika talks about all the things she has done in the apartment. The heavy, old-style German furniture came from the Salvation Army; she has picked out the nicest pieces. She has painted one large wall as an aquarium in shades of blue: water, fish, clams, water plants, and figments of her imagination. The fish don't have eyes, because she didn't have anymore paint that was the right colour. I ask myself the whole time, what is amiss here in this well-equipped apartment, why do I feel like being on a movie set. Everything that makes an apartment an apartment is here, yet it seems unreal, as though it's an imitation, an ideal, promoted by television advertising and newspapers.

During the project, Luuk Kramer takes pictures of selected phases of the work process. He portrays the participants, and in consultation with each of them takes one picture of their creation at a place within the prison that they have selected.

41 In Germany a judge can ban certain people from loitering in certain places or areas in a city to prevent drug scenes from becoming established in public places. The beat police are informed which persons are banned from loitering in which places. Failure to comply results in fines and if these are not paid a prison sentence is handed out. The length of the sentence depends on the amount due in fines, which in most cases accumulates over time.

42 In the LÜSA (Long-Term Transition and Support) Project in Unna over thirty severely addicted and chronically impaired drug addicts live in a community. The goal of their stay in the institution—up to two years and in some cases longer—is reintegration in society. <http://www.luesa.de>.

43 In the view of developmental psychology a four-year-sentence for a 17-year-old, i.e., until they are 21, is “unmanageable” and misses the point of a penalty as a corrective measure for the offence. It doubts whether serving long prison terms without probation can effect improvement if they are not accompanied by active socio-medical treatment and the development of a perspective for the future through education and social training.

44 All of the other participants insisted that their real names be used and their portrait photos appear in the exhibition catalogue. To publish their work under their own name seemed important to them and for me, of course, it was taken for granted. In all other editions of the project later in other European countries the ministries of justice ruled that pseudonyms had to be used, although the participants would have preferred to use their real names.

45 In the women's prison in Alfeld, which opened in 1994, offenders receive social therapy to enable the women to live responsible lives without committing crimes. The acknowledged task of the penal institution, however, is to protect society from further crimes by the inmates. In order to meet all these requirements, the prison has a large staff of personnel from

a wide spectrum of professions who treat and supervise the inmates. Source: [http://www.jva-fuer-frauen.niedersachsen.de/wir\\_ueber\\_uns/sozialtherapeutische\\_abteilung/die-sozialtherapeutische-abteilung](http://www.jva-fuer-frauen.niedersachsen.de/wir_ueber_uns/sozialtherapeutische_abteilung/die-sozialtherapeutische-abteilung)

46 There are a limited number of places available in prison methadone programmes (in Vechta there are just thirty). This gives rise to the impression that methadone substitution there is actually more a favour than a therapeutic treatment.

47 Excessively injecting into main arteries, like in the neck and the groin, is not only potentially lethal because of the risk of bleeding to death, but also because the risk of infection is far greater: the wounds are under clothes—and thus less exposed to the air—which means they may not heal properly. Old junkies only start to inject in these areas when, for example, the veins in their arms are calcified.

48 Loxstedt-Düring, a facility in a converted farmhouse for the long-term therapy of chronic drug addicts. [http://www.therapiehilfe.de/rl/index.php/therapiehof\\_loxstedt\\_during.html](http://www.therapiehilfe.de/rl/index.php/therapiehof_loxstedt_during.html)

49 Under German law, subject to certain provisions and conditions, it is possible to leave prison after serving two-thirds of a sentence and spend the rest on probation in therapy.

50 The number of helper T cells (also known as CD4 cells) in the immune system reveals the extent to which it has been damaged by HIV. These cells are required for almost all adaptive immune responses. The fewer the helper T cells, the greater the risk of succumbing to infectious diseases, including infections that would normally be negligible. In the 1990s as well as today if the CD4 cell count was less than 200, it was seen as an indicator that the patient had developed AIDS.

VECHTA, 22 SEPTEMBER 2000

## NICOLE FRISCH

Sorry that I haven't written before, but I've read through your letter a few times so that I can reply properly. I am doing quite well! Yes, it was really awesome in Braunschweig. It really does a lot of good to get out of here for a whole day. The living group is not bad. Well, quite good actually. I haven't yet gotten to know the people I will actually be living with there. I'll be moving there on October 4. They can't take me earlier. Although I don't know why. Whatever – perhaps we can meet up again before. I was so excited in Braunschweig that I couldn't eat a thing; I only managed to drink a Coke. I'll really do my best. Because dogs I don't know, I don't like, and also don't really want them near me. But I'll try and be nice, OK?

In my letter I had also asked Nicole, how she had experienced her last, but not the last work period on the project. Because of differences between me and our supervising officer, who literally was the key to our project, the continuation of our project was in doubt. All the participants were unsettled by this, and we found ourselves in an organisational and emotional dilemma, in an extremely wrought-up atmosphere, which in a microcosm like a prison can turn very suddenly, and become threatening for everyone involved.

I thought my last working period was good. I mean we managed to do quite a lot. The group was very good, too. And in my opinion, the whining about the shitty situation was not annoying at all. I think it's a good thing for people to let out their whines. Some can do that, and some can't. Yes, and I'm just one of the people, who can't do that. But that also has to do with my past. Well, that's the way it is.



I had asked Nicole, how she feels after completing her project participation and being back in the juvenile section.

Well, there's nothing new, really, to tell except that I don't have much to do with the others (from my section) anymore! Because I am fed up with all their childish crap. And especially because most of them here are lying to themselves. Well, I think there is certainly something to the saying that in jail you don't make any friends! I have my own worries, which is also why I keep a low profile.

Nicole thanks me for the photograph she had requested me to send.

In the prison I hear that Nicole, shortly before being transferred to the transport cell, had been given her first shot of heroin by girls in her section. Shortly before her transfer, I am able to speak to her briefly under supervision through the flap in the "departure hut".<sup>51</sup> She is sitting there like a small, locked-up child. I can't remember what we spoke about. She avoids meeting my eyes and tries to appear as indifferent as possible, my attempts at comforting her she responds to with

yeah, yeah.

This takes me back to one of our conversations at the beginning of the project, in which she explained the jail-codes for treating the warders.

Always just say 'yeah, yeah', and then they'll leave you in peace. Which means: Kiss my ass.

<sup>51</sup> Prisoners who are being transferred to another prison or institution spend the last days alone in the "departure hut", a cell that is inaccessible to other inmates to prevent illegal substances or objects being passed to them.

BRAUNSCHWEIG, OCTOBER 2000

## NICOLE FRISCH

Nicole Frisch is accompanied by and handed over to the living community and therapy facility for violent juveniles in Braunschweig by the head of the juvenile section. My letters, addressed to the living group, are returned. She has run away, seems to be living on the streets and taking drugs.

VECHTA, 25 OCTOBER 2000

## MARI NJIE

Mari is furious because she has just been ripped off again by women on her corridor while she was asleep – coffee, tobacco, sugar, everything is gone. Her best clothes – gone.

I won't see any of that again; it will be swapped for drugs straight away. Everything I treasured – gone.

Now she's going to put on an additional lock, or lock her things away separately in the cell. She is only a jailbird, so it doesn't matter how she is treated, she says. That's why she's so angry. Could I bring her some cotton yarn for crocheting, she asks. She encloses a leaflet from a protestant charitable organisation with her letter with an excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount. Under the title Mari writes:

'Go through the strait gate' – well, that would be nice here. She underlines: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

OLDENBURG, 3 NOVEMBER 2000

## WERONIKA MAZUR

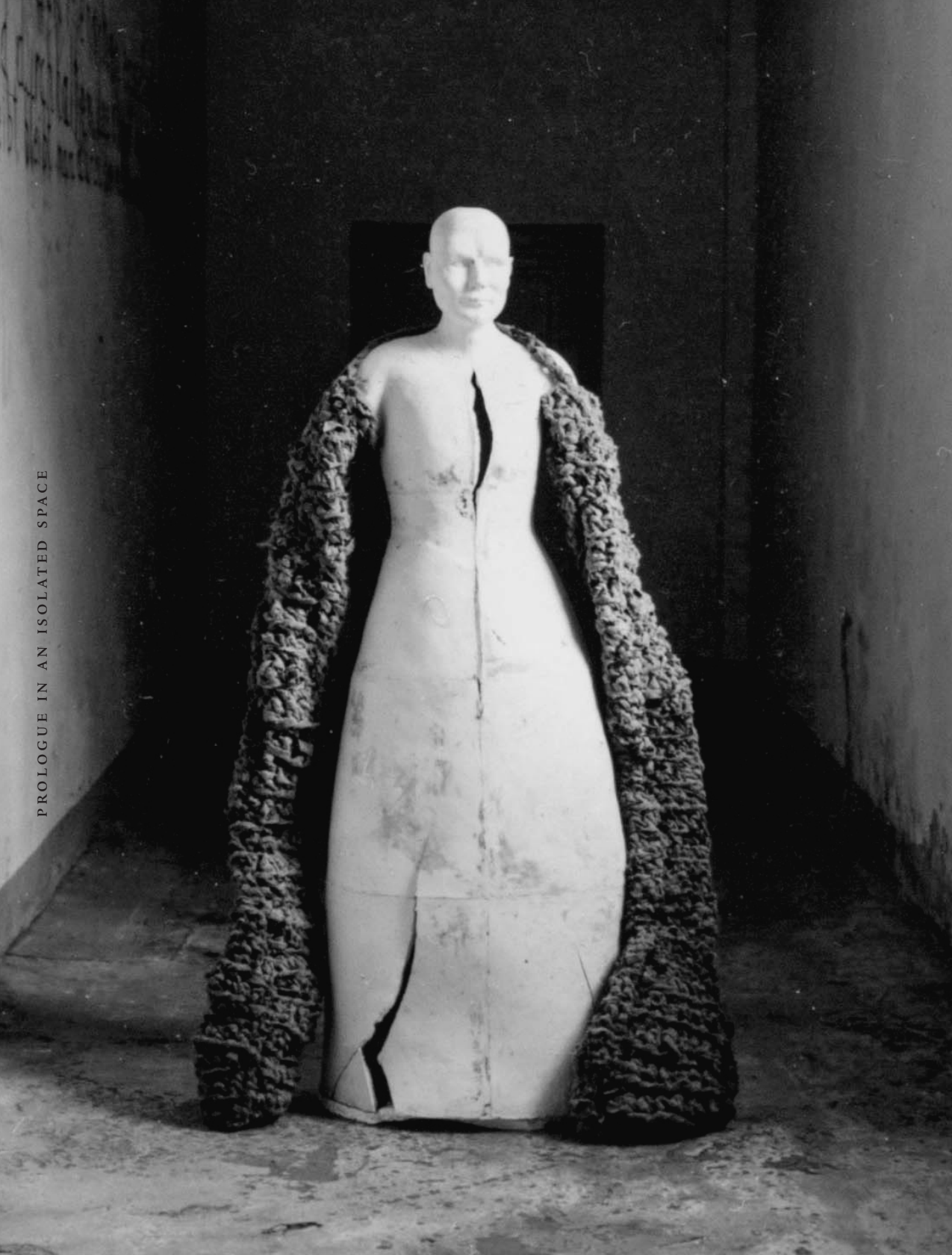
For her master's degree, Anneclaire had conducted a survey amongst the participants about whether they had had dolls or cuddly toys when they were children. At that point in time, Weronika had already been released, so she was requested to respond to the questions via letter.

About Anneclaire's questionnaire: I don't really know what to do with it, because I can't remember. I don't think I had any at all. I actually only became aware of this when I read Anneclaire's questions. However, my mother had some small and delicate porcelain dolls in a vitrine, but I was never allowed to touch them. I have no contact with my father; I still have hopes that he will contact me some time. P.S.: I've now got some really sweet bunnies.

OLDENBURG, 10 NOVEMBER 2000

## WERONIKA MAZUR

On November 10, 2000, Weronika's baby Marvin is delivered by caesarean section. She calls me the very same day to tell me all about it. Marvin is the most beautiful baby in the world. The burning question of whether he has been infected in the womb via his mother's blood cannot be answered yet, because results of blood tests in new-borns are unreliable. A reliable test is actually only possible on a child of two, Weronika says. In answering my question whether she is in good hands, she distinguishes between the careful medical treatment and the contempt of the nurses, which she encounters every day.



Mari Njie, arms, crocheted. Prison blankets, 170 × 35 × 35 cm,  
Seiler corridor



Nicole Frisch, sleeping bag. Smocked prison blankets, 200 × 60 × 60 cm,  
Seiler corridor





Weronika Mazur and A. G., Golden Baby dress. Skai, silk, Prison blankets, 180 x 70 cm, Seiler corridor and courtyard

And although she is in no way squeamish, and is used to being disparaged, in her present situation she finds it unbearable. It's probably because of the hormones she says.

VECHTA, 27 NOVEMBER 2000

## REBECCA MERTENS

A last greeting from jail.

She is sitting in the departure hut and can't sleep.

Well, now I'm sitting here and I'm not quite sure yet about what I should feel. I am both excited and scared shitless, too. It's simply that everything has come crashing down on me: saying goodbye (strangely sentimental, the best wishes from the screws ...), my fear, my joy, and of course what I expect of myself. That is absolutely enormous.

Around two o'clock she gives up trying to sleep.

Have you actually ever taken a look at the departure hut? Amazing. There are still things in here that I read while waiting for my first release in early '95! I feel the urge to immortalise myself here, but I've resisted. I know that it's a stupid superstition, but nevertheless ... I mean I never cleaned the windows once in all those years either. What good did it do? ...

OLDENBURG, 30 NOVEMBER 2000

## REBECCA MERTENS

Although Rebecca is managing entirely without medication, she has to do a six-week detox in the hospital before being admitted to Loxstedt. I visit her in hospital; she is completely confident – almost euphoric – about her future. She writes, telephones, and counts every day without drugs.

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

Magda faxes

for the last time

from Vechta. She will spend the interim time until admission to LÜSA at her parents' home in Hanover, where she – after many years – sees her daughter again, and gets to meet her granddaughter. She writes that she wishes she could follow her daughter to Australia, to look after the little one, but concedes that there is still a long way ahead of her to get her life in order again.

HANOVER, DECEMBER 2000

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

I am 'in good hands' with my family, although one could call it jail. This may sound harsh, but it's how I feel. My parents guard me like a little chick and although they mean well, to me it's torture and I shall be happy when I am released from this stagnation. I have to start moving, otherwise my time is up.

She fears that she will not be able to come to the exhibition opening in the prison, because there are suddenly enormous problems with financing her place in LÜSA. The social services have revoked their undertaking to assume the costs, and she now is supposed to apply to the employment agency.

This was a terrible blow, really. And I am gradually coming to the end of my tether. I am trying desperately to cope with everything out here, and now this. My first thought was, whatever, go into town, get smashed, so as not to have to bear any more of this. However, after a few anger-hate-crying attacks, I did everything possible to find a solution. What rescued me was the therapy organisation; I told them everything and they said: call back in an hour. I did that, and they said that this can't be right at all and that I should drop by, and they would then take care of everything with me! This took a load off my mind, because I would really not have known how to carry on; just imagine, two days before these events I had nightmares: I envisioned myself without therapy. It was horrific, though it appeared to me like an omen, that I will find myself and I hope that in future I will manage to listen to and trust myself. When I have managed that, then I am on the path to getting better.

## REBECCA MERTENS

After being admitted to Loxstedt and the initial four-week contact ban, we continue to talk. In the meantime, I am in contact with her therapists, and I apply for permission to fetch her for the opening of the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION exhibition in the prison on that day. I think it's important for the participants of the project to be able to experience the presentation of their works together, and also, for a change, to experience the success of having completed an immense achievement. Rebecca, however, is under no circumstances allowed to come, I am told; any proximity, every memory of her former drug addiction is prohibited in the next six months. This also includes a visit to the exhibition presented in the prison.

VECHTA, 19–25 JANUARY 2001

PRISON WEAR COLLECTION:  
EXHIBITION IN THE  
WOMEN'S PRISON

More than half of the project participants—Weronika, Rebecca, Magda, Nicole, and A. G.—are no longer in Vechta at the time of the planned exhibition and opening. Astonishingly, their role is now taken over by the former critics and vociferous opponents of the project, for whom cobbling stuff together from old prison blankets was formerly not an option for “cool clothes”. Nevertheless, though, during the course of the project they appeared at every opportunity in the Seiler corridor and the courtyard to ask whether any more people were needed. Neither the prison administration nor I were basically against people joining the project at a later point in time; it was the original participants themselves who viewed the group as closed, and did not want any latecomers. But they were welcome to visit and admire the work.

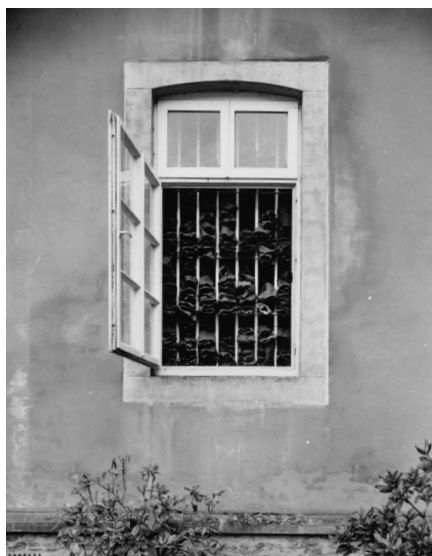
And now these women were helping with the preparations for the exhibition and its opening, which in their opinion simply has to shake up the prison regime.

Helmut König is willing to organise a music performance before the official opening speech. Besides his official function as head of the juvenile section, he is one of the three musicians who make up the band “Die 2” (The 2), which has been giving public performances now for decades, and regularly releases CDs. Additionally, he organises gigs by famous and unknown bands in the prison courtyard, which for the junkies are the best of all the events put on in the jail.



## OPENING AT THE PRISON

Behind closed doors in the Seiler corridor Helmut König gives a deafeningly loud demonstration on his electric guitar of what he would like to play at the exhibition opening. The women think it's "really awesome" and suggest enhancing the feeling of being helpless and imprisoned by turning off most of the lights. In the darkness, during the music performance, they want to stack quickly 300 "sacks of tears" between the bars on the window of the Seiler corridor. The "sacks of tears" were by-products of the project, which were hand-sewn from remnants of prison blankets by all the participants while pondering what to do next or waiting for a sewing machine to become free. Despite my reservations that this threatens to drift off into jail-clichés, I give my permission. After tough negotiations with the prison administration, the women get permission to put two ladders in the Seiler corridor. Cliché or not, the loud performance in the dark at the opening generates discomfort in the audience, and makes headlines in the press. Both very much to the satisfaction of the actionists.



300 Prison sacks of tears during the *Loud 'n Heavy* performance.  
All photographs of PRISON WEAR COLLECTION: Luuk Kramer

Weronika is one of the few project participants who comes to the opening of the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION in Vechta jail. She carries her "golden baby" very proudly in a baby sling and allows him to be admired by everyone present. The prison education officer lets her office on the D1 corridor be used for feeding babies. There I find Weronika who is giving Marvin a bottle, and next to her is my Swedish ex-student Malin breast-feeding her baby who is about the same age.

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

Magda's report about moving into the LÜSA house is positive:

I have settled in a little already, have my freedom, and just want to achieve what I have set for myself. A change of location is never easy, but so far it's going great.

Magda wants to know the dates of the next exhibitions of the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION in Amsterdam. She has shown the PWC catalogues to the other residents and the LÜSA team and explained about our work. Now the team really wants to come and see the exhibition in the Arrondissementsrechtbank, and then they could take Magda. Would it be possible for her to stay the night on my couch?

I ask her, whether she would like to give the speech that she wasn't able to hold in Vechta now in the courthouse. Yes, she would, absolutely! She asks what kind of audience is expected; whether a speech in German would pose a problem; and asks for advice about the content. A short while later, Magda reports excitedly that the team, consisting of the director, her caretaker, a team member, and herself will actually be coming from March 30–31. The director will be spending the night at a colleague's place, and her caretaker Tanja might contact me about a place to sleep.

Via fax we agree on the subjects that she would like to include in her speech, and despite my repeated, warm invitation, she keeps asking me whether it will really be okay for her to spend the night at my place, and she would totally understand if I don't want that:

... I feel comfortable here, it's totally different to a therapy facility, no constraints, perhaps a few rules, but apart from that I have my liberty and my drug problem is quite well under control, I have definitely not had a relapse once, and you really don't need to worry about that when I come to Amsterdam; I'm coming because of you and the exhibition.

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

Magda answers my question about the status of her speech:

When I have written something proper (I'm still unhappy with a lot of it), I'll send it to you straight away. Honestly, though, I am already totally excited and I'm getting on people's nerves here. They have to listen to it all the time, so that a little of the stage fright is taken away.

Shortly before the opening of the exhibition, Tanja Boecker of LÜSA informs me that Magda has fallen down a flight of stairs, and has been taken to hospital

with severe concussion. The injury has caused an organic brain syndrome (OBS), that is, a psychosis resulting from physical damage. Her physical and mental state is only moderately improving after her fall on the stairs.

VECHTA, 17 FEBRUARY 2001

# MARI NIJE

Mari asks me urgently to help her. I should write a reference, which states that she has worked for us in the “course”, and that we evaluate her work positively.

I am not allowed out here, because the department head has only written bad things about me, even things that – God knows – are untrue, never ever has a smoking device with hash been found in my cell, and that I have never done any work since I’ve been here, or was the course not work?

She has already spoken to the judge, who has given her three weeks to look for a rehabilitation clinic; otherwise the prison doctor and the psychiatrist will do everything so that she can get out of here.

At the moment I’m receiving medication so I don’t notice where I am, which is good actually, otherwise I would lose my mind, honestly.

I understand that it’s about early release after serving two-thirds of the jail sentence, and this depends on the evaluation of the department head. He is not impressed with my description of her immense contribution to the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION project. Alone from the quantitative aspect, Mari’s contribution over the past months should be classed as more than sufficient; she produced without stopping, and only once slept through an extraordinary working weekend.

Mari’s application is rejected. This means that she has to serve her time in prison until the very last day.

AMSTERDAM, MARCH 2001–APRIL 2002

# ARRONDISSEMENTS-RECHTBANK [DISTRICT COURT]

In his speech at the opening of the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION exhibition in the Arrondissementsrechtbank in Amsterdam, the prison director emphasises that “the results of the project bring us, the prison staff, nearer to the people

in the prison. Supporting further projects by the artist in the prison reflects the desire of the prison administration to engage critically with the effects of today’s penal system based on the clientele’s artistic objects.”

In October 2001 the exhibition in the Arrondissementsrechtbank is extended by six months. Kneier1 stands upon a rotating pedestal; occasionally we change her clothes. She appears regularly on Dutch TV, for every time the press commissioner of the court comments on judicial decisions, she very slowly rotates anti-clockwise on her own axis in the background.



Het Financieele Dagblad, August 2001



TAZ Berlin, June 2001

BRAUNSCHWEIG, MARCH 2001

## CORNELIA KNEIER

Helmut König informs me that Cornelia Kneier has died; she was only found days later on the sofa in her apartment in Hanover. She had lived together with her partner for a while, with whom she had already shared a cell in the prison. Cornelia Kneier died from an overdose of pills, which she – according to information from the police – had presumably taken with the intention of committing suicide.

## DESTINY: JAIL

That prisoners in today's western European prisons seem to lead a liveable existence—provided with food and accommodation—public opinion views as weakening the sanctioning effect of prison: The enforcement of the law must be seen to constitute a punitive measure. Since the abolition of corporal punishment, public humiliation, castigation, and torture in the first half of the nineteenth century, it continues to be discussed to this day how punishment can be meted out without palpable and visible physical violence. The answer was formulated by Abbé Gabriel Bonnot de Mably in an astonishingly simple way already in the eighteenth century: "Less cruelty, less suffering, more leniency, more respect, and more "humaneness" precipitate a shift in the goal of punitive measures. This means: If it is not allowed to punish the body, then an adequate replacement has to be found, which strikes at the heart, the thinking, the willpower, the talents, the soul."<sup>52</sup>

With the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION project, I had penetrated to the centre of the closed prison regime. For a demographic group such as the junkies, it seems to function as a kind of "natural habitat" to which they return again and again for a short or longer period of time, like through a revolving door. In answer to my question, how often the project participants had been given prison sentences, most of them give approximate estimates: three or four times, six or eight times. Some of them were released after serving two-thirds of the jail sentence, only to fly back in again to serve the rest of their time. The judicial officers as well appear to experience the revolving door phenomenon as the consequence of "certain ways of living". Whatever is being discussed in the context of this phenomenon, the adjective "certain" is sure to pop up

every time at some point. That it seems impossible to improve certain living situations, is therefore declared as "destiny", as fate.

Usually, judicial officers work in a prison for thirty years, and see day after day the inmates, often the same junkies again for a few weeks, months or years at irregular intervals, serving their time for larger or smaller offenses. In this rigid system of managing people it seems as though both the staff and the inmates have lost sight of the meaning and effects of imprisonment. When an offender is committed to prison for the first time, reference is made to imprisonment-shock; in Vechta, first-time convicts in the admission section are put into slightly larger cells for a few weeks as a one-off measure, are given pleasant work to do, and caretakers observe them in interviews to assess their psycho-social reactions. Based on this evaluation, it is decided whether the inmate is accommodated in the punitive detention cells or a communal corridor.

Staff who are being trained, referred to as "learner screws", also find it hard in the beginning to come to terms with the conditions in the prison. Rebecca Mertens told me that she once had to really persuade a learner screw, who had to do the evening lock-up for the first time, to actually lock them up. He had locking-up inhibitions. "You can do it", Rebecca said, "just turn the key!" But he was still unable to do it. "I'll turn my back, then it'll be easier." I discuss with the prison director how it might be possible to intervene in the existing practices of the prison regime, which is in contradiction to the education programme and constructive working and living conditions in place there.

During the planning, preparation, and execution of the projects so far,<sup>53</sup> and especially in my intense encounters with the imprisoned women, I have got to know quite a lot about the negative social conditions and factors, which repeatedly lead women into prison, and which get worse there. The projects in the prisons have shown that many of the women's talents lie dormant and that creative work on a subject which concerns them directly can trigger a process of awareness about and reflection on their situation.

Bringing influence to bear from outside, whether through me or others, which has the goal of changing the women's way of life—for example, stopping them from taking drugs—is misguided and doomed to failure. Most of the women and girls get caught up in a spiral of events and circumstances at an early age from which they are unlikely to escape. It seems to me that one possibility is to make what the women can create with their talents visible within their living environment and to integrate it both within and outside of prison.

To the prison director I suggest developing a concept for redesigning the juvenile section of the prison in collaboration with the youngsters. Here the goal would not be the production of exhibits, but explicitly action, intervening directly in the living situation of imprisoned girls. The intervention would be developed in accord with the needs of incarcerated kids such as Nicole (16), A. G. (17), Sheila (14), and others.

The situation of the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION participants changes as the end of the project draws nearer. Some are forced to go into therapy facilities, some of their own free will, others will continue their familiar way of life again as quickly as possible. As long as they want and as long as possible, I will follow them on their paths and initiate new collaboration, like the joint production of a "wearable" PRISON WEAR COLLECTION.



52 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Random House, 1995, p. 114ff.; G. de Mably, *De la législation. Œuvres complètes*, 1789, vol. IX, p. 326. Gabriel Bonnot de Mably (1709–1785), also known as Abbé de Mably, was a French Enlightenment philosopher, historian, and writer who also briefly served in the diplomatic corps.

53 In summer 2000 the project HEART CORE took place, which is not included in this publication. It was a collaboration between eight male inmates of the Oslebshausen prison in Bremen and eight students from the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam.

LOXSTEDT, FEBRUARY 2001

## REBECCA MERTENS

That Rebecca will be allowed to work on the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION 2 project is not absolutely certain, for some requirements regarding her therapy must be fulfilled, the head of the therapy department explains to me. They will give me an appointment sometime during the year.

In the following months I often speak to Rebecca on the telephone, and she describes her life in the therapy facility in great detail. I learn all the expressions and abbreviations for measures, contracts, rules, services, tasks, forms of therapy, and sanctions. She also tells me the names of the therapists, the patients, the three pigs that live on the farm, and that the local farmers like to house their young cattle, cows, pigs, sheep, and goats with the junkies, because all the patting and stroking they get from them makes the animals more trusting and docile. Rebecca is doing well, although she also has some criticism. She has had to hand over the music CDs she asked me to get her – because of possible glorification of drugs – for this could trigger craving. She is still counting her clean days, and in the therapy sessions she talks about the days when she is craving. She is not dishonest and doesn't make understatements or exaggerate, not even when embarrassing questions are asked. After a few months, she calls for the first time crying, because in therapy she had uncovered the sexual violence that had been done to her. She can only guess at who did it, perhaps her Scottish father who had lived with her mother from time to time, and/or by the neighbour who was always willing to look after her.

With her therapists she manages to reconstruct the period of time when the abuse took place: from age nine to age fourteen when she was put into a home. Through her psychological reactions and memories of herself as a small child, she manages to make further connections and draw new conclusions. Already at the age of two years old she spent several weeks in hospital, and again at age seven for eight months when she was treated in various clinics for the extreme agitation of a "difficult child with behavioural problems".

Physical damage such as the deformation of her rib cage are an indication that she had already been sexually abused when she was a small baby. Her heroin use is viewed in the therapy as self-medication that makes the split in

her personality, a split which had arisen as a kind of "natural reaction" to the sexual violence.

A few weeks later she rings me up to tell me that the psychologist from Vechta had contacted Loxstedt, and wanted to speak to her and her therapist. She had asked whether it is true that a member of the prison staff had traded drugs for sex.

Yes, it is true

Rebecca confirms. The psychologist and the prison director at Vechta want Rebecca to report this to the police;<sup>54</sup> however, Rebecca firmly refuses. The deal with the staff member had always been fair.

Rebecca asks me to accompany her on her first visit home.

54 When I next visit Vechta, the prison director asks me to persuade Rebecca to press charges against the prison staff member. He asks me what I think about this affair and mentions the names of several inmates who have confirmed the staff member's sexual assaults on themselves and others but none of them want to press charges. He goes to the police daily but without the depositions of the women involved it is not possible to investigate the staff member. At the time the staff member was due to retire shortly. After the prison director confronted the person with these allegations, the staff member left the prison immediately and then sent a fax to the effect that they were on sick leave indefinitely and did not want any official farewell celebration. All efforts to get Rebecca to press charges failed.

OSNABRÜCK, MARCH 2001

## REBECCA MERTENS

I have permission to pick Rebecca up and take her to Osnabrück for a weekend and, amongst other things, to visit her mother and ask her questions about Rebecca's childhood.

In Loxstedt, she shows me "her" farm, "her" animals, the surrounding area, and her room; she also introduces me to companions and colleagues.

In Osnabrück we stay at my friend Inge's place. I have to get used to a drug-free Rebecca; she seems to have internalised the rules and restrictions of the Loxstedt system. I ask her about her plans for after the therapy. Apprenticeship, a job? Life must be good in such a garden like my friend's, with dogs and a house, says Rebecca. Rebecca's mother is extremely nervous, when we arrive at her apartment. She gives Rebecca a hug, who remains motionless, and later on tells me that her mother had never done that before. Her mother speaks to me more than to Rebecca; she tells me she couldn't cope with such a restless child and wasn't able to handle her.



## PRODUCTION OF A WEARABLE PRISON WEAR COLLECTION 2—PWC2

By (ex-)prisoners and for (ex-)prisoners after the model FOR US BY US

With the hip hop movement, which had its origins in the deprived ghettos of major American cities, and introduced its own music and dance style, at the same time its own fashion developed: street wear or urban fashion. With their clothes, the outcasts displayed their poverty, and in their music, Rap, they thematised their world and their lack of opportunities in society. The crime rate in the ghettos was outstandingly high, being a murder victim or getting killed during the violent confrontations between street gangs were the main causes of death in young men between the ages of 14 and 25. They also represented the largest proportion of prison inmates. With the success of hip hop when it became mainstream, the reputation of the protagonists changed; they became stars and what they were wearing also became fashionable with the middle-class. This even went so far that in the late 1990s, major fashion designers were including elements of street wear in their collections. The many small fashion labels, which more or less developed from life on the streets and in prison, became very successful including financially. That the problems of the outcasts were transported back into society via their fashions is a remarkable phenomenon. The ideas and the passion of the participants during the first PRISON WEAR COLLECTION project inspires us to risk an attempt to design a wearable collection in collaboration with them. The collection should reflect their special needs, their way of life, and what they perceive as pretty or practical. If we additionally manage to make one or the other model that is fit

for the fashion market, these could be produced in the prison textile department, in work processes that wouldn't be experienced as an additional punishment, but as acquisition of education and as a challenge to the intelligence and creativity of the women. The existing technical equipment of the textile department could be used to manufacture products that are potentially commercially successful.

The example of the African-American start-up For Us By Us (FUBU),<sup>55</sup> which in 1992 launched its first collection of hip hop wear,<sup>56</sup> produced it, and established it as a brand, convinces the prison director to think about the production process in a more experimental way, and to lobby administrators at the Ministry of Justice to support such work in the prison.

55 FUBU—For Us By Us. As a reaction to the overpriced hip hop wool ski hats, in 1992 Daymond John from Queens, NY, supported by his mother, sewed around 90 hats and sold them at half the price of those on the market. The hats sold like hot cakes. With J. Alexander Martin, Keith Perrin, and Carlton Brown he launched the FUBU company, which designed, produced, and sold collections of streetwear. Twenty-seven banks refused to give these newcomers to the clothing trade a loan. After stars of the hip hop scene were seen wearing FUBU clothes in their music videos, investors began to show interest in the brand. FUBU is a success story and has brought Daymond John numerous awards conferred by business and trade organisations, universities, and the U.S. Congress. Today, the brand is reportedly worth U.S. \$ 350 million. Source: Wikipedia.

56 Hip hop fashion, also known as street fashion or urban fashion, evolved together with hip hop music in the ghettos of major cities in the USA. In New York City it developed in the 1970s but changed significantly in the 1990s with the advent of the hip hop subgenre gangsta rap, when it took over features of the characteristic apparel of gangsters and prison inmates. The distinctive baggy pants sought to emulate the clothing of convicts; the first thing confiscated when a person was admitted to jail was their belt, which resulted in their trousers hanging down very low. In the 1990s hip hop fashions for women and men began to diverge. Previously women had worn more or less the same as the men; now very feminine colourful dresses, even flamboyant ball gowns became popular. Top designers took up the *bling bling ghetto fabulous style* in their collections.

in Amsterdam. Four of the eight PWC2 participants are outside the prison in Vechta as in-patients or out-patients at therapy facilities, in hospitals, or in prisons with a focus on therapy. As agreed with the participants at our final meetings, we will follow them at each of the institutions and apply to the directors and therapists for their consent to the women continuing the project with a working schedule that is adjusted to the circumstances and needs of the individual participants.

ALFELD PRISON, FEBRUARY 2001

## A. G.

We receive permission to work with A. G. for three days in one of the visiting rooms in Alfeld closed prison. When we arrive, A. G. shows us many designs that she has drawn already. They are mainly party dresses, which she would like to wear herself. Drawing is fun for her; perhaps she would like to become a fashion designer later.

Together we work on designs for prison clothing, although we do not manage to produce any results that have to do with the subject. A. G. still seems to block out her life in prison, just like her crime. Even more than in Vechta, she seems like a kid to us, who has to save itself. During her first day on parole, she flees to Albania with her boyfriend.

HILDESHEIM, 11 MARCH 2001

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika moves to Hildesheim together with her baby. Although she is under the constant supervision of the child protection services, their care makes her feel like being supported and encouraged rather than distrustfully controlled. She writes letters and postcards, reports on every movement, every weight gain, every development of the baby.

When Marvin laughs, I feel good. He laughs quite a lot.

Weronika's daily life consists of therapy, appointments with the authorities, and appointments with her probation officers.

## DESIGN OF PWC2

The production of the prototype models is again done in collaboration with Anneclaire Kersten. The basic materials for PWC2 are felted white woollen blankets from the British navy plus our tried and tested staples—the luxury textiles silk and Skai, as well as Velcro hook and loop fastener tape. Individual models and series will acquire aspects of life in prison and carry them to the world outside. It is envisaged that the prototypes will be presented in the Supreme Court building in Amsterdam by officials, that is, representatives of the judiciary and executive such as judges, crown attorneys, lawyers, prison directors, prison warders, and police officers. A fashion show in the Arrondissementsrechtbank on the walkways in the central hall that have been converted into catwalks.

We organise workshops lasting several days at various institutions and we work on site with the women on designs and test pieces, which we will finalise

## WERONIKA MAZUR

We visit Weronika and Marvin. Weronika is looking forward to our new collaboration, and is waiting for us in the park in front of the apartment building where she lives. There she stands, as always in a mini-skirt and bare tanned legs, fur jacket, and sandals on her feet, with her new pet on her shoulder, a ferret. Marvin is a quiet baby, he happily babbles to himself and plays with great perseverance. He eats well, and the child protection service is satisfied with his development.

Due to the lack of working space in her apartment, we work on the project at her friend Renée's place. Renée is a former cell mate from prison, who lives in a large apartment with her 12-year-old daughter. She has been clean for years, and now keeps an eye on Weronika. Whenever necessary, she looks after Marvin.

We begin by planning the work on the project. Weronika has quite a lot of appointments over the next few days, with the doctor and with the child and social welfare services. Also, there is a funfair in town; we must definitely go there, she says, at any rate she wants to drop by there in the evening. She has a few nice Polish friends, who she will meet at the funfair.

We work for short periods of time. Like in jail, the sewing work gives us time to talk. Is her Polish friend Marek, who she talks about, her boyfriend? Nah, but a nice guy, he does everything for her and is nice to Marvin. Guys, who get on her nerves, she doesn't want anything to do with. Later on she says that a short while ago, at a party, a guy first got her drunk, or rather unconscious, and then raped her. Did she report this to the police?

Nah, course not, that doesn't help anyway;

who'd believe her? Shall we go to the police together? Nah, she doesn't want any trouble; that would mean stress with the child welfare service.

Her piece of clothing is going to be a warm coat with a sewn-in carrying sack for the baby, in principle similar to her Kneier silk dress. She also wants, matching the coat, a mask to wear. She wants to work on the wool blankets, the coat must look nice. Weronika knows exactly what she wants, and what she doesn't want. Her design is not her fashion style; she regards it as an object appropriate to the wearable collection, developed from the necessities of a life with a baby.

The next morning, Weronika receives a phone call that her friend Marek killed her rapist after a violent argument, and is on the run. Together we discuss what to do. Should Weronika go to the police? No, definitely not, then they would take Marvin away. What should she say to the police when they turn up at Weronika's place, which they definitely will do. I think that she should certainly report what happened last week, but at the same time I can imagine only too well how Weronika will be judged by the police and the child welfare service.

If they don't find her at home, the police will automatically come to her place, her friend Renée fears. She is angry because Weronika always manages to get herself and others into such situations.

Weronika is afraid that this incident will have an influence on her upcoming trial. When stopped by police, they had made unjust accusations whereupon

she had not only threatened the policeman with a piece of broken glass, but also threatened to infect him with HIV. To avoid being arrested, she had bitten him on the arm in the resulting scuffle. The officer did not accept her later apology:

He had to wait three months for the results of his blood test, which, thank God, turned out to be negative.

As a precaution we prepare a letter in which Weronika states that her friend Renée should take care of Marvin in case of Weronika's absence. Anneclaire and I witness the statement. Before we leave, we hear that Marek has handed himself in to the police.

HILDESHEIM, JULY 2001

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Everything's okay here with me! Better, better, every day ... have spoken to a psychologist. He helped me a lot. I also get medication that helps. For "Golden Baby" I have been thinking about a backpack. The mask idea was not so good.

She sends us drawings of her modified design.

LOXSTEDT, SEPTEMBER 2001

## REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca can show that the treatment has been successful, which is a prerequisite for her being allowed to invite us for the workshop. Soon she will be released and transfer to the semi-open residential community in Bremen where, at first under supervision, she can practice what she has learned in real life.

She has made preparations for our project technically and in terms of content, arranged for working rooms, integrated daily and work processes in the facility's house regulations, and now we can come. She has already gathered together a group of six Loxstedt residents, who want to work with us. The Loxstedt residents are young, between 20 and 30 years old, and there are more men than women. Rebecca gives an introduction and explains how we worked in the prison. To design the PWC2, the participants describe their motivation and their expectations for such a collection, which will be presented to public officials. Most of them have had experiences with such officials.

Personal events are implemented in the designs, and also the desire "to make a statement". The twenty-year old boy with severe injuries to his arm

thematizes violence in the drug-related prostitution scene. He prostituted himself to finance his drug consumption. He never tires of emphasising that he is not gay. For the women their prostitution is less a theme or not at all, they describe it as “grinding”. Their sexual orientation virtually plays no role in this. Getting involved with some regular clients outside the drug-related prostitution scene or better, to treat themselves temporarily to the luxury of free accommodation, seems to be more widespread amongst the women than the men.

Already when she was in jail, Rebecca had told me about her current “guy”; originally a regular customer, he also took care of her during the time in jail. He called her, visited her, and brought her drugs and presents. I would like to know what her relationship is with him. He doesn’t bother her – that appears to say everything. Though she will soon have to end it, she adds.

The boy designs a “whore-shirt”, as he calls it, a piece of clothing, which protects him in the red-light district as an available object, but at the same time reveals the areas of the body, which attract customers.

Rebecca can barely concentrate on her own designs; she is hyperactive and mainly occupied with the group dynamic processes.

UNNA, JUNE 2001

## LÜSA LANGZEIT- ÜBERGANGS- UND STÜTZUNGSANGEBOT [LONG-TERM TRANSITION AND SUPPORT FACILITY]

Anabela Dias de Oliveira (Ana Dias), the initiator and head of LÜSA in Unna, not only approves of our application, but she requests us to include further inhabitants of LÜSA in this or another one of our projects. Our first impression upon arrival: most of the people here look as though they have just returned from holiday; they are not at all as grey-faced as the junkies in jail. They all look a little tanned, but they aren’t really: their yellowish-brown facial colour is due to their advanced liver cirrhosis, I am told.

LÜSA differs from conventional therapy facilities whose goal is to heal the disease of addiction. LÜSA does not demand that its residents meet any of the usual conditions before acceptance: when admitted, they do not have to be clean or substitution-free. They get medical supervision, but not psychotherapy automatically. Basically, no goals are formulated so that no pressure builds up because of which so many junkies have already failed.

Therefore, the house rules are simple and clear:

- 1 Any form of violence, including verbal, is not tolerated. If this rule is violated, consequences depend on the gravity of the violence: a warning is issued, and if the violation is repeated, it will be reported to the police and results in a lifelong exclusion order.
- 2 In the main house, in the shared apartments, and in the workshops, no drugs are to be consumed, and it is not allowed to take drugs into the rooms. Cigarettes are an exception. In the hall of the house there are small lockers in which the residents can store their drugs.

UNNA, JULY 2001

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

Ana Dias confirms my observation that Magda is particularly depressed at the moment; she is a lot worse now than when she was admitted. Besides the deterioration of health due to contracting Hepatitis C and serious damage to vital organs because of infection, depression is the most prevalent disorder among long-term drug users. Depression in children and juveniles that is not recognised and treated is now presumed to be a contributory factor in starting to take drugs which should thus be regarded as self-medication. As drug addicts are unable to take drugs from a certain age, there are virtually no alternatives for treating their depression except for psychiatric medication in extremely large doses.

Magda doesn’t have much energy but she is looking forward to doing new work together every day with a small group of fellow residents. Being admitted to the LÜSA project means for Magda, and presumably for most of the residents, that they are now confronted with the fact that their situation is irreversible. Residents, who have not managed to find another, private, solution to where they can live, will die here or in a hospice. The question of who will be next is permanently on the agenda, and is very hard to bear, as it is for practically everyone. The suffering that results from individual loneliness, the absence of friends and family, and lack of concern and sympathy can only be compensated for by the LÜSA staff in a very limited way. Very few residents are able to pull themselves together and embark on a new, active phase of life.

During the project we get to know eight residents of the main house and six living in external shared apartments. The workshops, the printer’s, and the shop where the residents work were set up cooperatively by LÜSA, the AIDS Service Organisation, and the social services of the city of Unna.

The apartment-sharing communities offer perspectives for patients whose medical treatment could be stabilised to live more independently and to work. We even meet a resident of one of the shared apartments who was admitted to a hospice a year ago but discharged himself in order to carry on living.



Although six of the LÜSA residents are interested in participating in PWC2, we work mainly with Magda on designs for wearable clothes. The others join in our conversations and there are lively discussions about what kind of clothes the collection should consist of, they contribute drawings, designs, and samples of material. Unlike in prison, it is difficult for Magda to show solidarity in this working group. She has the advantage of experience with the previous project, and in the determined way she goes about things, she demonstrates that she knows how an idea leads to an actual design.

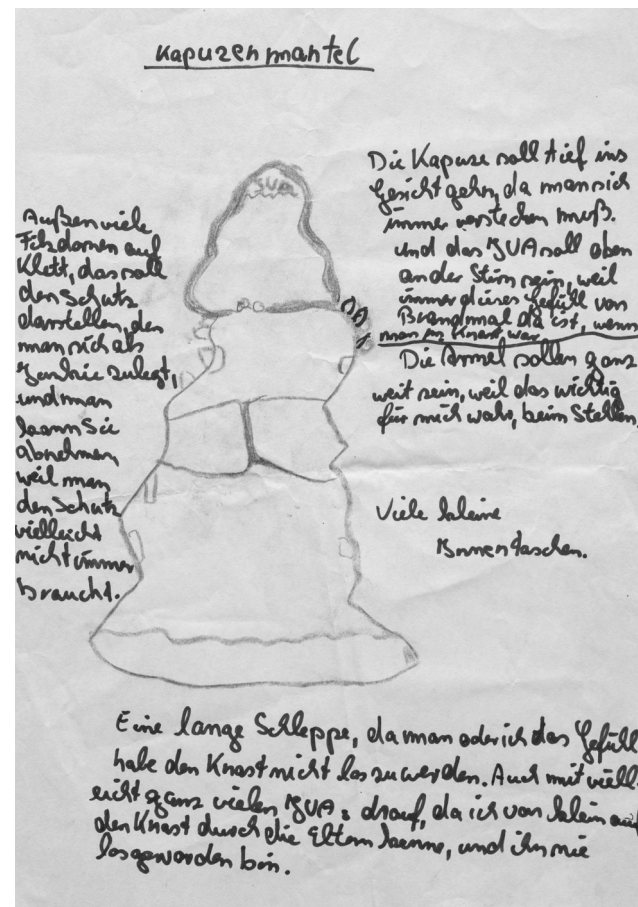
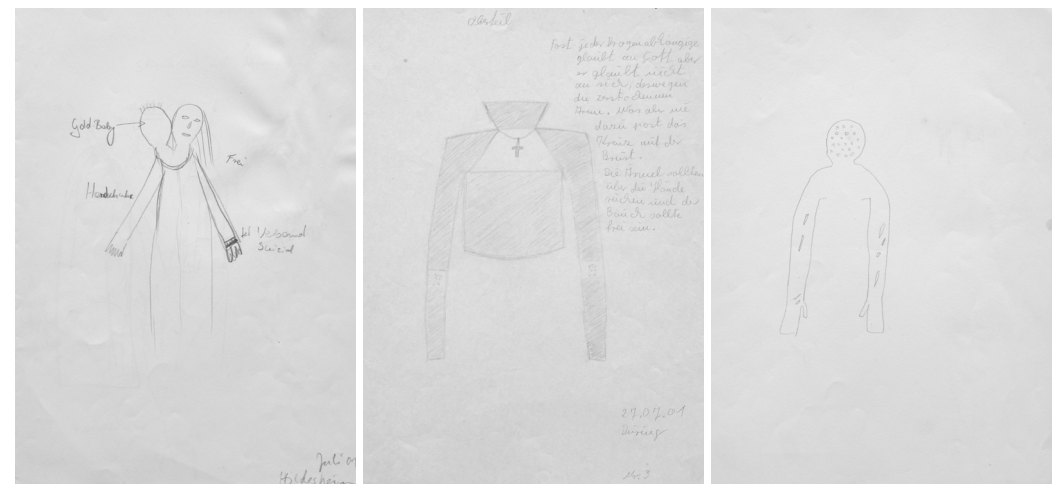
While the others are still in the process of searching and making preparatory sketches, Magda knows what kind of wearable article of clothing she needs: new arms – concealed arms, healed arms, treated arms, comforted arms. She designs gloves that go all the way up her arms which will be sewn from white blanket material. Her arms are not just scarred, they have deep indentations and bumps – the marks left behind by infected injection injuries and ulcers. We make plaster casts of her arms for wax models which we will work with. The gloves are not intended to hide all the injuries and damage to her arms but to compensate for the physical defects incurred in twenty years of taking drugs. A pattern of holes on the inside of the arm-long gloves call the injections to mind.

We arrange with all the participants that we will continue the work together as soon as we have worked on the designs in Amsterdam. We remain in contact and send pictures of the gloves and other pieces of clothing.

## PROCESSING THE DESIGNS

In my studio, we continue working on the participants' designs. We inventory the approaches for the designs of clothes and material used according to the ideas of the participants, and produce samples of material and paper patterns. In the course of this we integrate our notes about the function of each piece of clothing and test the suitability of each drawing as starting point for a model in a collection, which may also be interesting for the general public. We try to categorise and standardise the individual designs with the aim of integrating shared needs into the models of garments.

After a few months we ask colleagues and the judge who is supervising our plan in the Arrondissementsrechtbank court building to give us appointments for practise fittings and trial runs in the semi-public area "Het Glazen Huis". Luuk Kramer takes photographs. The clothes look spectacular on the catwalk; the pictures suggest something truly extraordinary. The walk-through of the models is like a theatrical performance. And precisely this is a huge problem: We have somehow bypassed the subject; lost sight of what we are trying to do. We have concentrated too much on our suppositions about what the drawings mean, we have interpreted, or rather we have projected. Totally unaware of



what we were doing, we moved away from the For Us By Us principle, and instead produced “outcast haute couture”.

It takes some time until we recognise that it is only by working intensively with the participants, concentrating every day on the designs and their execution and also questioning objectives that gives rise to a spiral in which authentic results can develop. During the first two projects the location and the participants had redefined the concept of an object. The suitability of one art(form) under such circumstances, however, is not automatically transferable to other situations, materials, and formats. That I followed “my junkies” from the prison into their situations in life, neither guaranteed the repetition of the quality of our contact, nor the quality of the outcome or proven methods. The LÜCKE and PWC1 projects had the effect of being emancipatory for all involved, now however, I miss the clear connection between the object and the participants.



Design PRISON WEAR COLLECTION 2, Het Glazen Huis, Amsterdam

UNNA, AUGUST 2001

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

Magda thanks us for the days we spent together, also on behalf of the other LÜSA residents.

I wanted to let you all know any way that I shall not be here for almost the entire month; perhaps you can still change the dates, but if not, then just come, because everyone who participated had a lot of fun working with you and are looking forward to your return, it's really rare to make these people excited about something.

She is feeling bad, though. Two to three weeks in the hospital are ahead of her, primarily for a general check-up, because she constantly feels ill, and secondly, for a detox, because they don't believe her that she is only taking half an Oxazepam (tranquiliser) per day and nothing else. She sounds despondent and helpless, is thinking about moving out of the house and returning to Hanover. One of the participants, Yvonne, is unfortunately in prison again.

I can't do very much with my limitations except to stay in touch!

BREMEN, OCTOBER 2001

## REBECCA MERTENS

After finishing the in-patient therapy in Loxstedt, Rebecca moves into the living community of former drug users in Bremen, where she is to be prepared, supervised by various caretakers, for an independent life. Practical supervision in daily life replaces group and one-to-one therapy. Without checks for drugs and behavioural restrictions, she should learn to move around in the city without falling back into former habits. I visit Rebecca in the shared flat where she lives. First, she shows me her room, which she hasn't arranged or settled into yet. Then she shows me Bremen and introduces me to the people with whom she socialises. She is even more restless than during my last visit to Loxstedt, she is torn between the desire to live a drug-free life and the longing to get back into the scenes she knows.

I just happen to like the freaks, the punks, and the weirdos

she says as though defending herself. And as I can see, she is liked by them. For the first time, she asks me for money when we say good-bye, gives urgent reasons for why she needs it, and she would definitely pay it back.

When I call the next time I am informed that Rebecca no longer lives in the community. It is not possible to give me more information.

Later, the therapist in Loxstedt confirms that Rebecca has abandoned her therapy, but does not answer my question whether Rebecca had been released too early to Bremen. She merely says rather tersely that Rebecca likely needed another round of drugs. Whether they would take her back into Loxstedt after this round? That remains to be seen.

VECHTA, 4 NOVEMBER 2001

# REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca tells me about her severe relapse, and her shame that she has caused disappointment. She has abused trust, and hopes she will get a new chance.

As you obviously guessed from the address of the sender, I am back in this nasty, cold, dark and especially hate-filled hole ... terrible. Especially after the therapy, this inhumane treatment is very hard to bear. Luckily, though, I won't have to bear it for very long. As fast as it is possible, I'm going back into therapy. Perhaps I shall go back to Lox!!! I hope so much that they will take me back again, because every other therapy, no matter how good it may be, in my heart would be second rate. I soooo would like to go back there, though I am a little scared that they will say no. Even if it's not Lox, I'm going back into therapy, 100 percent! I have behaved in a shitty and cowardly way; I can't sugar-coat it at all. I think I really need to learn to look after what I love and treasure.

VECHTA, 19 NOVEMBER 2001

# REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca faxes that she will soon be going to Elrond<sup>57</sup> in Osnabrück – as an interim solution.

Elrond is a self-help group for drug addicts, who are clean although still addicted.

When she is there, she will have a three-month contact ban.

No letters, no telephone calls.

So, I shouldn't worry if I don't hear from her.

Apart from that, I am doing much better again. Sun in sight. Would have liked to speak to you, explained everything properly again!

We speak on the telephone during the regular telephone times. I try to make it clear to her that she does not have to answer to me. It is important to her, though, she replies, to work on taking responsibility, very important, if you expect people to believe in you – including believing in yourself. As I no longer have a special permit<sup>58</sup> to enter the prison outside of the regular visiting hours, I can only see Rebecca for forty minutes in the official visiting room.

57 <http://www.elrond-osnabrueck.de>

58 The previous prison director fell ill in the autumn, and the acting prison director did not want to support my projects.

VECHTA, 28 DECEMBER 2001

# REBECCA MERTENS

In her following letters, Rebecca reports with her usual humour about this year's Christmas in jail, amongst other things. With only one television channel, a woman is obliged to

suffer ghastly German Christmas hits, Helmut Lotti's Classical Christmas!!!! And movies like *Gone With the Wind*!!! It's hardly surprising that the suicide rate rockets up in jail at Christmas.

Rebecca will be 26 in a few days, and her greatest worry concerns her inability to get everything straight. Soon I will be thirty, and then what? Shall I end up here like Mari, knitting? Gulp! Speaking of whom, she is doing really well, by the way! Since she's been off methadone, she's really back in the present! Has changed totally, really great. Shows me once again, what kind of rubbish that stuff is, and I never want to take it again!

HILDESHEIM, DECEMBER 2001

# WERONIKA MAZUR

I get letters and cards regularly from Weronika. She continues to report on the obstacles she has to overcome to be a good mother to Marvin. Which is really not very easy; every day she has to do an internship or go to school, go to therapy sessions, and constantly has to do stuff at official offices. She sends Christmas greetings.

## PROJECT CONCEPT: LIVING ROOM FOR JUVENILES

During the PWC project, I had regularly fetched two participants, A. G. and Nicole Frisch, from the juvenile section accompanied by a prison officer. I can quite imagine working together with these girls intensively to redesign the vast corridor of the juvenile section into a Living Room for Juveniles.

## ACTION AND INSTALLATION: REDESIGNING THE JUVENILE SECTION OF THE VECHTA WOMEN'S PRISON

The “action” consists of reading stories and setting up a library. For the “installation”, existing elements of the furnishings are re-purposed and combined with new furniture and everyday household objects. It is planned to design the latter in collaboration with the juvenile inmates, and produce them in the prison workshops.

The redesigning of the juvenile section pursues two goals: the stories<sup>59</sup> read aloud take up the experiences and desires of the residents, mirror them, and/or give insights into other ways of living. During this time, the young women who live there change their surroundings in such a way that their needs and intentions are detectable, and take on a concrete form. This process is comparable to the structure of a story: after setting the scene and characterising the figures, the plot gets increasingly

dynamic, and through the sequence of events and the descriptions of human behaviour, the readers gradually come to identify with the main characters and their actions. At the same time, an idea begins



to grow in their minds as to how their immediate environment could look and how they might live in it.



*Snow White*,<sup>60</sup> illustration by Ludwig Richter, ca. 1850



Still from the film *Trainspotting*, directed by Danny Boyle (1996), based on the novel of the same name by Irvine Welsh (1993)<sup>61</sup>

59 The American psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim argued that fairy tales help a child “to make some coherent sense out of the turmoil of his feelings”. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, Introduction. New York: Knopf, 1976.

60 The fairy tale begins in winter, when the birth of a princess is announced. The magical colours black (the ebony wood of the window), white (snow), and red (blood) represent the stages in the life of a woman: youth, maturity, old age, and death. Within these stages of life, birth, education, test (initiation), (spiritual) death, and resurrection to a new life take place. The number seven (the seven dwarfs) refers to, amongst other things, the seven virtues and the seven sins of humankind. The mirror is supposed to provide answers to life and death.

61 The book, and the film adapted from it, tell the story of young drug-addicted vandal and trainspotter, Mark Renton, who tries to get clean and stay away from his “bad” friends. It’s about sex, violence, drugs, and gross language; there is no idealisation. Trainspotters stand at stations or by railway lines and write down the numbers of all the trains that pass them. When they have “spotted” all the trains once, the collection is complete and the session over. Then, seeing a train does not have the same function or importance any more.

## GIRLS’ PRISON

The juvenile section of the prison houses around twelve fourteen to twenty-year-old girls from four neighbouring federal states. The section is located on the ground floor of the prison building that was constructed in 1882 as a custody facility for women. The corridor, which is approximately seven metres wide, five metres high, and thirty metres long, is divided into two by a glass wall, so that warring factions of inmates can be separated if necessary. One half of the corridor has large windows looking onto the small prison yard in which there are a few trees, and onto the prison wall. Not much can be seen of the street behind the wall. The other half of the corridor has no windows, no sources of daylight.

In each part of the corridor there are six cells; four are used as prison cells and two are a guard room and an office. Both parts of the corridor are set up as common rooms and there is a semi-public telephone booth and a communal kitchen.

The cells measure approximately 4 × 2.5 metres and offer living space for one or two girls. The girls arrange their cells themselves like a children’s or teenager’s room—as far as security rules allow—with pictures on the walls, a wooden bed, one cuddly toy (only one is allowed), and—as far as enough space is available—a bedside table between the beds. All cells have a toilet and a wash basin; the warders can see into the cells at any time.



Juvenile prison cell for one or two girls, women’s prison in Vechta, Lower Saxony, 2003

The common room is the corridor; it is currently furnished with antiquated upholstered furniture, and the easy-care PVC floor is always clean. Here, the young prisoners slouch in chairs like sand bags, bulky “Buffalo” shoes with mega plateau soles on their feet casually resting on the oak side tables. There is chatter and laughter. On the surface, a gathering that seems like lively social interaction; however, it is actually not relaxed and there is definitely

no friendliness. They don't talk to each other, they shout at each other. No questions are asked, there is no enquiring or discussion; instead, accusations, denunciations, people are laughed at, slandered, ordered about, insulted, and threatened.



Corridor with cells in the juvenile section, women's prison in Vechta, 2003

## SNOW WHITE, PSYCHO BEGBIE, AND DIANE (14)

In the minds of the young prisoners, a phantom image of the integrity of middle class life plays a big role: what life could be like if they weren't in this situation, if everything would turn out right in the end; for them, a fairy tale and an unrealistic dream.

The goal of rearranging the corridor is to develop the inmates' mental flexibility and offer experience of physical proximity without endangering the young women.

A literary event is the non-material part of the project. To begin with, I concentrate on telling stories and constantly repeating them. I am convinced that I can reach the girls and capture their attention with fairy tales like *Snow White* just as much as with stories like that of fixer Psycho Begbie and 14-year-old Diane in the film *Trainspotting*. From the dream of the sleeping princess in a glass coffin or the young woman locked in a tower without an exit to the nightmare of a destructive environment, the fate of every life is covered. For a limited period of time real life is suspended.

While the young women think about and reflect on the stories, in parallel ideas for the design of an interior take shape, rather like a continuation of what they had heard: how and where does each of them want to hang out, sit, lie, when it's reading time?



Rapunzel's Tower, wood cut by Otto Ubbelohde, illustration from *Grimms' Fairy Tales*, the tea house of 1616 called "Rapunzel's house" in Amönau, Hesse, which served as the model for the Brothers Grimm.<sup>62</sup>



The Tower of Michel de Montaigne<sup>63</sup>

All designs for the pieces of furniture will be produced in the professionally equipped prison workshops (wood, metal, textiles). During this process, various familiar craft techniques will be employed, but also some new ones. Sewing bolster cases made of Skai (faux leather), the felting of cases for beanbag chairs, and the quilting of futons, for example, are techniques that can easily be learned, and whose results are immediately visible.

Because of the glass wall, the two parts of the corridor seem like one room, although they will be furnished separately. The front part, which is very light due to the large windows, is designed in shades of grey with straight lines

and forms; the back part of the corridor that has less daylight is done in neon colours and flashy designs.

Both halves of the corridor will have the same basic items: chairs and tables, which can be used separately, or put together for working in groups. Form, material, and colour emphasise that they are purely functional. Additionally, there is comfortable furniture for sitting and lying on, for example, for reading aloud and telling stories. In both parts of the corridor an own library is being set up, which is added to regularly. The only fixed object will be the book shelf; all the other furniture is on wheels and can be moved about. The old living room furniture in “Gelsenkirchen baroque” style will be taken apart and put back together again in such a way that each item becomes an individual piece of furniture or object. Texts and symbols that mean something to the inmates can be carved on the wooden parts.

Before it is furnished, there will be construction work in the dark part of the corridor so that it has a source of daylight. This darker room will be set up in a style that is somewhere between an UFO and a princesses’ suite. The basic colours are pink, yellow, pale blue, metallic; the materials are leather, Skai, and fine wool, woven or felted. The “chilling corner” in this room will consist of movable beanbag chairs, which when arranged form a circle with a diameter of around four metres, and in every constellation radiate comfort and warmth. The fluorescent lights on the ceilings and walls will be underlaid with coloured Skai.

The “chilling corner” in the brighter half of the corridor consists of several box elements for sitting, which can be set up in variable arrangements. All of the elements are covered with the detested grey prison blankets, which then suddenly look like exclusive designer sofas.

In addition to furnishing the two common rooms, it is planned to transform the cell containing the TV into an ultra small cinema in which films to the stories being read can be screened.

For this, too, an archive is being set up in the prison section. The computer working stations will be integrated into the corridor; they will be movable and used flexibly in the room. For the acquisition of books and DVDs, generous book traders in Lower Saxony have pledged their help and financial support.

The project to give the juvenile section a complete makeover can, in collaboration with the prison staff, be continued and regularly updated.

62 The principal symbol in the fairy tale about Rapunzel is the tower. “Rapunzel” also refers to lamb’s lettuce, which has small, stringy roots that look like hairs. Plants grow under and above ground, and therefore they belong to two spheres. In the interpretation of the fairy tale, living in a tower symbolises the development of thought in a secure environment, but which has to be abandoned when the time is right in order to take part in life outside. The defining feature of this fairy tale is the active role of women in overcoming obstacles.

63 Michel de Montaigne (1533–1592) retired from public life for many years and withdrew to the tower of his Château de Montaigne where he wrote his famous *Essais* (essays). His stated goal was to describe humans, and especially himself, with complete honesty. Montaigne developed his ideas by observing himself as well as the leading figures of his day. The great variety and volatility of human nature are its most basic features, in his opinion, and humans are not able to attain true certainty. Because they are slaves to their habits, prejudices, egoism, and fanaticism, humans are victims of circumstance. On education Montaigne remarked, “Je n’enseigne point, je raconte.” (I do not teach. I relate.) Michel de Montaigne, *Complete Essays*, vol. III., chp. II. On Repentance. Quotation in: Michel de Montaigne, *Essays*, trans. and introduction J. M. Cohen, London: Penguin, 1959.

## MAKEOVER OF THE JUVENILE COMMON ROOMS: WORK PHASE

The concept and the plan of the work phase are approved by the prison administration, the staff of the juvenile section, the Lower Saxony Ministry of Justice, and the council of the monastic community, which commits 55,000 euros to the project.

In spite of numerous attempts, the project is never carried out. The current prison director, the project’s strongest supporter who could have established the right conditions for it, falls seriously ill. The earmarked funds are used for other purposes. However, two new kitchens are installed in the juvenile section, and some new pieces of IKEA furniture are purchased.

It is only later that the prison director’s successor manages to make decisive changes to the living situation of the juveniles: he takes them out of the closed adult prison, and accommodates them in a separate building near the semi-open prison.

VECHTA, JANUARY 2002

## REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca writes:

I can forget my two-thirds.

The new division director would just not let her go. “Was pretty down, because I was actually counting on it.” She and her psychologist have already handed in a new application for Paragraph 35.<sup>64</sup>

The way things are looking, the decision will be made this week. My admission date for Loxstedt is scheduled already for the 21st; this was also faxed to the StA. More waiting! If they ruin my admission again, I’ll go directly into the methadone programme; well, at least I’ll try to, and then go straight to the communal corridor. I’ll then do therapy after serving the whole of my sentence. I know myself that this is not optimal, but I have to see how I can manage to get through the year in the best way possible.



Rebecca says a staff member has tipped her off that a pilot project will start here, with original substance substitution;<sup>65</sup> however, the date has not yet been set. She praises the prison director. It is the last of five days' lockup, which she received because at the last cell check, her hooch<sup>66</sup> was discovered.

What a shame, it only needed another two days.

64 In the case of drug-related crimes committed by addicts, the sentence can be commuted to therapy in a treatment facility. The convicted offender does not have to serve the sentence in prison, but can use the time to get therapy for drug addiction. If the offender's application according to § 35 BtMG is granted, then the offender will be transferred to a therapy facility.

65 Controlled substances-assisted treatment means that doctors prescribe diacetylmorphine, first marketed and now generally known under the name heroin. Studies have found that long-term users of heroin can be in such an extreme state of neglect that they cannot be reached by low-threshold offers of aid, such as opioid replacement therapy. On the other hand there is the so-called maturing out process – the long-term use of heroin gradually comes to an end by itself. At the end of May 2009 the German Bundestag debated controlled substances-assisted treatment and voted to include it in standard medical care and change the laws on drugs accordingly.

66 The women brew alcoholic beverages from all kinds of foods that ferment. They prefer apples, but any type of fruit will do.

VECHTA, 16 FEBRUARY 2002

## REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca has finally received the court's decision. She is allowed to leave prison in four days. First, though, she has to do a detox for a week, as usual. She says she is totally excited and also has the jitters about meeting the group. Apart from the therapist she won't know anyone there; she already can't sleep at night anymore.

LOXSTEDT, MARCH 2002

## REBECCA MERTENS

When the period of the contact ban is over, I ring up in Loxstedt. The fellow resident on the telephone says Rebecca is not there. Nope, not tomorrow either.

She has gone.

Of course he can't give me any more details.



Ulrike Möntmann, examples of objects for sitting and lying on in the front part of the corridor. Wood, futon, boomerang pillow, prison blankets, 400 x 100 cm, 1998. Photographs: Jeroen Alberts





Bastienne Kramer, installation: Examples of the furnishings in the back part of the corridor.  
Leather-covered benches, fluorescent lighting, plastic elements, 1996

HILDESHEIM, MARCH 2002

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Marvin gets up to a lot of mischief, and he can walk now. I have successfully completed my course; that is, the pre-grades. They turned out good, could be better though.

HILDESHEIM, MAY 2002

## WERONIKA MAZUR

The school is quite okay, I hope that I'll be able to finish. In November I shall be doing an internship in the county of Hildesheim as an administration secretary, I'm looking forward to that. I don't have a boyfriend and concentrate exclusively on the school and Marvin. I only smoke at the weekends. Marvin is developing well, I must say, and he likes the nursery very much.

She is waiting for her trial.

The maximum sentence I could get is one year, I could live with that. If I get a psychological assessment, I could get away with a suspended sentence. In hope lies strength!

For a few weeks now, she has been on medication.

Because of the infection, 12 pills a day, terrible. I keep getting diarrhoea, and have problems concentrating. Also, since I've been taking these pills, I hardly go out of the house because I am so tired. Marek, thank god, has "only" been charged with grievous bodily harm resulting in death, therefore not with murder, and will get a lesser sentence, I am happy for him.

Unfortunately, she no longer has any contact with Renée, although her daughter comes by occasionally.

On the 30th I have an appointment at the clinic with Marvin. It'll be alright. Recently, I took him to the doctor twice, because he had a slight temperature, 38°, but that is normal, the doctor said.

VECHTA, 13 MAY 2002

## REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca writes a short letter:

Sorry that I haven't contacted you for such a long time, it all wasn't so rosy, nope, actually everything was pretty shitty! I got totally smashed! At the moment I'm still lying in hospital, and I'm feeling like crap! Yes, I know, it's my own fault!

From where she is, she can't send faxes nor use a telephone, but she gives me the number where she can be reached and at which times.

Don't know how long I'll have to stay here, I immediately applied for the communal corridor.

As of June 9, she will be on the communal corridor, the D2. She wants to be transferred to the B1 corridor,<sup>67</sup>

... with the methadone patients, life is not exactly very exciting! But it's much, much better than solitary confinement.

For when she is released from prison, she has decided to do therapy at "Violetta Clean"<sup>68</sup> in Berlin, a facility exclusively for women. We had talked quite often about therapy specifically for women. In spite of the "contracts" that the clients have to sign before they begin therapy, in which they pledge to not start any sexual relationships with other patients, Rebecca starts affairs with clients (or in jail with inmates) in every place, women and men.

Just for fun

she says,

no love relationships.

She finds the concept at Violetta Clean attractive; it is comparable with Loxstedt. The living community is housed in a villa where Hildegard Knief had once lived with her family for a longer period of time.

Perhaps a therapy exclusively for women is really better for me.

On a separate piece of paper she writes:

I had a dream

One which today

I can hardly remember,

it was very bright, warm.

Rays of sunshine flooded the grey,

which usually prevailed,

a pleasant light: friendly, full of love

Then the awakening – darkness, loneliness

(The first that I have ever written)

Pigsty

It stinks

None of the pigs do anything

One gets fed up

and opens the window

The others bite it to death.

(Because it's draughty)

67 The D2 corridor is a closed cell block. The B1 section is located in the new building of the prison. The cells there are more like normal rooms; there, women are accommodated who are in the replacement therapy programme and regarded as stable.

68 Violetta Clean was founded in 1983, and was one of the first projects in Germany for female addicts. It is a therapy facility that is a living community for women with problems relating to addiction in the Berlin district of Grunewald and is independently operated by the association FrauSuchtZukunft-Verein zur Hilfe suchtmittelabhängiger Frauen e.V. <http://www.frausuchtzukunft.de/fsz/index.php?page=einrichtungVC>

VECHTA, 27 MAY 2002

# REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca sends me a leaflet from Violetta Clean, because I had asked about the program. Her letters are gradually beginning to sound calmer.

You ask whether I'm clean. Yep, I sure am! And I'm very happy about it, too. Of course, occasionally I smoke some pot, that's OK though. It's not as though I run around in a daze all the time – don't worry. At the moment I'm doing really well, apart from the fact that I still don't have any work. That really sucks! And that also I'm on a communal corridor, totally isolated from everything, that really is quite heavy and not my thing at all.

She is now in the writers' workshop,

... which is quite OK. One of the prison school's teachers founded this initiative, and a local publisher was called in so that the whole thing is a little more professional. He was also in the men's jail, and he published a book of poetry with the cons there. Together with him we've revived the newspaper, Andrea Bachmeyer is also involved so believe me, it will really be good!

The newspaper is going to be called *Catwalk*, and will appear monthly as of August. I could, of course, subscribe to it via the prison director. On the coming Friday, a poetry slam is taking place in the sports hall at which Rebecca will recite her first poem. Although it's only very short, she already has butterflies in her stomach when she thinks about going on stage.

How my relapse came about I'll tell you when we see each other. Writing about it is hard for me – I need your direct questions! I have started to wobble here already – I was much, much more prone to a relapse than I thought – also mentally.

In the P.S. she also asks, what about the red postman's bag I had promised her once. This is the big red leather bag I always had with me when we were doing the first PRISON WEAR COLLECTION, and because Rebecca liked it so much, I wanted to give it to her as a farewell present. However, unless she had made an application to receive a present, she wouldn't be allowed to get the bag, and every time I thought about sending it to her, Rebecca was already in a different place. Now she sends me a "green token", which she has had to apply for, in order that she can receive a package from a checked sender.

Well, as you know, I never forget anything.

VECHTA, 5 AUGUST 2002

# REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca complains that she starts a lot of letters, but doesn't finish writing them.

A writing block full of fragments about the things that go down in the prison, especially in the communal corridor. Here on the corridor, I am really not doing well!

I have now decided to withdraw from the hubbub that’s going on around here, staying in my cell more, and going back to concentrating more on myself and on my way again. I think I can’t really write to you properly about what’s really going on here. Constant stress – not my stress – I am always in the middle of it and am careful that I don’t step on a mine, and increasingly talk less – I am becoming absolutely superficial!!!!

At least she is working now, she says, in the kitchen.  
 ... the grind in the kitchen is quite OK in itself! Already simply because there are two guys there, it’s a totally different atmosphere. No flirting, though, and so on is allowed, otherwise you’re out.  
 She now lives in a cell with Melanie, that is OK, and actually doing her good. They both keep away from “all this claptrap”. She is lucky with her cellmate – which is really a break, because she doesn’t manage to get much done lately, it is time, to think things over more – and to come down to earth.

A short while ago, there was a workshop with two students, and she had made a sculpture from an Ytong block. The exhibition was presented in the recreation room  
 ... with the director there and the press.  
 The working in the monastery yard and the Seiler corridor painfully reminded her of our project and of her current situation. She would so much love to work with us again. She asks me to give her more details about the juveniles project I am working on at the moment

Oh yeah, I almost forgot! I was baptised today. There was a massive do in the church, with children as well ...! Altogether seven people were baptised! Was quite OK, I am now a protestant – amen.

She has no stamps to send the letter, whether I could send her a few?

HILDESHEIM, 27 AUGUST 2002

# WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika has finished her secondary school certificate with an average grade of 2.0.  
 ... could be better. As of August 1st I will be working as an office assistant for a Third World aid association, I find the work a lot of fun, because it is so versatile.  
 Weronika has moved again; the apartment on the fourth floor was too strenuous with a child, and also too expensive.  
 My trial has also taken place; unfortunately they have sentenced me to one and a half years, I have appealed. In this way, I can postpone the beginning of the sentence for six months; should everything go wrong, I will then lodge an appeal<sup>69</sup> and if that doesn’t work, I will make a plea for clemency. If, despite everything, I still have to go inside, I will do an apprenticeship in Vechta. I have quite good contacts with the child protection services, and they will reserve a place for me in the mother-child

day release. I have already made the applications just in case, about six months ago. I have managed to not smoke pot for almost three months now, a good achievement, don’t you think? Since the trial I have started smoking again, but moderately. Apart from all this, everything else goes on as usual; only the men stress me out a bit or I do it myself!!! Thank God I don’t have much free time; such a regulated day doesn’t leave me much time to get up to mischief.

Proudly she writes that Marvin now uses the children’s toilet, and that he enjoys being in the day care centre; the nursery teachers there think that he is developing well. He is both charming and cheeky.  
 Her messages about being single and stress with guys alternate. At the moment, she can’t decide between three of them, an ex-boyfriend, a Dutch guy (no drugs, but he does have a pet tarantula!), and a young guy who has just finished studying medicine. All of them are really very nice!

69 An appeal hearing takes place at a regional court. All the facts of a case are examined again and evidence heard again. At an appeal hearing it is only examined whether a judgement contains errors of law, the findings of facts cannot be challenged. Judgements of a regional court can only be appealed.

VECHTA, 26 NOVEMBER 2002

# REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca writes:  
 ... just a few lines, I dunno why but I can’t be bothered to write – and anyway everything’s pretty crappy at the moment. What you don’t know yet: I am back in a closed cell! Last week I got kicked out of the G building together with Ellen. That was a slightly tricky matter, I better tell you the story some time on the telephone; you know, the enemy is reading this too. Apart from that, I don’t really know quite what’s going on in me. At the moment I’m just drifting along without a goal and without any kind of motivation.  
 It makes me sick that I was once much further along than I am now, and I just don’t manage to get back there – my crappy psyche! I miss being with people who want something other than this shit here; alone, I simply can’t do it.

2002–2009

OF SPACES

OF VIOLENCE

AND  
REVOLVING  
DOORS

“Some lives are grievable and others are not; the differential allocation of grievability that decides what kind of subject is and must be grieved, and which kind of subject must not, operates to produce and maintain certain exclusionary conceptions of who is normatively human; what counts as a livable life and a grievable death?”<sup>70</sup>

70 Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, Verso: London and New York, 2004, xivf.

2002



## DUTCH SOUVENIRS

European Ceramic Work Centre (EKWC), 's-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands

“Dutch Souvenirs” is a project initiated by the EKWC, which aims to develop a new type of Dutch souvenir. In 2002, in his function as design coordinator, Matthias Keller invites former residents<sup>71</sup> to the EKWC to give physical form to their ideas and concepts for unorthodox ceramic souvenirs. It is intended to present the prototypes for the first time at the famous design trade fair in Milan.

I am interested to find out whether drug policies and my experiences with imprisoned drug-addicted women could be a subject for the Dutch Souvenirs project.

A souvenir (French: to remember) is an object with which memories of something or someone, of a place or a moment in time, are connected. The object represents something that is outside the familiar environment and ordinary perceived things that can be taken home.

I want my souvenir to record and reflect my thoughts and experiences in the heterotopia that is prison. How and in what form could they be concentrated in an object that when one looks at it they gaze back?<sup>72</sup>

While we were doing the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION project at the women’s prison in Vechta, there was always one participant or other walking around with the “Golden Baby”, a soft doll made of gold-coloured faux leather, which was part of Weronika Mazur’s clothing design. The dearest wish of Weronika, pregnant and HIV positive, was to give birth to a healthy baby. No other object in the collection received nearly as much attention as this doll. Dolls and cuddly toys meant something to

the inmates—in nearly all the cells cuddly toys were sitting on the beds, and little dollies or stuffed toy pendants dangled from their bags and sets of keys.

One finding of Anneclaire Kersten's survey of the project participants about which dolls or stuffed toys the women owned when they were children was that as children, seven of the eight women had no dolls or stuffed toys, only A. G. owned both dolls and cuddly toys. Weronika Mazur's mother had collected porcelain dolls, which Weronika found fascinating; however, she wasn't allowed to touch them.

71 These include the artists and designers Sigurdur Gudmundsson, Ineke Hans, Jongeriuslab, Hugo Kaagman, Matthias Keller and Simone van Bakel, Manon van Kouswijk, Bastienne Kramer, MNO Design, Ted Noten, Louise Schouwenberg, and Studio Job.

72 Based loosely on the words of English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889): "what you look hard at seems to look hard at you, hence the true and false instress of nature. ... Unless you *refresh* the mind from *time to time*, you cannot always remember or believe how deep the *inscape* in things is." The terms "inscape"—related to "landscape" and "seascape"—and "instress" are neologism coined by Hopkins; see <http://www.victorianweb.org/authors/hopkins/hopkins1.html>.

## REBORN BABIES

My plan is that the souvenir will be a porcelain doll<sup>73</sup>, a Baby Doll. It evokes associations with a beginning human life, with a newborn, who is already assigned characteristics and talents by its relatives, in the hope of a fulfilled life within the community into which the baby is born.

I am looking for a contemporary baby doll, which is suitable for producing a plaster cast mould. As I realise on my tour of toy shops, the doll industry still concentrates on girls as the target group, whereby these days producers link the acquisition of exclusive products with perfidious conditions; like "doll inspectors" they seek to monitor the future of their expensive quality dolls, which are not only designed more naturalistically—with the crumpled faces of newborns or blemishes—they are also equipped with audio technology that expresses things like hunger, hygiene, fatigue, longing for attention, and so on—at the push of a button in ten selectable sentences. One does not just simply buy a doll like that, one adopts it. How the child is supposed to treat the doll is not only outlined in a printed manual for its care, it is actually a requirement for its purchase. The future doll owner signs a certificate in which they promise to take optimal care of this doll. The contract is returned to the manufacturer.<sup>74</sup>

73 Porcelain became popular for making dolls' heads, predominantly in Germany, around 1840. A decisive innovation in the design of dolls was movable limbs. This type of doll was known in Germany as a "Gelenktäufeling", a baby doll clad only in a vest; see: Susanne Regener, *Das verzeichnete Mädchen. Zur Darstellung des bürgerlichen Mädchens in Photographie, Puppe, Text im ausgehenden 19. Jahrhundert*. Marburg, 1988.

74 See, for example, the Wikipedia entry on reborn dolls, which are created by "reborners" or "reborn artists". Reborners see themselves as artists specialising in doll design that simulates a human infant as realistically as possible. These dolls are not simply bought, they are

adopted. Reborn dolls began to be made in the USA in the late 1990s, when some ambitious doll manufacturer sought to create ever more realistic models of babies. The manic drive of the reborners to create such artefacts led to their function as toys receding entirely into the background. The mass producers of dolls recognised that here was a market niche and took over the idea of the reborners' exclusivity. Then they also marketed their cheap dolls with accompanying claptrap about "adoption".

## EKWC

As a model for the baby doll, I decide in the end to use my old plastic doll which says "Mama". I cut off her synthetic locks, take the body apart, and produce the moulds for the separate parts at the EKWC. After a few attempts, I manage to cast usable porcelain parts that do not deform in the firing process.

For the doll faces<sup>75</sup> I use photo portraits of Weronika Mazur, Rebecca Mertens, Nicole Frisch, and Magda Gomez Ferrer. On the doll's back, into the raw, leather-hard porcelain of the round surface where the Mama-loudspeaker was attached, I perforate one of the four women's names and the year of her birth. To give the porcelain doll a voice, I research together with an electrical engineering student how it would be possible to build and insert mini-loudspeakers and sound carriers into the doll's body.

75 "The differentiation of body form and facial features led in the last two decades of the nineteenth century to the baby doll. This is a type of doll that because of its specific image and character can be easily associated with notions of a young girl's body. In terms of its formal structure this type of doll has survived into the present day. The term "baby doll", however, does not imply theoretically that here a baby girl model functions as a quasi natural and "realistic" image. Rather, the forms assembled into a characteristic image of a "girl-child" should be understood as a symbol of what being a girl represents"; Susanne Regener, *Das verzeichnete Mädchen*. Marburg, 1988.

DECEMBER 2002

## BIOGRAPHY OF KEY FACTS

I try to reach Rebecca in the women's prison at Vechta to ask her to participate in the Dutch Souvenirs project but without success. She seems to have been transferred to a different section, and at first, nobody is prepared to give me any information. From Helmut König I finally learn that she was in the segregation unit, and has now been transferred to the closed section. Since her relapse, I have not heard from her again; before I tell her about the project concept and the deadlines, I want to know how she is doing. When we finally speak to each other towards the end of the year, she immediately agrees to collaborate, and

is excited about working together again. To begin with, her contribution would be to write her biography in short sentences, which a Baby Doll could say. “Of course, will do”, she says.

At the beginning of February 2003, Helmut König mails the sentences of Rebecca’s biography.

I do not read anything new, I know the background to each and every sentence, which she had told me about during the months I was working at the prison. But that was not in such a condensed form; it was here and there something biographical, something harmless, something topical, some sign of hope. Her bald statements touch me in a different way, stronger. Despite her leaving out quite a lot, such as the physical violence she had experienced from her earliest childhood onwards, later the daily soliciting, which she did to fund her drug habit, the revolving door of into prison, out of prison, in, out, and being locked up for years.

UNNA, NOVEMBER 2002

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

Magda is happy that the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION will be presented in Unna at the international AIDS memorial day in the catacombs of the former Linden Brewery, which is now a centre for Light Art. She helps with the setting up of the exhibition and for the first time sees the complete picture of the Kneier models and the clothing objects.

VECHTA, 29 DECEMBER 2002

## REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca wants to spare me the description of her this year’s Christmas.

It’s really not that easy for me to get away from my (actually, I don’t really know exactly what it is) crisis? and not only jabber a load of loud and depressing stuff. This permanent greyness gets me down so much – I almost would have jumped out of the window, but not even that is possible here in this nasty place.

She says that she is going to appear on television, in a documentary about imprisonment in Germany. Unfortunately, she was a little bit stoned by mistake when the TV team came, but she wasn’t able to get out of it because the entire team was standing in front of her.

Rebecca Mertens [1976]

As an infant maybe as a small child, I might be being abused

At age three, I am for the first time being treated by a therapist

At age six, the police brings me home for the first time

At age nine, I start being sexually abused

At age ten, I start drinking

At age twelve, I play truant a lot, and stay away from home nights on end

At age fourteen, I am sent to a home

At age sixteen, I shoot heroin

At age eighteen, I am taken into custody

At age twenty-four, I enter therapy

At age twenty-five, I quit therapy and go back on heroin

I'm in the middle of preparations for Bremen! I still want to go back there. Clean living community + outpatient therapy. I think that then I'll also get in touch with Loxstedt again. But first, I want to "cope" for a while before I contact them. I think the decision to go to Bremen is the right one. I also don't know where else I could go. It's time to finally find a home, or to put it better, to create it.

She says that she sometimes thinks intensely about our project, about the music we used to listen to, on the warmth and closeness. It seems to her as though that was all in a different life.

VECHTA, JANUARY 2003

MARI NJIE

In early 2003, Mari replies to our letters and reports about the continuation of the projects; she tells us about what has changed in her life over the course of the past year.

Well, I've almost managed it now, the full sentence ends on March 10, 2003, thank God, it was a long time here. I'm clean (except for smoking, I need that to feel good).

Not only what she says, but also how she says it, gives the impression that she has come out of her lethargy. I wonder whether she is still in the methadone programme. She sounds as though the dosage has at least been reduced.

She says that she's been living up in the G building for a year now, where she feels a lot better. She has lost a lot of weight and has been working in the plastics workshop for some time now, which is also going well.

I enjoy working, as you very well know!

After her release, she is planning to return to Hildesheim or Salzgitter, but as yet she has no concrete idea about the further course her life will take, except that she desperately wants to go dancing. She is in a relationship in the jail, Ina is her name, a young woman

... could have been my daughter  
who has gone into therapy.

I ended the relationship before she left. For the past few months we did nothing but talk, I then had a moment of clarity; that she must go; otherwise she would have waited here for me for years. And in therapy she needs to be free, not waiting for me. Now she is writing from the therapy facility that we should meet outside, which is what I really would like very much. I don't do crochet work any more, I have other things on my mind; watching television and cooking do me good. Rebecca has landed up here again, but she is in the closed section so I never see her; also, she doesn't go to church. I go every Sunday, just to see who's there. I hope you can read my writing, school was never quite my thing.

HILDESHEIM, NOVEMBER 2003

WERONIKA MAZUR

Marvin is now three years old. I would say that the luckiest thing for me was getting pregnant back then. I think if I didn't have him, I wouldn't be able to cope at all.

She has been accepted for vocational training as a management assistant in office communication in Braunschweig, and will do an advanced computer course in IT. The costs are borne by the employment agency. Her work as office helper for the Third World association is still a lot of fun.

My work is very diverse; last week I helped with the work (advertising, food planning, coffee service, etc.) for an exhibition of our association at Hildesheim University, and met many new nice people.

The Russian course in the adult education centre is fun, despite the people there being a little bit uptight. I am fully booked, so-to-speak, I shall also soon be doing an advanced education course at AIDS Aid, on the subject of AIDS.

During the week, I obviously don't have so much time for Marvin, so at the weekend, I devote as much time to him as possible. Marvin is a marvellous little boy, artful, smart, and cheeky – those are the words that spring immediately to mind.

VECHTA, 9 FEBRUARY 2003

REBECCA MERTENS

Above all Rebecca misses Vanessa, her former lover from Osnabrück, who after five drug-free years in which she completed her training as a kindergarten teacher and had a firm offer of a position, had a relapse last year. She wound up in Vechta shortly afterwards, and was released a couple of days ago to the State Psychiatric Hospital in Wehnen for detoxification. Rebecca says that afterwards Vanessa will go to Loxstedt.

I'm sad, very sad because she is no longer by my side, I feel quite lonely without her. What I think is really shitty is that I have no one to talk to here – at least that's what it feels like! Apart from that, everything is pretty much the same here, not much going on. And without work, it's even lousier! I've got exactly sixty days left, which is not really a lot – nevertheless it's too much.

The whole lot of them here just make me sick – I want to get out of here! The women here are just plain evil; they look for your weak spot, and then get their teeth into you! I live here constantly behind a mask. In therapy I had learned to take it off bit by bit, but now it just fits perfectly again! Over the last few days, I have written more letters than I've done in a long time. Perhaps I'll be getting more post again now. By the way, I have decided to go back into therapy – after serving my time. If Loxstedt will take me again, I want to go there. If not, I'll go to the Pyramide for three months, then three months aftercare in the Carl Schurz, and after that to the clean



flat-sharing community and out-patient therapy. Well, what do you think about that? I think, that is the most sensible thing I can do. I think that if I just leave here, I wouldn't manage to stay clean – for that, my will is simply not strong enough at the moment! I need distance! In the ten months here, I have somehow lost the feeling for being clean, and the feeling for myself. Looks like I'll have to start right from the beginning again!

Apparently, Rebecca had already written a letter to the therapist Lisa in Loxstedt, though she had not yet had the courage to send it. Perhaps she should ask Martina (the psychologist in the prison in Vechta) to put out feelers ... or perhaps better not?

VECHTA, 14 MARCH 2003

## REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca writes that she misses us talking about our work together.

I'm actually feeling quite well, everything is beginning to get a little clearer, at least as regards therapy. Have my mind quite set on Loxstedt. Gradually, a feeling for it also is beginning to develop. Things are beginning to get clearer and I don't feel so scatter-brained anymore. Mhhh, I somehow can't express it properly on paper. The past few months I felt pretty bad, I can see that now quite well, it was only going downhill, I had been steadily working in that direction. Especially with regard to drugs and my behaviour, bit by bit I fell into the same pattern. And I did loads of things because of which I am now sitting knee-deep in the shit again. I am incorrigible, honestly. Somehow I always manoeuvre myself into somewhere where I actually do not really want to be, incapable of setting limits, or summoning up the courage to solve it in a reasonable way. I'm a coward! Dishonest to myself and to others. What am I actually searching for, damn it, and what do I want and need? Life without drugs is as difficult as constantly being on drugs. I don't know whether you actually understand what I'm wanting to say. Probably not. My mind is chaos.

Phew, enough of that! Apart from all this relationship-sex mess, it's alright actually. Another three weeks, and then I'm out of here. A new chance to start over, and a new attempt to not get caught up again. This time I know more though! I will not make the same mistakes again when I'm in therapy! I just have to stop giving myself just because someone wants me. That is one of my most important points in therapy! I am very confident that I will be able to work well together with Iris this time. As you know, I wasn't able to with Alice at all. I always arranged everything nicely with myself, and failed miserably.

It is high time that I properly start to engage with myself and my desire, and not constantly search for a substitute gratification, which doesn't last long and which always gets me into situations that are unbearable. I feel like I am constantly on the run, trying to escape. Oh well, something like that anyway!

Yesterday evening I stopped writing because it was all too over-intellectual and confused.

I had asked Rebecca to speak her text, which would be recorded in the prison by Helmut, in German and in English, so that the project can be circulated to an international readership.

Helmut König had given her my letter with the definitive version of her biography, and announced that he would be coming to the recording session next day. Apparently, she was also very happy about my letter:

Your letters are the only ones where I get the feeling they are really intended exclusively for ME.

She says I cannot imagine how much dumb correspondence she receives, it's mind-boggling. How many idiots had written to her after the airing of the documentation about German prisons on RTLII. One is as bad as the other. There was one where the guy said he adored her more than anything. Isn't that just sick? And one was of the opinion that all she needed was a nice, faithful man, who would stick by her in these troubling times, and that ultimately the inner values are what counts, outer appearances are completely unimportant. He had seen her, and added that she has a fantastic body, where everything is just perfect ... She was highly amused about her fan mail, most of which had come from men's prisons. One letter from Switzerland came from a guy who writes biographies and would perhaps be interested in hers. What did I think, should she answer him?

On Monday she will hear whether Loxstedt will take her. Lisa is sick. Rebecca will be released on April 11. In the addendum to the letter written the following day, she reports on the audio recordings with Helmut; she assumes that it went quite well.

## AUDIO-BIOGRAPHY

Helmut sends me the cassette with the audio recording of Rebecca's biography. Listening to it has a different effect than silently reading Rebecca's sentences. Rebecca speaks her text loud and clear, first in German, then in English, without any emotion; in a way it is as though she is reciting a shopping list which has nothing to do with her. Is this what she means when she says she is unable to bring thoughts and emotions together?

In the meantime, several audio technicians are working on developing the module and its standardisation. The porcelain stomach of the Baby Doll proves to be an excellent soundbox.

The four Baby Dolls will travel without voices to the various exhibitions of the Dutch Souvenirs project as prototypes of the series THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE. Rebecca's biography is printed on the packaging.

TBDWBAJ is nominated for the feminist art award<sup>76</sup> of the Dutch women's foundation Mama Cash. For the exhibition I produce eleven Baby Dolls. All of them speak a sentence from Rebecca Mertens's biography when they are picked up.



Catalogue Dutch Souvenirs, EKWC, 's Hertogenbosch, 2003

76 The audio module installed in the dolls' bodies was developed and produced by Dirk Stoop and Kees Reedijk of the Rijksakademie Amsterdam. The first series, which consisted of eleven talking Baby Dolls, was part of the 2003 exhibition featuring the eight artists nominated for the Mama Cash art award, *Imagine 10*, Bijlmer Amsterdam. The winners were Elke Uitentuis and Iratxe Jaio.

AMSTERDAM, MAY 2003

## REBECCA MERTENS

When I ring up Loxstedt after the detox and at the end of the period when she is incommunicado, I am informed that Rebecca's application for admission was rejected.

OSNABRÜCK, 2003–2007

## REBECCA MERTENS

In the years that follow, as soon as I am in Osnabrück I drive through the city at a snail's pace, along all the dark roads around the train station and the industrial zones, convinced that Rebecca must be somewhere close. Once I get out, search the entire train station, and do not see one drug-addicted woman. It appears that even in the provinces, drug scenes are being "cleansed". I do not know the new hangouts. Rebecca likes this city; she had always viewed Osnabrück as "her ideal city". It was her drug metropolis; she knew all the ins and outs, dealers, junkies, the junkie streetwalkers' district, police officers, judges, lawyers. I did not visit her mother; I was convinced that she did not know where Rebecca was living at the moment – or if she is still alive.

EUROPE PROJECT:  
THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE  
A JUNKIE [TBDWBAJ]

The title suggests that drug addiction is an inevitable fate; an ominous pronouncement on a human life that has hardly begun. It contradicts the common perception of the equal opportunities and individual freedom, and that an individual's right to physical and psychological self-determination is achievable for every life.

Rebecca Mertens's biographical sentences document a human life that takes place mainly on the street, not in personal spaces, and in jail. Rebecca's openness and her radical way of observing herself are untypical of the women whom I have so far encountered in the prison, although I assume that the facts of her biography are exemplary for the cvs of incarcerated female junkies. For me her statement becomes a kind of request to continue exploring and recording the circumstances of the lives of women before and after the beginning of their drug careers in correctional facilities of neighbouring European countries.

## TBDWBAJ CONCEPT

Some lives are grievable, and others are not; the fact that only some lives are deemed livable and some deaths grievable (Judith Butler 2004) discredits solidarity, or rather the disposition for solidarity, as a human universal: The bringing together of similarity and difference—despite diverging positions and points of view—references our common world, a world shared by all.<sup>77</sup>

To observe our common world and to bring together what is similar and what is different is a permanent process, which concerns every person individually and everybody in general. Peaceful coexistence and solidarity of the similar and the different precludes classifying the collective into winners and losers, is not based on compassion with the losers or management that aims to eliminate disruptive elements, but commences by recognising and integrating the differences and diversity of people, who together form a pluralistic community.

A collection of international biographies will reveal similarities and differences, which enable comparison of the cultural, social, and political positions of women in various societies—not only those of the junkies, but of all members of a society.

77 See Hannah Arendt: *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

## FROM ISOLATED SPACES TO CULTURAL SPACES

TBDWBAJ operates in various social environments, the isolated, the cultural, the public, and the virtual space.

When I produce TBDWBAJ in an isolated space—prison for instance—and then take the result into a cultural space—as an exhibition in a museum, art space, or gallery—the Baby Dolls leave and enter the two social environments that are the farthest apart, whose populations would probably not meet in real life—except unintentionally in a public space. Where and how will encounters of incasts and outcasts occur via TBDWBAJ?

## PUBLIC CONVERSATION: THE EXPERT MEETING

The Expert Meeting takes place in a cultural space, the exhibition room, and puts up for debate the legitimacy and the effectiveness of the intervention in social areas using the tools of visual art: Can “action” through art, as Hannah Arendt defines it, take place at all in public space, or rather can or should art throw off the constraints of merely “creating”?<sup>78</sup> Does the very presence of TBDWBAJ in the museum, the gallery, in the artists’ group, and so on, already transform the art space into an action space, into a political place? The goal of the talk is to exchange ideas between project participants and experts from the fields of art and art theory, philosophy, sociology, psychiatry and psychology, law, the penal system, politics, especially drug policy, and aid organisations.

The aim of the talk is not to dream up some utopian proposals for solutions, but to generate interdisciplinary questions and perhaps even a methodological apparatus: Is it possible to gain knowledge about systemic and social (power) structures from the biographies of individuals belonging to a neglected section of the population, or must we continue to neglect them on the grounds this is their private affair? Such an exchange of ideas can reveal the distance existing in the balancing act between public and private, between pitying them but not grieving for them, between being victims and perpetrators in order to approach collectively the subject of “violence as a mode of behaviour or interaction”.

78 Hannah Arendt criticises reducing an active life to work and consumption and insists that the public sphere must be kept open and expanded. She differentiates between human conditionality in the activity of work, of production, and of action. Creation of art she thinks of as “producing”, that is, as creation, which brings forth into the world monuments, writings, buildings, everyday objects, and artworks corresponding to the zeitgeist of a society. “Producing” goes beyond the activity of “work”, which merely serves the biological processes of short-term sustaining of life. “Action” is the highest, respected human activity, which is performed in the public sphere by people as their only collective activity, and in which all people, independent of “work” and “producing”, show each other who they are. The result of this “action” is unforeseeable, which significantly influences the diversity and the freedom of a society.

## SHOW WHO WE ARE

The German term *Gewalt* (“violence”) is linguistically related to *walten* (“to pre-side”) and originally meant—on a rather neutral level—effectuating something. In today’s German language the word mainly has a negative connotation.

In the English language this differentiation is implicitly expressed by the usage of the words violence (Latin: *violentia*) and power (Latin: *potestas*).

To what extent can one actually speak of a public sphere when marginalised groups of a society are denied access to it or excluded, and who “presides” over



this public sphere? What is particularly striking is the perpetual presence of violence in the lives of the project's previous participants in Vechta women's prison. Their reports demonstrate that violence is a mode of behaviour within our society.

Particularly in public space it becomes clear that there is symbiotic relationship between violence and power.

## DROP OFF

The *Drop Off* is the act of the installation of THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE in public space. All the Baby Dolls of a series are abandoned—*dropped off*—by small groups of participants from the Expert Meetings in various public places that belong to the sphere of the drug addicts' lives, left behind without any further supervision.

The Baby Dolls are accepted or rejected, ignored or destroyed by the inhabitants of or visitors to the city.

After the Baby Dolls have disappeared from the public space, the biographies are put into the web archive [www.thisbabydollwillbeajunkie.com](http://www.thisbabydollwillbeajunkie.com).

With the concept of TBDWBAJ I contact various European women's prisons to carry out further collaboration with incarcerated junkies.

AMSTERDAM, 2004

## THE NETHERLANDS

Without a recommendation from influential people, my overtures to Dutch prisons are a one-sided affair. Neither the administrations of the women's prisons<sup>79</sup> nor the Ministry of Justice reply to my written and telephone enquiries. I approach the Amsterdam *Junkiebond* MDHG,<sup>80</sup> AMOC,<sup>81</sup> and some other small aid initiatives. At least at the smaller organisations I can introduce myself personally, talk to staff and clientele, and get to know the objectives and programmes of each institution. I consider doing the project within the aid organisations. "Yes, that would be great ...", says the director Willemijn Los, her clientele at the MDHG, however, consists mainly of men, who turn up irregularly and then disappear again. At AMOC, the people seeking help are mainly young men, and the few young women speak neither Dutch nor English. The clientele is also frequently in a very unstable or fragile psychological and physical state; their stay in this minimally safe room should not be made more

difficult. Most of the aid organisations have contacts with the state hospitals—their clientele is regularly in and out of prison. The aid workers provide me with the names of people, who by order of the Ministry of Justice are tasked with showing ex-prisoners the "path back to normality". I contact "Toekomst in Balans, een nieuwe uitdaging" (future in balance, a new challenge) in the prison at Ter Peel. My project idea is very interesting, one of the staff members says, but she doubts whether any prison administration will be ready to support the idea. Not because it is organisationally impossible, but because it does not correspond to the goals of the prisons. Their goal is to practice for a life free of crime, not to reflect on one's own history.

I also contact the state contact point for all kinds of addiction diseases, the Jellinek Clinic<sup>82</sup>, which also works with women drug-addicts in small groups, who are victims of violence. After numerous preliminary conversations, I am permitted to give an introduction about the project under supervision, and propose collaboration to the women. The extreme anxiety of the women in this group is striking; although they find the project good and right—they recognise themselves in Rebecca's biography—they fear resentment from people in their environment, such as rejection and anger from partners, parents, and children.

Of the four women who are interested, only two who want to participate turn up at the second meeting; they are mainly interested in the craft aspects, the porcelain moulding of the Baby Dolls. The production of a biography as a component of the project they rather view as the "price to pay" for being allowed to produce the dolls. What would they have to do? What would have to be put in such a biography? And would they be allowed to keep the Baby Dolls?

For conducting the project in the Jellinek Clinic, a working room would be provided for me only once a week, in which I could work for a few hours with the women in the afternoon. Not exactly ideal conditions for casting or working on the porcelain elements because the breaks in between would be far too long, or for generating and maintaining concentration, which seems essential to me for putting together a biography. Nevertheless, I would commit to working there with the two women.

A week later I am informed that the two women have decided to not participate after all.

79 The Dutch women's prisons (Penitentiare Inrichtingen voor Vrouwen—P.I.V.) Ter Peel in Evertsoord, Nieuwersluis, Breda, and Zwolle.

80 MDHG Medische Dienst Heroïne Gebruikers, Amsterdam.

81 AMOC, Drug assistance for non-resident European Citizens, in Amsterdam is since 1997 a drop-in centre for homeless drug addicted visitors from Eastern European countries. Clients who want to return receive help in applying for a passport, in buying a bus ticket, and in organising psychological and social support in their countries of origin. Excerpt from: <http://www.deregenboog.org> Translated by U. M.

82 The Jellinek Klinieken work on behalf of the national health service Gemeentelijke Gezondheidsdienst (GGD). There are clinics in eight cities where inpatients and outpatients are treated for substance abuse of all kinds. <https://www.jellinek.nl>

## TBDWBAJ GERMANY

LÜSA Langzeit Übergangs- und Stützungsangebot [long-term transition and support facility], Unna

On behalf of the LÜSA project, Ana Dias asks me for a contribution to the 2005 National Day of Remembrance for Those Lost to Drug Addiction in Unna. She suggests bringing the biography of a recently deceased LÜSA addict into the public eye in a series of THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE.<sup>83</sup>

From piles of files, data, and notes of conversations with her LÜSA companions, Ana Dias and I reconstruct Karin Pausch's vita. For this I attempt to adapt Rebecca's choice of words and sentence construction, and to formulate it in the scenic present tense, in which the past is recounted in the present tense. Unlike with a story, I don't use adjectives and adverbs that specify emotional nuances. Her age is stated, then the events. This makes the construction of the biography more like the style of a protocol; it's factual and seems sober, real, and unchangeable.

From the few photographs that Karin left, I have transfers printed for the doll's face. Angela Keumann-Kramer, who also lives in the LÜSA house, lends the Baby Dolls her voice for the audio recording of the posthumous biography.

83 The production of the Baby Doll Series Karin Pausch and the work-intensive installation of the audio modules was accomplished in record time thanks to European Ceramic Work Centre colleague Matthias Keller, the MA students Veronika Beckh, Clara Moranta, Lucia Luptáková und Kuri Yorigami at the Sandberg Institute, the audio experts at the Rijksakademie Amsterdam, my colleague Bastienne Kramer, and my son Salan Zijlstra.

At age six, I am afraid of my addict parents

At age twelve, my father dies

At age thirteen, my mother supplies me with cannabis and medicine

At age sixteen, my brother dies

At age seventeen, I am shooting heroin

At age eighteen, my mother dies of an overdose

At age nineteen, I am living homelessly in France

At age twenty-five, I am for the first time incarcerated

At age thirty, I infect myself in jail with HIV

At age thirty-one, I escape from another incarceration to the Netherlands

At age thirty-two, I fall in love with a junkie and live with him illegally in Rotterdam

At age forty, I return to Germany for rehab, am treated with polamidon, and start drinking

At age forty-one, I am locked up in a psychiatric hospital

At age forty-one, my lover is shot dead

At age forty-two, I am committed to hospital in LÜSA with advanced liver cirrhosis

At age forty-four, I die in the care of my caretaker

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

Magda has just returned from a holiday at home in her mother's place; in the meantime her father had died. She has visited her son, who she had not seen for four years. Her caretaker Tanja Boecker had accompanied Magda, because she can no longer travel on her own; she is now classified as physically and psychologically severely disabled. For a year now, she is under a judicial guardianship order and is under care because she is increasingly losing her sense of orientation and has memory loss. Amongst other things, she is unable to fill out her annual applications for the costs to cover her care. Magda is quiet and depressive.

It just doesn't get better, it can't

she says over and over again. Nevertheless, she participates in the preparations for the Drop Off.

She wants to leave LÜSA, and go back to Hanover. On July 25, she will have a place in the care home of the Seelberg socio-psychiatric centre<sup>84</sup> in Hanover.

<sup>84</sup> The care home has 105 beds in single and double rooms. Here people in need of care live in five residential groups. <http://www.seelberg-hannover.de/index.php>

## INTERVENTION UNNA: DROP OFF—KARIN PAUSCH SERIES

The TBDWBAJ Karin Pausch Series is the focus of a meeting of experts with regional politicians. Beforehand, the experts, LÜSA residents and caretakers will drop off the sixteen Baby Dolls in the public spaces in Unna. The Drop Zones were chosen by the LÜSA residents.

On their wrists, the Baby Dolls carry a label with the title of the project, and the address of the first TBDWBAJ website, which goes online that day.

For the Drop Off LÜSA residents and caretakers plus staff from all participating aid organisations from the city and environs gather in the courtyard of the main building, where the Baby Dolls are lying ready for the Drop Off. The residents handle them affectionately, listen to every sentence of the recorded biography, look intensely at their facial impressions, the perforations on their backs, and ask questions. The Dropping Off they see as really heavy. "One of us" is going to be abandoned again to a populace, in which nobody here puts very much trust. Yet nevertheless they think it's good that the biography of a fellow sufferer is being made public.

For each destination groups of two to five Droppers are formed, consisting of junkies, politicians, staff of the aid organisations, and journalists. The groups take a lot more time for the Drop Off than I had anticipated. They linger for hours next to the Dropped Baby Doll, wait for reactions, or provoke comments of sceptical passers-by, who spontaneously change over to the other side of the road.

At six o'clock, a group returns with a smashed Baby Doll. In front of everyone's eyes a public transport bus driver deliberately drove his vehicle over their Dropped Baby Doll at the bus station. At seven p.m. all the other Baby Dolls have disappeared from the city.



LüSA, Unna, preparations for the Drop Off. Photograph: Bastienne Kramer



Hellweger Anzeiger, July 22, 2005. Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, July 22, 2005

# MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

Magda sends a Christmas card; she apologises for not getting in touch earlier.

I have so much trouble and stress here. It was the worst thing to do, to return to Hanover, in every respect. Will try to get accepted back into the LÜSA again. That is my wish for the new year.

As in every letter, she reminisces about our work together in jail and at LÜSA, and the deep friendship that she feels for Anneclaire and me.

2005

# THE NETHERLANDS: EUROPEAN CONGRESS ON FEMALE OFFENDERS

The *European ESF/EQUAL Conference on Female Offenders in Women's Prisons* takes place in the Netherlands at the Nieuwesluis prison. The presentations are addressed to facility administrations, psychiatrists, and aid organisations in Western and Eastern European women's prisons. Critical contributions from various institutions confirm my suspicions about the differences between male and female inmates, and gender-specific guidelines are demanded for the detention of women. In the presentations about drug-addicted prisoners, I hear about problems which accord well with my own experiences.

The director of the Hungarian women's prison in Sopronköhida is interested in the Baby Dolls, he wants one of them. Yes, I should come by his prison one day, he says, I would be welcome to do something like that there, and he hands me his card. My later written and telephone messages and enquiries about a visit to the facility, however, remain unanswered.



## TBDWBAJ THE NETHERLANDS

ARTA Anthroposophical Therapeutic Agents for Addicts, Zeist

I contact Jacques Michel Abas, a psychiatrist at ARTA<sup>85</sup> who treats addicts from the psychiatric unit in the Lievegoedkliniek. We meet at the clinic in the outpatient unit for treating drug addicts in Zeist, and talk about this subject, my experiences so far, and my intention to continue my work with drug-addicted women. We also talk about the significance of the biography, which is viewed as an important form of reflection by anthroposophical pedagogics as well as by other forms of therapy.<sup>86</sup>

I tell the psychiatrist about Rebecca's description of the soothing effect of heroin, which just for a moment brings together thinking and feeling. Jacques Michel explains that through the experience of traumatic events—such as sexual violence in childhood and youth—structures of thinking, feeling, action, communication, and values are established and organised differently than with healthy juveniles, especially when this process takes place in a family or social environment characterised by violence.

Heroin has the effect of a temporary liberation from the torment and agony caused by the trauma or traumas.<sup>87</sup> We compare the approaches of therapies, which I have gotten to know so far, with ARTA's. How are anthroposophical methods of treatment practiced in drug-addiction therapy? Could Rudolf Steiner have already formulated guidelines in the 1920s for this urgent problem of today? No, no specific guidelines for the treatment of drug addiction exist, says Abas, here too, the principle of the holistic observation of the person is applied, which for whatever reasons has become out of balance.

ARTA treats drug addicts in different phases of addiction and accompanies them, both as inpatients and outpatients, whereby clients are accommodated in various housing complexes separately or in living communities. ARTA is different to regular therapy facilities, mainly because it does not give up on any individual. ARTA takes the view that to declare drug abstinence as the goal of therapy completely misses the point of the treatment and care of traumatised people. When one falls, or relapses, he or she can always return to therapy. Abas tells me about clients, who have been in care for thirty years, continuously or with breaks. Moreover, for the patients the idealistic components of the treatment methods are not important. It is not they but the caregivers who follow the principles of anthroposophical approaches to health.

Abas wants to carry out the TBDWBAJ project in his clinic, and will provide us with a workroom for four weeks. He thinks that probably several patients would be interested in participating. Hans Kassens, a former client and today an ARTA staff member, would take over the organisation; I can talk to him about details. Hans Kassens has been clean for fifteen years, and since then is an important contact person of ARTA's clientele. He is direct in what he says, warns of weak points of the people in care and of the ARTA institution. Nevertheless he is convinced that we will be able to do the project; he wishes to accompany it. We talk about the necessary equipment, a room that can easily kept clean with good lighting, water supply, work tables, and enough space for pouring the porcelain and storing the cast forms. In an anthroposophical doctor's practice in Zeist he finds an art therapy room, which we can use daily for four weeks except on Thursdays. Now we can plan to give the introduction to the project at the clinic.

After searching for almost two years, it seems as though I have found an institution where I can carry out the Dutch edition of TBDWBAJ. The conditions for doing the project with new participants are good. With the support of Abas and Kassens, I take the plunge and let myself in for a new form of working together with junkies.

85 ARTA is the Anthroposophical Therapeutic Agents for Addicts of the Lievegoedkliniek which has its main seat in Bilthoven. From their website: The personal capacity of each one of us for development is far greater than commonly supposed. We see each and every client as an individual, but we frequently work with groups. This underlines the fact that nobody stands alone in the world and they are not alone with problems of this kind. The uniqueness of every human being is of paramount importance; it is not the problem that defines our approach—we choose the form of treatment that is suited to the particular person. We work to support and nurture further development and social competence. Psychiatry and assistance for drug addicts: Depression or addiction, together we can make the difference clear and change ways and patterns of behaving. We can help to start a new life. [...] Spirituality, creativity, sense of purpose. Structures, daily and yearly rhythms, help in finding a new balance. <http://www.lievegoed.nl/verslavingszorg>

86 Pedagogics: In Waldorf schools during puberty children study the biographies of famous people—heroes and anti-heroes—as examples for realising ideals. Writing and reading biographies, particularly in this phase of development, has a positive influence on the ability to empathise with other forms and ideas of living that existed in other periods and societies. To recognise yourself in others fosters the ability to see oneself critically.

87 In the 1980s for the first time international studies link personality disorders and drug consumption and abuse. Nearly a third of the subjects with alcohol problems and half of the subjects with drug problems were diagnosed with personality disorder. The assumption that a very close connection exists between early childhood trauma and the later development of personality disorders has, since the mid-1980s, been confirmed by various psychological and neurological studies. Frank W. Putnam was the first to publish the findings of his control group

research on the psychobiological effects of sexual abuse in childhood and the emergence of dissociative identity disorder. 97 % of the 100 patients studied reported experiencing severe and very severe traumatic experiences in their childhood, whereby incest was most frequently mentioned but also other kinds of sexual and physical violence. Other studies of patients with dissociative identity disorder found that 85–95 % of the subjects experienced physical violence or sexual abuse. The common characteristics found most frequently were: being a woman, the ability to dissociate well, very severe trauma in childhood, and not having received any help. Cf., e.g., Frank W. Putnam, *Diagnosis and Treatment of Multiple Personality Disorder*, New York: Guilford Press, (1989); Psychobiological Effects of Sexual Abuse: A Multi-Generational Study, MP3, YouTube; P.M. Coons and V. Milstein, Psychosexual disturbances in multiple personality: Characteristics, etiology, and treatment, *J Clin Psychiatry*. (1986) 47(3):106–110 and [psycnet.apa.org](http://psycnet.apa.org); Michaela Huber, *Multiple Persönlichkeiten: Überlebende extremer Gewalt. Ein Handbuch*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch (1995); *Seelische Zersplitterung nach Gewalt*, Paderborn: Junfermann (2010).

## INTRODUCTION AT ARTA

Sitting in the communal room of the ARTA clinic in Zeist are approximately 15 women between 20 and 55 years of age, and during the course of the afternoon more arrive. There is quite a commotion in the room, comparable to that during the introduction in the prisons; I suspect that some of the women are genuinely interested in participating, and that it was suggested to others that they should show an interest.

The visual documentation of the former projects is well received until I reach the point in my presentation about the biographies that are part of the artwork, when almost as one the audience lets out a groan. They perceive biography as a continuation of ARTA therapeutic treatment; most of them have had more than enough of people insistently poking around in their biographies.

It takes quite an effort for me to describe TBDWBAJ as an artwork, and the creation of the biographies and the Baby Dolls not as therapeutic but as political work, as an emancipatory act of rising above a passive outcast position. I cannot answer questions about details as I don't yet know how we will create the biographies, how much time we will need for it, and how strenuous the work will be. The women like the LÜCKEN [gaps] and the PRISON WEAR COLLECTION; couldn't we rather do something like that?

In the end it is the Baby Dolls speaking Rebecca's sentences who persuade this group far better than my lecture can.

At the end of my introduction, Hans and I say goodbye to some agitated women, who receive my invitation to participate positively, thank me sincerely and wish me much success, but who are clearly very unsure whether they want to expose themselves to everything that such an undertaking involves. Some of the others are considering participating, and ask for time to think about it. Hans is very surprised—more than I am—about the reticent reactions of the women. We immediately plan a follow-up to the introduction outside the clinic in my studio in Amsterdam. Two weeks later, Hans chauffeurs eight

MAY 2005

## ARTA ZEIST

HESTER VAN DE BEUKEN  
 LOUISE VAN DER LAAN  
 TESSA DE VRIES  
 RENSKA WESTRA

Four women enrol for the project. Hans accompanies Louise, Tessa and Renske on the first day of the project to our workroom. Together we haul what feels like tons of porcelain clay, casting moulds, and tools up to the second floor, and set up our room. I introduce them to the “flash light” method, we fix working times and breaks, and the times when the women have appointments in the clinic during working time are noted. We can have lunch in the clinic’s canteen.

women in a small bus to Amsterdam. I see some who were at the introduction in Zeist, but also new faces, curious ones and sceptical ones. From experience I know that there is no point in persuading suitable women to participate in the project. I can recognise the “coerced volunteers” already during the introduction: tightly folded arms and a grim look demonstrate refusal. Today, this is the young cocaine addict Lisa; it is obvious that it is important to Hans to include her. She however is—as Hans calls it—in the phase of downplaying: Lisa is of the opinion that she is not affected by the usual effects of drug consumption, drug addiction. She says she came out of detox without any problems; anything that follows, she will manage it.

Only somebody who speaks from experience, an ex-user, can act the way Hans does: he almost digs around in the wounds of the young woman, reminds her that she dropped out of university, got kicked out of her apartment, and was picked up off the street several times by strangers in a life-threatening and desolate state.

I turn to the others present, who consider participating after hearing my introduction. They are Renske from Friesland, in her early 30s; Henriette from Zeist, mid-30s; Tessa, also from Friesland, early 50s; Hester from Amsterdam, late 40s; Tea, from Utrecht, mid-20s; Louise from Bunschoten Spakenburg, early 50s; and Anja from Groningen, late 30s.

They are addicted to soft and/or hard drugs, some to pills and/or alcohol. As in the first prison project, I ignore which substances they consume, and concentrate on the people who have come together here and say that at the moment the circumstances of their lives and drugs prevent them from living an independent and self-determined life.

The difference to the working atmosphere in the prison quickly becomes clear: for the women in prison, the working time together could never be long enough, and every approved extra hour was used. The ARTA clients doubt whether they will be able to endure long days of work; they are not used to working for six to eight hours a day. I have to refocus myself, for these participants live in a different isolated space, a psychiatric facility; they are patients. I cannot yet visualise whether this form of isolation is more bearable, humane, or hospitable than in prison, and which advantages or drawbacks this specific psychiatric institution possesses—but I can definitely see that social marginalisation also characterises the lives of these women.

Louise and Tessa are both in their early 50s. Louise has been in treatment at ARTA for approximately 30 years with breaks, but lives independently with her partner in the village of Bunschoten Spakenburg. For a long time now she is unable to inject heroin, so for psychological stability she receives a daily dose of sedatives, which is 50 times higher than normally prescribed. Tessa is physically fit. Since her youth, her addiction consists in taking hallucinogenic substances and mainly hashish and marihuana. Her treatment began at the age of 37 with detox; she alternates between living under the care of ARTA and independently, three years after her first treatment at ARTA she worked there as an attendant until she had a relapse.

Renske recently became an inpatient at the psychiatric unit; she was admitted because of depression and excessive use of alcohol. She was born with a physical handicap, the function of her oesophagus is impaired, and needs to be operated on repeatedly. She is approximately 1.7 metres tall, but only weighs around 45 kg.

Hester doesn’t turn up until the second working day, she is not doing well. She is an alcoholic, has just had a relapse, and didn’t make it out of bed. She apologises for her outbreaks of sweating, she is nauseous, and can hardly sit straight in her chair.

The workplace in the doctor’s practice offers secure surroundings, continuity, and gives the project implementation an official framework. The daily walk through the general practitioner’s full waiting room becomes a silent performance of social outsiders’ existence by the four participants. They are used to it, Louise says.

We begin with pouring the porcelain. Tessa is a quick learner, she has a lot of experience with practical work processes, she possesses dexterity, thinks logically, and from the very beginning, she sets an example. Renske has difficulties with gross and fine motor skills, she is impatient, has an extremely low frustration threshold, and quickly gets angry. Louise describes herself as a natural observer; at first she watches and ducks out of pouring and working on the seams. She squashes more doll arms than can be made, although she finds this quite funny and doesn’t think it’s as bad as Renske does.

Hester picks out work where her shaking does not present a hindrance or disturbance for the others. She finds it difficult to brace herself to get up each day; she battles against depression and the side effects of her medication. Tessa offers to pick up Hester by bicycle in the mornings so they can ride to the work room together. Hester agrees to this, although this kind of service gives rise to regular conflicts about helpfulness and devotion on one side and expected thankfulness and reliability on the other.

Louise is brought by her boyfriend; by bus and on foot they take one hour to get to the workroom. Each time Louise complains about her boyfriend, who so desperately wants to bring her to our work place. Renske comes on her own.

In comparison to the prison projects, in which the framing conditions were predefined and the working hours limited, but where the permanent stress results in a fast work pace, the work with the porcelain in the surgery progresses extremely slowly. The four-day working pattern is strenuous for the women.

ARTA clients are officially certified as on sick leave; that is, declared temporarily or permanently unfit for work. I wonder whether the prison clients are healthier; they are generally classed as fit for work, and are very rarely written off sick—punishment takes priority over illness. Some ARTA clients work as volunteers. They have been excluded from the employment market for a very long time—if they were ever in regular employment at all.

In our conversations about creating the biographies, we clarify the distinction between private and personal: to express personal aspects but without giving up privacy, so that personal messages become socially relevant and arouse the public's attention.

We talk and listen to each other. We get to know each other and admit that we all experience each other as “strangers” upon a path to a distant destination. We exchange points of views, discuss social positions. The women take notes, formulate sentences, and experiment with different ways of writing something. Hans Kassens sends me Nick Snaas, a former ARTA client, who has been living—clean—in one of the clinic's residential complexes for 20 years, and does not use the clinic for treatment any longer, at most “for the regular maintenance of his abstinence”.

Nick is an audio engineer and he volunteers to produce the audio modules for the Baby Dolls at cost price. Nick has already listened to the biographies on the website and he thinks the project is really good, which is why he wants to support it. He takes several porcelain baby tummies with him to experiment with the modules and the sound. In addition to optimising the audio quality with more powerful speakers, he looks for solutions to minimise the energy used in dormant phases. The Baby Doll should only speak when it is in a certain position; namely, as soon as it is picked up and held at an inclination of 45° to 70°. The battery should provide energy only in that position, then the power would be sufficient for the Baby Doll to speak a sentence approximately 25,000 times. In addition, he attaches a switch to the battery holder with which the module can be turned off, for example, during transport. We now are regularly in contact to test the advantages and disadvantages of various audio components. It is absolutely invaluable to have Nick on the project as expert and participant, who places his know-how, his time, and his entire equipment at our disposal. He also talks about how he came to ARTA, and how he manages to stay “sober”. In his former life, he worked freelance as a technician on complicated productions of various theatre groups. Alcohol excesses on tours saw to it “... that nothing was left of me, except for depression”.

At ARTA he had found peace, a new opportunity for living and working, and he no longer feels any desire to leave the secure environment of the facility. He knows the place inside out. And many, who had left ARTA confident and

upbeat, had all met in there again at some point. These days he makes sound recordings of interviews with asylum seekers commissioned by various NGOs.

After four weeks, we leave our workroom in Zeist. 140 Baby Doll parts have been moulded, processed, and fired. Next, the photographic portraits of the participants have to be transferred onto the Baby Dolls' faces with ceramic transfers, and then fired again.

The production of the biographies is progressing rather slowly.

SUMMER 2005

## ARTA AMSTERDAM

We move into my studio, which is the gymnasium of a former school.<sup>88</sup> In this building 15 artists have been working and living for 30 years now. To work out the biographies, we will meet on two to four days a week. Hans organises that ARTA will pay the participants' travel expenses, and the treatment dates of the participants and our working times are coordinated.

Louise is still being brought and picked up by her boyfriend; the other three women travel together to work. Although they perceive the effort as strenuous, and their being in the city is a reminder of heavy phases in their lives, they enjoy the new working situation, being together, lunching in the garden, meeting my family, and getting to know the pets and the colleagues in the house.

Hester also had a garden like this she says, and with care that took years made it blossom. Then she destroyed the garden. Perhaps she would show me a picture some time. Why she destroyed her garden, she does not wish to tell the group.

Louise often brings along something personal, for example, enormous drawings, which she had created in times past and now wishes to give me as a present, and polaroid pictures that show her as beautiful young lady in a bikini (type: Sophia Loren) together with her father on his speedboat. Her sister, who looked very much like her was still alive at the time had taken the picture.

Occasionally, she takes a walk to the coffee shop nearby, which annoys Tessa intensely. She thinks Louise's behaviour is reckless, and Louise objects to Tessa telling her what to do. The women then agree on rules at the studio. Louise thinks that this is ridiculous, but she nevertheless sticks to them.

88 Vereniging Woon- en Werkruimte Oostenburg (vwwo)—Oostenburg Association for Living and Work Spaces.



## NORMALITY

The vitae of the women are similar to those of the prisoners at Vechta, except that none of them has ever received a prison sentence. Nevertheless, they still experience themselves as outcasts, and dream at least to a certain extent of normality, or to put it better, of social affiliations without any external control. For one of them, “normality” is an own apartment and work; for another to recover from addiction; and all of them want to be able to remain at a distance from relationship drama.

The attempts of the four women to write down their biographies consist mainly in naming the effects of their addiction on their lives; that is, in what is keeping them from leading a “normal life”. Grasping the events seems to be difficult; despite their many hints I do not dare to ask more precise questions, or to analyse what they have formulated. I suspect that sexual violence occurred in the lives of all four women, though I leave the decision to the authors of the biographies as to what they wish to tell or not.

During my first visit to LÜSA Ana Dias had warned of the danger of the compulsion to repeat the trauma with people who are classed as “beyond treatment” when their past traumatic events are thematised. Jacques Michel Abas, however, works in conversations with patients of all ages on the naming and questioning of experiences. To declare someone as “beyond treatment” or a “hopeless case” is inhuman.

I wonder whether perhaps I have idealised Rebecca Mertens’s keen perception or misinterpreted her open-mindedness as emancipated awareness which had saved her from her desperate situation and from being made a victim. Rebecca’s sober attitude towards life without any self-pity could actually be the serene detachment of a person without hope. In her biography, Rebecca had presented a real situation in every sentence, which had to do with violence in her environment, regular encounters with the police, the foster home as a safe location, heroin as a means to survive, and prison as the consequence of her actions, etc. She had viewed her life from an outside perspective.

With the Dutch women by contrast, it seems as though the problem lies in the assessment of certain events, whether an event is important enough, in their estimation, to be classified as “significant”. The basic attitude of these women is no different to that of the women in Vechta. Events in their lives, which from the point of view of psychology are classed as “life-threatening”, are perceived as “normal” by the participants despite years of therapy. The only factor considered “non-normal” is themselves. Therefore they accept, here as there, their outcast status as justified, and classify the consequences of traumatic experiences as beyond any kind of causality. What is more, they trivialise them and treat them as their “own fault”. Yet someone who views herself as at once “unimportant and guilty” is unable to answer questions about which events are decisive and important. For this would mean permitting feelings of compassion for oneself to arise, recognising injuries in childhood for what they were, and allowing oneself to feel grief and regret that they occurred. None of the women manage to do that. After a few more weeks of work, although the participants find it really cosy in

the studio and the garden and we have gotten to know each other well, the TBDWBAJ project in the Netherlands is at a dead end.

## MATRIX AS METHOD

What if the biography authors received a kind of printed form instead of a blank sheet of paper, which would counteract the clearly excessive demand of formulating sentences giving events and the age at which they occurred? So I develop the “matrix model”: it is a table with the numbers 1 to 50 in the first column denoting ages. Next to the age words can be written, or better, chosen from a pre-given catalogue of words. The words fulfil the status of “terms”, a unit of thought that represents a segment of reality. Would it be possible to develop a conversation about relevant events or their background from arranging and assigning these words? Before our next meeting, I make lists of basic terms and important persons, who play an important role in everyone’s life, both in a positive and negative sense. Terms, which capture specific events, people, perspectives, expectations, and feelings. In compiling these lists, I try to avoid suggestions and to keep the ratio of positively and negatively connoted terms in balance.

I come up with about 160 basic terms. Each word is written 20 times in a column, type size 16pt in boldface. Altogether there are 50 A3 pages, they look intriguing: an imperative torrent of words. I explain the new material to the women, and ask them to create their matrix: Pick words that apply, cut them out, and stick them next to the numbers denoting age. Each participant is provided with a catalogue of terms, a page with numbers, a pair of scissors, and sticky tape on their work table. Hester and Tessa delve into the word catalogue straight away, and without hesitating start to cut out words. At first Tessa pushes her words around, and tries out various arrangements. Hester sticks hers on immediately.

Louise looks at the papers, starts moaning, and then laughs when she comes across the terms from psychology and psychiatry, cuts out whole blocks of words, sticks them in the middle of her paper, writes numbers next to them by hand and draws lines between words and ages. She has done it “all”, she says. The numbers indicate how many stays in hospital, emergency admissions, psychoses, depressions etc., there have been in her life. Around this, she sticks on further words.

Renske asks questions, and has terms explained to her because she wants to be sure that she has understood their meaning correctly. Tessa wants to know, for example, whether she could use the term “child” for the phase of her life when she had wanted a child, but hadn’t had one. Yes, perhaps in combination with the word “Desire”? It’s about choosing the terms that



Matrix, Ženska Kaznionica Požega. Photograph: Nina Glockner

reflect what had occupied one's thoughts at such and such an age, and what had actually transpired.

During the next few work days, it's very quiet in the room. All four of them search through their word catalogues again and again, cut, move, combine, and stick words next to, under, and above other words and numbers.

Hester wants to do her matrix over again, right from the beginning. She says she now knows what is wrong and which words belong where in which combinations. Tessa's matrix is getting increasingly dense, but her arrangement allows room for further additions.

I only watch the women over their shoulders, or sit down next to them. Already on the very first day, I see word combinations that hint at events which have so far not been mentioned at all. The collages of terms result in an entirely new picture of the vitae of these four women. Without me asking, they begin to explain which events are behind what combinations.

Louise declares that her matrix is complete and that no psychiatrist has ever squeezed so many aspects of her life out of her. I don't know whether that is good or bad. She would like to talk to me about her choices: the matrix lies on the table between us. It is now very easy to talk about events. She or I point to certain words; she jumps to and fro between terms, creates connections, and says again and again that she had never looked at her life before so systematically and in such a downright orderly way. Just occasionally I ask if I have understood her correctly. Then Louise adds something to her explanations, or corrects them. I write down what she says.

It is absolutely phenomenal how naturally, clearly, and factually the women are now able to talk about events in their lives. Tapping on a word with a finger, they no longer list the effects their addiction has had but describe real things that occurred, and talk about events and the people involved. They can look at their matrix from a distance, and at the same time identify themselves with it: that is me, that happened to me, that is my life.

In this one week, the basis for the four Dutch biographies is developed. We are all really excited and totally surprised about the effect of this simple method, which has overcome the blockades of the past weeks. However, it wasn't simple producing the matrix, the four women agree. They needed to be highly concentrated, and they find the results are at once surprising and a confrontation, but in every case they are an eye-opener.

To avoid repetition of the writing blockade during the formulation of the biographical sentences, I write down sentences using the pre-given concepts based on the matrix and the noted explanations. The finalised sentences almost write themselves. I borrow literal statements by the women, which leads to unorthodox sentence constructions, but these are in line with the intentions of the biographers. Each of the first sentences reflects a kind of motif or the theme of a life. All of the participants had at some point during the conversations made it clear who they are, how they experience themselves, and where they see themselves within the world.

I don't manage to replicate Rebecca's succinct syntax, or to restrict myself to eleven sentences. The sentences are longer: the explanations the women gave are too detailed for me to decide what can easily be left out. The women make my suggested sentences more precise but change little.

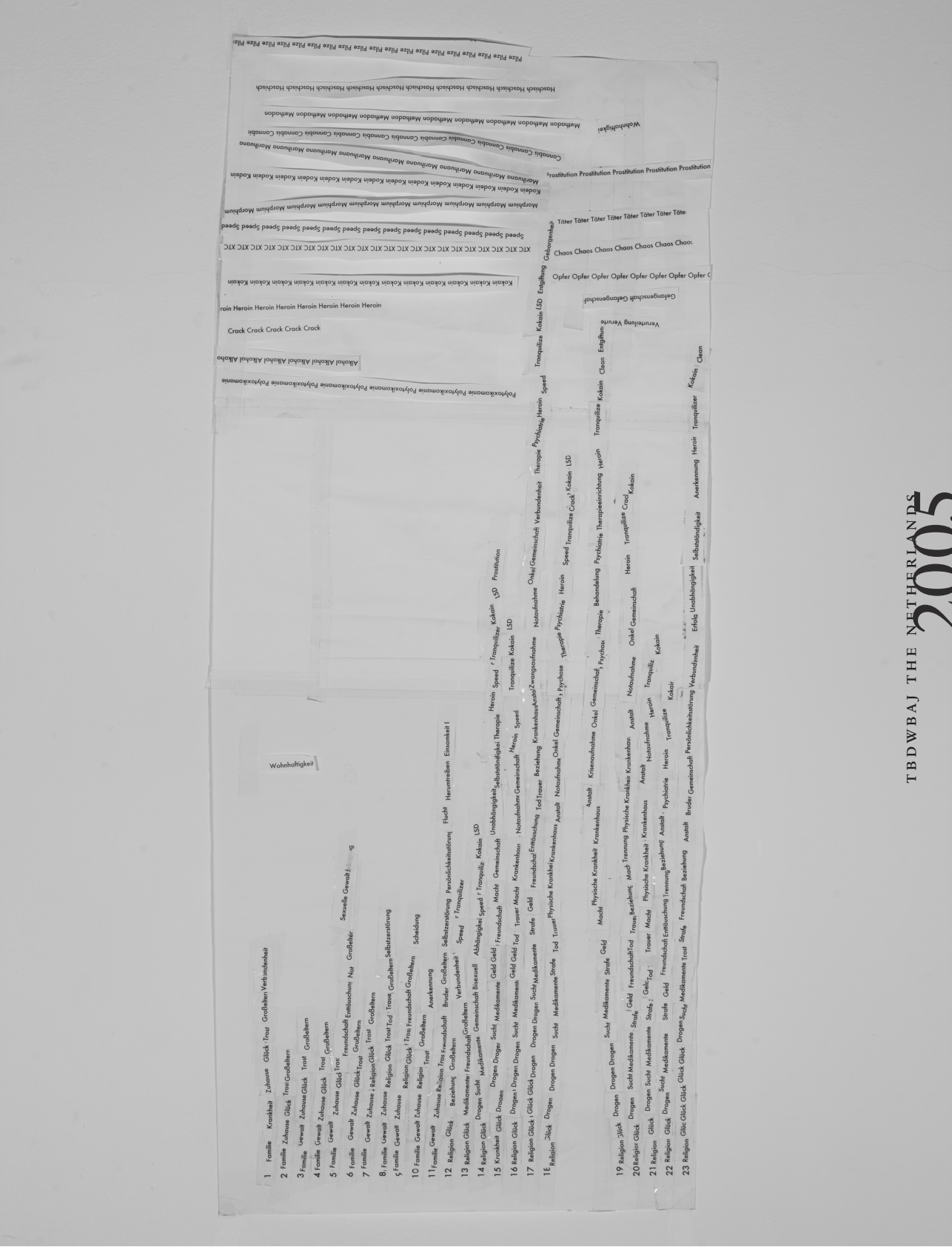
FRYSLÂN (FRIESLAND)

Tessa and Renske want to read out their biographies in their native Frisian language. We first write the biographies in Dutch, and the women translate them with the help of my ex-student and young colleague Jolanda Visser, who also comes from Friesland. Frisian, or to be precise West Frisian, unlike the German Frisian dialects, is classed as a language and since 1969 has the status of an official language.<sup>89</sup> As the spelling is treated in a more variable kind of way, we approach the Fryske Akademie Ljouwert<sup>90</sup> to check that the texts conform to contemporary standards.

89 West Frisian, also known as *Westerlauwers Fries*, is spoken in the province Friesland (*Fryslân*) of the Netherlands by an estimated 440,000 people; for around 350,000 of them it is their first language. It has four main dialects and four smaller ones. West Frisian is the most widely spoken of the three Frisian languages and the only one to have developed a standard variety. Based on the entry in Wikipedia.  
90 <https://www.fryske-akademy.nl/>

AUDIO RECORDINGS AND DROP ZONES

The high tension of the past weeks eases off after the biographies are finalised, and we now meet at greater intervals. Nick Snaas lends us his recording



Matrix by Ivana Landmann



I am born short of breath and a depressed child  
 At age ten, I am being treated with tranquilizers  
 At age twelve, my sister and me are using pot, mushrooms, and LSD  
 At age fifteen, I am anorexic and cut myself  
 At age sixteen, my sister and I start shooting heroin  
 At age eighteen, I am psychotic for the first time  
 At age nineteen, I marry a doctor and live as a middle-class housewife and a junkie  
 At age nineteen, I am for the first time forced to submit to psychiatric treatment for psychosis, depressive disorder, addiction, and hysteria  
 At age twenty-seven, my sister dies of a heroin overdose  
 At age twenty-seven, I start drinking excessive amounts of alcohol  
 At age twenty-seven, I adopt my sister's heroin baby as my beloved child  
 At age twenty-eight, I train as a educationalist, and work with children while on drugs  
 At age twenty-nine, I am pregnant and stop using heroin  
 At age twenty-nine, I am hospitalized for nine months, speechless and apathetic, and being treated for postnatal depression  
 At age thirty-four, I use cocaine and wander on the streets, bored and anxious  
 At age thirty-six, my husband dies  
 At age forty, I am beaten up and raped by a junkie who tries to force me into prostitution  
 At age forty-two, my boyfriend is for the first time found guilty of abusing me and detained  
 At age forty-six, my boyfriend forces me to have sex with other men  
 At age forty-seven, I enjoy wandering on the streets and using drugs with my boyfriend  
 At age fifty, my alcoholic father dies  
 At age fifty, I am clean for the second time in my life, and tired of life

I am my mother's whipping boy, an unruly, depressed child  
 At age six, my aunt and uncle want to adopt me  
 At age seven, I am not yet toilet-trained  
 At age seven, I am raped and beaten at the hospital by the doctor who is treating me  
 At age thirteen, I run away from home for the first time  
 At age fifteen, I start drinking alcohol  
 At age sixteen, my relationship ends, and I try to shoot myself  
 At age twenty-two, I wander on the streets and go home in order to drink  
 At age twenty-nine, I marry my beloved  
 At age thirty-seven, I wander the streets, shut up into myself  
 At age thirty-eight, I want to drown in the sea  
 At age thirty-nine, I break with my family and my husband  
 At age thirty-nine, I deny my addiction, resist treatment, and escape from confinement in anxious-psychotic condition  
 At age forty, I wander the streets, depressed, neglected, furious, and ashamed, and drink myself into a stupor  
 At age forty-one, I am kept asleep for a year  
 At age forty-four, I stick out psychiatric treatment for the first time, am sent away, and end up wandering the streets and drinking  
 At age forty-seven, I live under the protection of a drug rehabilitation program, can feel myself for the first time, and commit myself to a man  
 At age forty-seven, I am committed to a psychiatric hospital to be treated for depression and grow rigid, motionless, with fear  
 At age forty-seven, my beloved leaves me  
 At age forty-eight, I live in gloom, without any defenses  
 At age forty-eight, my demented dad, my ally, dies  
 At age forty-eight I am declared mentally fit, Addicts Care Services arrange admission to psychiatric ward, then I'm chucked out without any explanation and find myself on the street.



equipment, and we set up a makeshift audio studio in my studio. Jolanda Visser supervises the recording of the biographies.

As we have more biographical sentences than planned, and we can make around 50 Baby Dolls out of our 300 doll components, we agree to produce a Dutch and a Frisian Baby Doll series, which will be exhibited in Amsterdam and Leeuwarden in art spaces and also Dropped Off in the public spaces of the two cities.

The women designate their Drop Zones. Tessa feels it is important to take the photographs of her places in Leeuwarden herself. Each Baby Doll series with sound recordings is put on the TBDWBAJ website; the biographies appear in the original language as well as in German and English translation. Deciding which biography will be realised as a Baby Doll series is hard. All of them are representative of TBDWBAJ. We decide on the biographies of Hester and Tessa.

In the meantime, Nick has developed an audio module; he is going to deliver to us the parts for constructing 50 of them, assemble them with us, and also help with installing them in the bodies of the Dolls.

The portraits of the four biography authors have been printed on ceramic transfers, and are ready to be put on the Baby Dolls' faces. Both of these work processes, assembling modules and applying transfers, require enormous precision and patience. I am afraid that this will be too much for the four women. Renske is exhausted; for her a new stay in hospital is imminent. Tessa does not want to leave the project, she wishes to remain until the end, in spite of the fact she has actually had enough of the group dynamics. Also, she wants to move and look for a job—outside of ARTA.

In the meantime, I have had telephone threats from Louise's boyfriend that he is going to beat me up; over the course of several days, he leaves his vitriolic outpourings on my answering machine. Louise does not turn up on the days agreed; a few times she calls and says that her guy has gone nuts and she can't come. Louise's boyfriend is also one of ARTA's clients; I ask Hans Kassens to check out what is going on there. Hans warns Louise's boyfriend: If he does not stop attacking Louise and me, he will be thrown out of ARTA. Hans says to me that the harsh way Louise and her boyfriend treat each other is just normal.

Hans wants to send us some people who can help us with applying the transfers. The project is popular amongst ARTA's clients, they talk about the work that has been going on for months and that the participants enjoy many privileges. To be precise, three male clients want to lend us a hand. The three men endeavour to make themselves useful, and while so doing, talk mainly about themselves. The group dynamics change to the disadvantage of the women, who now have to listen to explanations of how something can be done better or faster. We thank them profoundly, and agree amongst ourselves that this should remain a one-off experience.

For the evaluation of the project, I meet Jacques Michel Abas in Zeist. I tell him about the methods we developed during the work together, and which aspects were good and not so good. The psychiatrist analyses minutely each matrix and biography. Much content of the biographies is familiar to him, but by no means all of it; many of the listed events are part of the treatment. In psychiatry in general, and in developing of the biography in particular,

Tessa de Vries [1954]

Being the first-born, I look after my mother

At age fifteen, I start going out and fall maniacally in love with men

At age sixteen, I start smoking pot, and escape from my mother's terrorizing reign

At age seventeen, I run away from home

At age eighteen, I am raped by a man while drunk

At age nineteen, I can no longer have children

At age twenty, I experiment with heroin, cocaine, and spirituality

At age twenty-one, I use mushrooms, LSD, pot, and tranquilizers, and enjoy my hallucinations

At age twenty-five, I violently break off my connections with my husband and the outside world

At age twenty-six, my sister has become a heroin addict

At age twenty-seven, I am clean and alone

At age thirty, I comfort myself with homegrown cannabis and lock myself into a closet for months at the time

At age thirty-two, I am addicted and psychotic without treatment

At age thirty-nine, I go into rehab, build a ship, and survive on the thought of love

At age forty, I work as a caregiver in a rehab program

At age forty-three, I fall back on the use of homegrown cannabis as a substitute for love

At age fifty-one, I am compulsively in love and psychotic

At age fifty-one, I attack my mother

At age fifty-one, I am sober

Renske Westra [1972]

I am born prematurely and survive my disability

At age two, I am taken out of the hospital and brought home

As a young child, I am being treated as a deformed child by my parents and punished at school for lagging behind in my development

At age eight, I start drinking my alcoholic father's booze

At age seventeen, I fall in love with a compulsive gambler

At age eighteen, I drink excessive amounts of alcohol

At age eighteen, I begin systematically to seduce men and take them home

At age twenty, I am committed to a hospital to be treated for my defect

At age twenty-two, I am being abused by my intoxicated husband

At age twenty-three, I suffer from pains and am hospitalized

At age twenty-five, I am being treated like an inferior child by my husband and neglect myself

At age twenty-six, I decide to destroy myself

At age twenty-seven, I am depressed

At age twenty-eight, I cannot remember that I may have been raped while drunk

At age twenty-eight, I am chased out of the house by my husband and my parents

At age twenty-eight, my cousin's drug addiction is kept secret within the family

At age twenty-eight, I flee Friesland, go into rehab, and live under the protection of the rehab program

At age thirty, I am depressed and committed to a psychiatric hospital in a state of shock

according to anthroposophical guidelines it is important that a client mentions events and experiences of their own free will. It is very productive to compare motivations, approaches, procedures, and goals of psychiatry with those of art—especially with reference to the importance of the biography.

It still takes weeks before the two Baby Doll series are assembled. As we agreed, I continue to inform the women of the TBDWBAJ agenda and leave it up to them whether they participate or not. Tessa and Hester often show up and work unassisted on the outstanding tasks. I report about all external activities, such as looking for possible exhibition venues, the grant applications for the interventions in Amsterdam and Leeuwarden, and the continuation of the TBDWBAJ project in other European countries.

AMSTERDAM, SEPTEMBER 2005

# HESTER VAN DE BEUKEN

One day Hester announces that she desperately needs to add a sentence to her biography:

At the age of 48, despite successfully completed therapy, the drug aid organisation is trying to get me confined to a psychiatric hospital, and throws me out onto the street without giving any reasons.<sup>91</sup>

91 Hester is very angry when she tells me about what has just happened at ARTA. A short while ago her therapy was deemed "successfully completed". Despite this they want to transfer her to a confined psychiatric ward. Hester puts up resistance and refuses to get up for days. One morning they came and forcibly removed her from the bed and threatened to throw her out in the street if she continues to refuse to move to the psychiatric ward. In the end she comes to an agreement with ARTA that she will be transferred to an alternative facility that in addition offers assisted living. Nick Snaas records the addition to Hester's biography in a sound studio in Zeist.

# W139

In March 2006, my colleague Gijs Frieling took over as artistic director of W139<sup>92</sup> in Amsterdam. Frieling's own art practice, in which his socio-critical position plays a significant role, is an excellent basis for our mutual understanding. TBDWBAJ will be presented in a discursive format.

The W139 rooms are suitable for thematic exhibitions in which several artists participate. There is also ample space for us to hold an Expert Meeting.

W139's location, Op de Wallen (in the red light district), is especially suitable as a launching point for an intervention in the city's public space. We agree to present TBDWBAJ as part of the scheduled project<sup>93</sup> about life and living conditions in the city.



92 The old theatre at Warmoesstraat 139, the oldest street in Amsterdam, was occupied by a group of young artists (former Rietveld Academy students) in 1979. The idea is to use the rooms to practice organising and exhibiting own works, and also to create a counterculture space in opposition to the closed, commercial art market. The artistic director changes every five years. <http://w139.nl/nl/about/>  
 93 2007 edition of the *Liefde in de Stad* project.

JULY 2006

# SWITZERLAND: FIRST CONTACT

The Anstalten Hindelbank, located in a former castle, is the only women's prison in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. I approach the current prison director, and invite her to participate in the Europe Project TBDWBAJ.

We had already been in contact indirectly, in 1999 and 2000, when she and the deputy prison director of Vechta prison had discussed exhibiting the LÜCKE [gap] project during the events at the castle to mark the centenary of Hindelbank prison.

On the telephone, the prison director agrees to Hindelbank participating in TBDWBAJ on the condition that it fits into the prison regime. She states the basic conditions regarding times and spaces, and I incorporate these into the project plan. I suggest an intensive working period of fourteen days. We should manage to do the project within that time, if I limit myself to producing a basic series of Baby Dolls, and providing that compiling the biographies with the matrix method works.

In the autumn I visit the director and deputy director in the Hindelbank prison. Our first conversation is very objective; we do not talk about motivation, content, or goals of the project, or about the prison, only about organisational aspects. A two-week, artistic collaboration with two to four prisoners is covered by the legal provisions governing cultural projects offered in prisons, so there is no need to apply for special permission from the Department of Justice.

I describe the technical details of the work processes. They are classed as suitable or non-suitable according to the compulsory work restrictions. Non-suitable means non-negotiable. We lay down the conditions:

Work Period	A maximum of 14 days in the prison, working time as per the obligatory working time of eight hours per day, five days a week, from Monday to Friday. That makes 10 days. My departure will be on Saturday latest. On Saturday, the participants will be allowed to help with the clearing up and packing.
Participation	From two to four, a maximum of five prisoners. Participation is recompensed at the same rate as compulsory labour.
Description and Explanation of the TBDWBAJ Project	Only in writing, flyer format. The staff will ensure distribution of the flyers. No personal introduction by me beforehand. The prison administration will check the suitability of the candidates.
Supervision and Assistance	I only need one person to see that the organisational process runs smoothly, for opening and locking doors, and for communicating with the prison administration. Preferably not a judicial or police officer. This will be decided internally at a later point in time.
Working Space	This will be set up in the leisure room. The leisure room has daylight, a water supply, and additional tables and chairs will be brought in. Detergent will also be provided, so that the room can be cleaned daily. My assistant and I will have access to the toilets accompanied by the prison officer.
Assistant Artist	Throughout the entire project, my colleague Jolanda Visser, and later my colleague Bastienne Kramer will be present to assist with the ceramic work processes. In the case of the portrait photographs needed for the transfers, an exemption will have to be organised. In general, it is prohibited to take photographs that are not confined to the project.
Ceramic Kiln	Can be used on the prison's premises

Honorarium for Artist and Assistants	None.
Reimbursement	
Material	None.
Production	None.
Transport	None.
Accommodation	I ask for a room in the prison's guesthouse. They don't have a guesthouse. It may be possible to arrange accommodation in one of the empty apartments in the estate behind the prison. To be checked.
At the beginning of January we agree to carry out the project from February 19 to March 2, 2007. We will be housed in one of the prison's apartments.	

AUGUST 2006

## AUSTRIA: FIRST CONTACT

Wolfgang Zinggl of WochenKlausur, an artists' group that develops suggestions for improving social conditions, gives me the names of people to contact at two women's prisons in Austria, Schwarzenau and Favoriten in Vienna. I write to both prison directors.

The current director of Schwarzenau prison replies that he is in favour of doing the project in his prison, although as he will be retiring shortly he does not wish to commit to anything on behalf of his successor; he will hand over my idea for the project to the future director.

From Favoriten in Vienna at first I do not receive a reply. In December 2006, I call the director and ask whether the prison would be interested in participating in TBDWBAJ. Wolfgang Werdenich says "yes", and adds that he is acquainted with the details of the project. To discuss further plans, we agree to meet at the beginning of 2007 in Favoriten prison in Vienna.

OBERNWÖHREN, 5 NOVEMBER 2006

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

In the meantime, Magda has moved into one of the residential homes of Ex + Job.<sup>94</sup> In Obernwöhren mainly alcoholics are in care. She apologises that once again so much time has passed since her last letter.

So much has happened. It was a big mistake to move away from Unna. Many problems – from one crappy institution into another. Yet soon there will be a little sunshine for me. I shall look for a small apartment near my mother, attempt to start afresh. I hope everything works out. I'm off the drugs, I don't drink anymore, and with this, I will try and live normally.

She tells me that she ran into Mari, our crocheting queen, which made her really happy and at Mari's wish herewith passes on her address.

Of course I would like to continue to work with you on your plans, creating my biography, but only if you are still interested in doing this. I don't know if you are still working on that?

My next letters remain unanswered. On my way to Berlin, I spontaneously visit her in the care home. Her carer tells me that Mrs Ferrer apologises, but she doesn't feel well today. Another time, with pleasure.

94 EX + Job offers jobs and runs residential homes for people with drug addiction: "In various residential and support units, the homes for chronically, multiply damaged addicts offer many kinds of possibilities for rehabilitation into "normal life" according to §§ 53/54 SGB XII. Altogether, there are currently 131 residential places available in various locations in the Schaumburg district: Obernwöhren, Hörkamp-Langenbruch, Habichthorst, Stadthagen, Bergkirchen and Pollhagen. Accepted are people diagnosed, for example, as suffering from addiction and secondary psychological diseases (CMA); substance abuse with illegal drugs, including substitution, addiction, and Korsakov's syndrome." [www.exundjob.de](http://www.exundjob.de)



## TBDWBAJ SWITZERLAND

Anstalten Hindelbank  
Hindelbank women's prison, Canton Bern



Hindelbank women's prison, Canton Bern, 2007. Photograph: Jolanda Visser

“The Anstalten Hindelbank is the only women’s prison in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. They serve the execution of penal sentences and justice according to StGB and ZGB in closed (including high security) and open units for women prisoners with low to the highest security risk. While safeguarding the internal and external security, the prison guarantees provision of group-oriented conditions, medical treatment, and suitable working possibilities with the goal of re-integration. In addition, meaningful further education and leisure time possibilities are on offer. Hindelbank prison can admit a limited number of mothers with small children. There are currently 107 places in seven living groups (including an outside living group) available. Women serving sentences from 25 different nations are permanently housed in Hindelbank. The prison employs approximately 109 staff who together represent 85.5 full-time positions.”<sup>95</sup>

95 From the website of Canton Bern, [http://www.pom.be.ch/pom/de/index/freiheitsentzug-betreuung/vollzugseinrichtungen\\_erwachsene/anstalten\\_hindelbank.html](http://www.pom.be.ch/pom/de/index/freiheitsentzug-betreuung/vollzugseinrichtungen_erwachsene/anstalten_hindelbank.html), accessed 30.6.17.

## PRISON IN SWITZERLAND

A sign at the entrance to the car park informs us that this area is under the jurisdiction of the Office of Imprisonment and Supervision of the Police and Military Administration of the Canton of Bern, and there is no access for unauthorised people.

My colleague Jolanda Visser and I park the car and report to reception at the gate, which is called a “lodge” at this prison. It is a towering glass building with a 360° panoramic view, which is brightly illuminated also at night. The officer in the lodge checks and registers our passports and calls Karin Domenig, who has been assigned to us as an escort and contact person. While we walk through the large prison complex, she explains to us where what is located in the facility. On the right is the baroque Hindelbank castle with a fenced-in park, which houses the kitchen and the canteen for the staff. On the left, in the six white one or two storey buildings from the 1950s, are various workplaces: the cardboard packaging fabrication, the pottery, the textiles department, and the tailoring department. Plus the health service and the four living groups with the mother and child unit. At the rear edge of the complex is the taller high security wing with its especially secure yard.

The entire complex is situated outside the town of Hindelbank, amidst farms. Directly bordering on the prison is a farm surrounded by fences. It used to be part of the prison and was worked by the inmates, she tells us. Located at the rear of the grounds is the gardening centre, here inmates work by special permission. In the grounds five donkeys and some sheep roam freely, three woolly pigs (Mangalica) wallow in their favourite mud. Near the approximately five-metre high fence ducks live on an island in a small pond. The houses for goats are located in the middle of the prison compound. The animals are taken care of by the prisoners.

Our workroom is located in the building of Living Groups I and II. The living groups are connected by a corridor; from here the administration offices, rooms for training courses, and the inmates’ toilets can be accessed. It is only permitted to open the inmates’ toilets when needed, and at all other times they must be securely locked because regular urine checks are carried out. In the corridor are chairs and two small tables with indoor plants between them. This is the so-called bistro. Every Wednesday after work until lock-up, women from the two living groups can sit here together, smoke and talk. Our workroom has been set up very efficiently; it has large sinks and tables. From the workroom one can see Living Group I’s garden, where the women are permitted to spend time after work.

Jolanda Visser and I live in two apartments on the housing estate for prison staff directly behind the prison.

## PROJECT CONDITIONS

Members of the prison administration reiterate the conditions under which TBDWBAJ is permitted to be carried out in Hindelbank. First of all, privacy protection: the women’s own names cannot be made public, neither on the website, nor can their real names be perforated in the porcelain on the dolls’ backs. The identity of the participating women must be anonymised. We decide to use aliases; it is permitted to state each woman’s real year of birth. We are only allowed to take photographs of the participating women, not of other inmates and under no circumstances of the prison. Every publication on radio or TV requires prior permission from the prison administration. We sign the agreements.

All phases of the project will take place within the agreed 14-day period. Some of the complicated, time-consuming work stages, such as applying the transfers and assembling the audio modules, will be merely demonstrated, and carried out later in workshops in the Netherlands. The completed series of Baby Dolls will be presented to the women after consultation with the prison administration. During the duration of the project the women will keep their appointments with the health service, continue their therapy, and attend the sessions discussing issues concerning their penal sentences.

19 FEBRUARY–2 MARCH 2007

## PROJECT EXECUTION

MELLA AFFOLTER  
MARIA VON BANK  
RENÉE GASSER  
NICOLETTE  
KRISTINE STAM

After the formal parameters have been settled, we begin with a round of introductions and create aliases for the participants, although the Swiss women would also have preferred to use their real names. I am interested about the women’s criteria for deciding to participate in TBDWBAJ—although I had not introduced myself or my work beforehand. “Reflectively facing up to one’s own situation” is mentioned. Also “to contemplate one’s own situation outside of the prescribed therapy, the goals of the prison sentence, and/or the measures involved”.

In the subsequent introduction, I show the visual documentation of the previous jail projects. I tell them about how I ended up more or less by chance in a women’s jail, how questions and assumptions about the living conditions

evolved through my long-term collaborative work with junkies in Germany and the Netherlands, which I wish to investigate in and with the project TBDWBAJ.

We make a deal. I can't do the work without them, and they can't do it without me. We define our common objective: that we wish to make the vitae of drug-addicted women in Europe a public affair.

## POURING PORCELAIN

While I demonstrate the pouring process, I explain the characteristics of the materials: plaster of Paris, which the moulds are made of, and porcelain. There is a try-out by all participants: mixing porcelain, filling it into measuring jugs, pouring it into the moulds. Then closing the plaster mould, turning it upside down, placing it on narrow wooden slats, and leaving it to rest. Determining the different times a mould must rest, when the plaster mould draws all the moisture out of the porcelain part. The volume of the particular porcelain doll part determines how long the hardening process will take (2–4½ minutes). Next, the moulds are turned around and opened. Careful pouring of the porcelain in a constant stream is necessary to prevent any “gurgling”; that is, pulling away the thin layer of porcelain that has just formed on the plaster wall. The first time the moulds are opened is exciting, because the wet blanks are revealed and at the same time this represents success.

The opened plaster moulds have to rest a little until the porcelain part can be easily removed from the plaster wall and taken out of the mould. The parts are then stored to dry.

The women learn fast, and handle the material with patience and concentration. They help each other and ask questions. Even before the lunchbreak, 20 parts have been poured and laid out to dry. I demonstrate how to work on the seams left behind by the pouring process, how to cut the openings on the body, arms, and legs, and explain how to use the tools for this. Already after two hours of drying time, the first names can be perforated on the dolls' backs. The atmosphere is enthusiastic, and after just a few hours, we are in a united workflow. In the afternoon, though, Nicolette voices doubts. She is afraid that she is not up to the demands of the work because of the condition of her health, and would like to work only half days, as she does in her normal day-to-day prison life. She wants to start at 10 o'clock, and leave early in the afternoon. Then she would miss both of the “flashlight” sessions. I address her concerns and suggest alternatives, but urge her to be present at least for one of the flashlights. The other women intervene and criticise Nicolette's attitude. Like Nicolette, Kristine also only works half days for health reasons; however, she says she enrolled for the entire project, not just half of it. She takes exception that Nicolette wants special treatment. Already in the morning, when they were determining the aliases,

Nicolette had insisted on being called by her “street name”, although they had all agreed on using a first name and a surname.

Nicolette then reckons she has to drop out. Nobody objects to this, she is invited by the other four participants in a slightly contemptuous tone to *zwüschedüürä go luegä* ... come and have a look from time to time. Nicolette leaves the workroom, but I can't tell whether she is relieved or disappointed. I am impressed how already after just half a working day, the women have made the project “their thing”. At the same time they have also demonstrated to me that I, as an outsider, am not allowed to interfere in the solution of in-house problems.

After the lunchbreak, we produce more porcelain parts. Already after this first experience with the ceramic working process, the participants understand that one biography will be selected to be spoken by the Baby Dolls. We can now calculate how many parts we can produce in two weeks of work, and they will only be sufficient for one series of dolls.

The participants are astonished at how quickly time has passed; they are elated, agitated, exhausted, and pleased with themselves and the work accomplished. At five o'clock we conclude the first day of work with a flashlight session about how they feel.

During the morning flashlight session they first talk about how they slept, most of them “very deep”, Mella “as always, tormented by nightmares”. From now on, the women tell each other daily about their nocturnal dreams.

## FLASHLIGHT

With every new edition of the project I am amazed at the positive effect which communicating their feelings and their thoughts has on the women. They all report things that are not especially spectacular—that the boyfriend still hasn't got in touch, that there was trouble with this or that person, what the girlfriend said about the project, that someone has solitary confinement because of a positive urine check, that the police had come by for an interrogation because of an attempt to smuggle hashish into the prison. Their accounts paint a picture of everyday life in the jail. The flashlight rule that their statements should not be commented on by the others, contributes to unusually relaxed communication. Okay, throughout the day most of what had been said is directly or indirectly a topic of discussion, but even then it is not in the form of judgemental comment, but rather as contributing an own thought, which one of them wishes to share with the others.

They provide Jolanda and me with background information about the Swiss drug scene and about Switzerland's drug policy, and apprise us of the judicial consequences of certain offenses inside and outside the prison. Smuggling in the vagina, which was mentioned during the morning flashlight session,



## KEYS

Jolanda and I have been given a pass key for access to the workroom, to other training course rooms, and to the staff toilet. All rooms have to be locked immediately after use.

We have to make sure that the women are never alone in the workroom because it has a telephone, which the women are not allowed to use. I would prefer not to have any key at all, because this means a position of authority, directly or indirectly exercising a control function, and this immediately changes the positions within a group. Because our prison officer Karin who escorts us around can't be with us the whole time—she has duties in the training unit and must regularly attend staff meetings, we need this key. The women say they don't have a problem with that; they think it's good that we are just by ourselves; that is, no prison staff in attendance. Of course, nobody here would endanger the project by secretly using the telephone.

I ask Karin whether she also does lock-up. Yes, she says, except for the bunker; that is done by the prison director. On Sundays, she unlocks a little later, around 10 o'clock, so the women can have a lie in. For Karin, too, being issued with keys to the prison's lock system is a problem, but because at the moment there are far too few officers working in the prison, she and her colleagues have to shoulder the additional burden of locking. Even when she finishes her apprenticeship as a social worker, Karin will not be able to evade executive functions in whatever Swiss prison she works, she will always have to function as a "screw".

Although Karin is "only" a trainee, her position in the project's execution is comparable with that of the prison officer who supervised our PRISON WEAR COLLECTION project in Vechta. The women had thought she was quite nice, but

not for one second did they forget that, as prisoners, everything that was said could be used against them. On the very first day in Hindelbank, I already noticed that the women changed the subject as soon as they heard Karin's footsteps.

When the project started, Karin had asked the prison director if she could be relieved of the obligation to report to her superiors for the duration of the project. Could she tell the women that everything that was said would remain within the four walls of the project room so that everybody could talk openly, and other things like that. The answer she received was not definitely negative, but Karin was told she should be aware of the fact that in any case, she first and foremost represents the prison. Karin asks me to tell the women that what is spoken about in the workroom will not go any further, unless it's about illegal things, which always has to be reported.

During the flashlight session, I pass on her message. The women mutter and agree that prison staff are not to be trusted, whether they are screws or social workers. However, it is astonishing how openly they still talk about their life—their double life as they call it—in the prison: how they try to function according to the rules, while at the same time looking for niches to maintain a minimum degree of individuality. In this, some are more resourceful than others. Nevertheless, they must all cope with the adversities of the rigid system, some for years, until they have served their time. Yet they feel far removed from the actual objective of the prison sentence, "improvement/reform", or do not seem to come into contact with it. Renée feels that her sentence is justified. Her problems are her private affair, which she doesn't share with anybody in prison, not with prison officers, nor other inmates. She is just as alone in her cell as she was when she was outside. She is worried about her lover, a young Brazilian woman, who is going to be deported shortly. She is worried about her daughter and her horse, which because of her imprisonment has to be taken care of elsewhere.

Mella is hoping for a reduced sentence in the current case being brought against her, and with this in mind she had started her prison sentence early. She often says "I want to go home." She talks about how unbearable it was in the beginning for her in Hindelbank. Being locked up in a cell, deprived of the right of decision, knowing her heavily drug-addicted boyfriend is alone outside without her care, having to write her parents a letter after years without contact, that she is now in prison, and that at 32 she feels as though she has reached the end of the line.

Mella speaks positively about the medical care in prison: for the time being methadone, and psychotherapy once a week. The insights she has gained within the context of her addiction help her to understand herself better. It's all new territory, she says, she had never understood before what had gone wrong in her life.





# MATRIX INTERVIEW BIOGRAPHY DROP ZONES

I explain how we write the biography with help of the matrix and the talk that follows, and outline how this method was created in collaboration with the Dutch women. I show the Dutch matrix sheets to the Swiss women, who are very interested and search them for terms they recognise. Many words I do not need to translate. Using the examples of the matrix and the sentences, I explain each step of the work on the texts.

**Matrix:** The catalogue of terms consists of two parts. The first lists basic terms with which origin, environment or type of family constellation can be compiled, and the second part contains terms that specify particular situations and people, circumstances and conditions, family structures and existential positions. **Interview:** Questions and explanations about the terms chosen for the matrix are addressed in an individual conversation. The biographer tells me about the events behind the word combinations, which meaning they have for her, and in which connection they stand to events that came after. The biographer starts at any point she chooses, she determines the course of the conversation, begins with an event or her birth or her incarceration. I listen and ask questions if there is something I don't understand. **Syntax:** The biographers decide what kind of emphasis their statements should be given in the sentence that is formulated. I pre-formulate the biographical sentences, and talk about them with the biographer. Together we correct or specify, until the biographer is happy with the sentences.

The women immediately dive into the first part of the word catalogue. Kristine works very fast; she is very determined and cuts out her terms and sticks them onto the matrix sheet. Mella, who sits next to Kristine, appears to be thinking hard, considers, and constantly pushes the words around into a new order. Maria sighs quietly to herself, cuts out vast numbers of words, but doesn't stick any of them down immediately. Renée works through the lists in an angry kind of way and starts over again and again.

For several hours, there is full concentration in the room. Breaks and smoking are forgotten. There is hardly any talking, except about the meaning of the terms, questions are asked in Swiss German, and I answer in German; the communication works well.

After two hours, Kristine is finished with her first phase. She is very pleased with it and wants to continue straight away with the next. We take a look at her matrix together.

On this afternoon everyone already gets started on the second part of the word catalogue, which addresses the social environment, the cultural surroundings, health, the drugs, and so forth. At ten to five, Renée reminds everybody of the flashlight session, because she wants to leave. The others can hardly drag themselves away from the piles of words that lay on the table in front of them.

In the days that follow, the women work alternately on porcelain and the matrix. Kristine peruses her completed matrix and is obviously satisfied with the order that lies in front of her. In her assemblage of words all the terms are

found, which by now I consider junkie classics, for example, sexual violence in early childhood and puberty, early onset of drug abuse, serious liver disease. Yet with Kristine I cannot make out whether she feels like a victim; her disciplined attitude is more like that of a business woman.

Mella is basically finished, too, though she still keeps poring over the lists. She thinks the word "criminality" is missing. Maria thinks "morphium" and "polytoxicomania" should be on the list. Except for Renée, all the participants are diagnosed as polytoxicomaniac; they consume several different drugs at the same time or successively. We add these terms to the word catalogue.

Renée is clearly having a hard time with her snippets and indecisively pushes them around. I ask whether I can help. No, it's just kind of hard ... she is not very proud of what she has to process with the words. She says she is a doubter; she has difficulties with every decision, therefore also with the selection of the words. Also, she almost constantly has headaches, she keeps begging for painkillers, which she doesn't get, because in prison all illnesses, from a headache to suicidal depression, are treated with cups of tea.

The unequal distribution of medication is a hot topic. Kristine, for example, receives a four times higher dose of tranquilisers than Maria, although she, too, needs this medication against depression since her childhood. Of course, Maria does not begrudge Kristine her pills, "But it's not honest!" Kristine has organised her medicine supply excellently, her doctor outside had also helped. Moreover, she has a good lawyer. I ask why they don't all get together to represent their interests, or assign one person to communicate their demands. Kristine states quite clearly that she can't be bothered to stand up for something or someone in prison except for her own problems or those of her friends. Like on the first day of the project with regard to Nicolette, when she has decided on something Kristine does not want to be hindered by sleepyheads. Not that she is being antisocial, just forthright.

Throughout the entire project, Kristine has a heavy cold, although she doesn't complain about it once, nor does she complain about her four year sentence. She has come to terms with the prison, does not resist what she cannot change, and uses the few things that are possible to the max. Everything we need, she knows where to find: A3 paper in the administration from Mrs So-and-so, coffee, loudspeakers to test the audio recordings, and kitchen roll in vast amounts. She has various telephone numbers at her fingertips of the prison pottery, which on the first day Karin had mentioned in passing. A dealer has to have everything on her radar, she says.

For the interview, Kristine and I go into the corridor, her matrix lies in front of us. In a very objective way she talks about the events behind the words she has selected. She doesn't defend herself and doesn't blame anybody; her account is precise and she always states what I can publish in the prison and what not. It is only when she explains why she wanted to forgive her father a few years ago for sexually abusing her that she becomes emotional. She went to see him, not the other way round.

Kristine led a double life for years; on the one side with her son, and on the other with her drug use and dealing. Her son didn't know of her addiction until she was arrested the first time. By now he is long grown up and leads a successful middle-class life, drug-free of course, he doesn't even smoke.



At the end of the week, the first Swiss biography is complete.

We write the biographies in High German; for the audio recordings they will be translated into Swiss German: Kristine speaks the Solothurn dialect; Maria the St. Gallen dialect; Mella Walliser German; and Renée a mixture of Aargau and Zurich dialect.

Kristine now turns to determining the Drop Zones in public spaces. Every sentence of her biography is associated with an actual place, with towns and cities, streets, squares, and buildings. Accordingly, Kristine's first Baby Doll would be brought to her place of birth: "I am the obedient child of my religion-obsessed mother."

Theoretically, a series should be Dropped in various cities, perhaps even in various countries. However, because with TBDWBAJ we wish to perform the intervention, the Drop Off of the Baby Dolls in the public space of the city from an art space, for example, in Zurich, instead of the participants' authentic Drop Zones we search for equivalent sites in Zurich. Both Drop Zones, the authentic one and the one that represents it, can be documented with photographs. Kristine organises maps of Switzerland and also city maps of Solothurn.

Renée, whose matrix is also finished, turns to polishing the Baby Doll arms, and from time to time also sticks words into her matrix. She ignores questions, and refuses to name concrete places as Drop Zones.

Maria will still need some time to arrange her words. That doesn't matter, she says, it's progressing well, and she is feeling fine. She only misses her medication. She likes making the matrix. So objective and tidy.

Mella repeatedly checks whether her combinations of terms cover each of the meanings that she is looking for. No, she does not think any terms are missing, the lists are quite sufficient, what is difficult is the order and assignment of the terms that occur repeatedly: What came first, exclusion or sadness?

During the first days of the project, Mella had avoided all eye contact and addressing anyone; it was not apparent whether she was shy or sceptical. Neither, she explains later on, she just allows herself some thinking time for every new situation.

Now she speaks more freely when she tries to formulate a complicated line of thought aptly or a question about her life as a junkie. She wants to understand what decisions she made when, and what resulted from them. Mella's unusual appearance and her sharp mind do not suggest that she is suffering from deep depression. Neither does her curiosity or that she does not avoid engaging in any debate or dispute. She wants to understand and comprehend TBDWBAJ fully, in all its aspects, as an artwork and as arts-based research. She queries the art space selected as well as the topics that the Expert Meeting is tasked to address. She does not know whether she would like to participate in a discussion, though she would like to be present.

In the interview Mella thinks while talking: "No, the boss didn't want sex with me; that is, he never made any advances to me. I was his muse, perhaps, or the child he would have liked or his hope or his projection."

Had he wanted to rescue Mella from her drug addiction?

"No, that was either not clear to him or he didn't care. I functioned for a long time without my drug use being noticeable. It was about my presence in his life. At first he was overly friendly and helpful, then he became increasingly

coercive, demanding, and eventually it was about his control over me, he wanted to have power over me. In the end he got someone to spy on me."

In the interview, Renée talks a lot about her early childhood, her learning disability, the problems in school, and about the all-pervasive feeling of having been left alone. She had needed help, but nobody had done anything. She doesn't blame her parents in any way, they had taken care of her and her four brothers, and there had been no reason to tell them about her worries—they had stood in no comparison to the worries of her parents. Perhaps that was why she had kept the early onset of her menstruation secret. And because she was embarrassed about it. It was the same after the accident with her moped: a locally known business man had offered his help, loaded her broken moped into the car, and driven directly into the woods with her. There he had threatened her, beaten her and raped her. Reporting him to the police had not been an option, Renée said; she kept quiet about what had happened, didn't tell her parents, and later on it was the same with her pregnancy. That she was pregnant, she had only realised very late herself. Later, she conceals relationships, her addiction, and her attempts to save herself.

I ask Renée many questions, more than Kristine and Mella. Not because I think she wants to conceal anything or avoid articulating something, but rather because the events, situations, positions, and relationships somehow remain up in the air: it is difficult for the two of us to establish causal links.

Mella has an appointment with the psychiatrist. She takes her matrix with her to the session, and reports how insightful the conversation about her word collage was.

Maria also has an appointment with the same psychiatrist. She hopes that her matrix shows that it is necessary to increase the dose of her medication. She returns disappointed and angry. The woman had not even wanted to take a look at her matrix. Now she feels rejected, betrayed, and sold down the line. During this current prison sentence she has tried to slash her wrists twice; as if that wasn't a cry for help!

Maria is very aware of the hopelessness of her situation; to her, future means serving her time, and afterwards carrying on in the same way as before her imprisonment. In looking back, she re-experiences her capitulation and perpetual sadness all over again. After giving up her dream of living together with her children, she had placed them with a foster family. She had not visited them for years, in spite of the fact that this was not only permitted, it was expressly desired and encouraged. She doesn't try to excuse herself, she simply states the facts. She is different to Kristine, Maria says, she is incapable of organising any improvement in her situation herself, and is entirely dependent on favourable moments and people who are willing to accept her in her present state and to give her support. She is not asking for therapy, but for medication so that she can actually bear life at all.

# HINDELBANK CERAMIC WORKSHOP

The kiln master is very impressed by the results so far and how quickly the participants have acquired technical competence. We plan to load up the kiln the next evening. Beforehand, the perforations on the dolls' backs have to be blown out using a high pressure compressor—blocked holes would impair the audio quality. In the afternoon, we count the porcelain parts: we have around 50 processed parts, which makes 13 dolls. Strangely enough, we have many more left arms than right ones. We haven't yet got enough Baby Doll parts for a TBDWBAJ series; we need at least another 26. The firing will take two days, and Bastienne Kramer<sup>96</sup> will supervise the firing process in the ceramics workshop. The first load has to be kiln-ready early the next morning. For us this means that in the afternoon we must pour and process porcelain without a break. Moreover, the porcelain has to be as hard as leather so that the seams from the pouring can be cut off, thus it has to be dried long enough. The warders and security officers make an exception for us, and permit us to work after dinner until lock-up at 9 p.m.

Bastienne says the state of the kiln is problematic. The kiln plates are sagging, and there is no sand available, which prevents things from sticking to the kiln plates. She sands down the dirty kiln plates and whitewashes them, so that the residues of glaze on the kiln plates do not melt into our porcelain.

In the afternoon we take the portrait photos of the women, so that we can edit them at the weekend and have them printed as ceramic transfers.

In the second project week, we finish all the biographies, designate the Drop Zones, and start work on the audio recordings. Except for Renée, the women want to record their sentences in Swiss German. We set up the recording studio in an empty cell, and insulate the walls and the door using mattresses as sound proofing. Reading the biographies aloud is the project's performative act. Like the Dutch women did two years ago, now the Swiss biographers literally stand up to tell about their lives. I see them standing behind the microphone, they are highly focused and speak without sentimentality.

<sup>96</sup> Bastienne Kramer is an artist and head of the ceramics department of the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. She supervises all the ceramic work processes in the TBDWBAJ project.

Kristine Stam [1959]

I am the devoted child of my theomaniacal mother  
At age eight, I am sexually abused by my father  
At age nine, my father attempts to rape me  
At age ten, I deliberately injure myself to blackmail my father  
At age fifteen, I am raped by a stranger, busted by the police, and accused by my mother  
At age fifteen, I anaesthetize myself with medicine  
At age sixteen, I run away from home, live together with a man and get pregnant  
At age seventeen, I am forced to marry the father of my child in order not to be expelled from my mother's church  
At age eighteen, my husband begins to abuse me  
At age eighteen, I shoot heroine, work while addicted, and look after my beloved childhood  
At age twenty, I leave my husband, live with my parents, and work professionally as a dealer  
At age twenty-four, I manage a restaurant with my HIV-positive lover and take care of him until his death  
At age thirty-one, I love a drug-addicted woman and live happily  
At age thirty-seven, I contact my father in order to forgive him  
At age thirty-eight, I fear life, alone  
At age thirty-nine, I am being observed by the police, and am charged for openly dealing in heroine  
At age forty, I am arrested and sentenced to four years imprisonment  
At age forty, I submit to legally imposed treatment and confess my addiction to my son  
At age forty-two, I am clean, depressed, and cannot endure life in sobriety  
At age forty-two, I fall in love with a former drug addict, experience unprecedented understanding, and no longer defend myself through verbal violence  
At age forty-three, I break off treatment, and fall back into polytoxicomaniacal drug abuse  
At age forty-six, I am treated a full year for advanced liver cirrhosis  
At age forty-seven, I live in prison

## TRANSFERS

Everything goes according to plan. We unload the kiln, the results are good. Now the second batch can be fired and the kiln unloaded on Friday morning.



## NEGOTIATIONS

It is very rare that conversation takes place with the prison warders or the management and administration staff during our communal lunches or other opportunities in Hindelbank castle. Nobody asks how the project is going. On Tuesday we invite the prison administration representatives to visit us in the workroom; we would also like to talk to them about the presentation of the project.

In the afternoon we talk with the participants about how the presentation at the end of the week should take place. What do the women want to show, what don't they want to show, what is most important to them? They want to talk about what they have created out of porcelain, and how they worked on their biography with the matrix. They want to describe what the matrix consists of, they want to present the audio recordings, show the maps with the Drop Zones, and explain especially the meanings and connections. The entire material should be exhibited, so that the project can be demonstrated based on the methods. When do we want to present it, Friday morning or in the afternoon? If we plan it for before midday, the other inmates will still be at work. In the afternoon is leisure time, and many women don't want to hear or see anything then. Karin points out that the workroom is reserved for the sewing course on Friday afternoons. She speaks with the prison administration on the telephone and is informed that the presentation is planned for Friday morning, only for interested prison officers. The women are absolutely horrified. What about the prisoners? They especially want to present their project to their fellow inmates; they have talked about their work in the living groups every day, and have already invited them to the presentation. Renée says emphatically that she will not come to the presentation. Kristine actually cries, I can hardly believe it. She won't come either, not without her friends. Mella is angry about the sewing course, which is taking precedence.

Why actually? Maria sees the whole thing as sabotage by the institution: When one actually does something really important for a change, there is no room, no time, no attention. Typical jail. Get back to your seat.

The prison administration representatives visit us in the workroom. We tell them about how the project has progressed, the women point out the matrix sheets that are hanging on the wall, the biographies are placed upon a table, and the doll parts are on the pouring table. Questions are asked, which the participants take turns in answering. Renée is quiet, continues sticking on her transfers. After half an hour the visitors say goodbye, and wish us success with the rest of the work. Not a word about the presentation.

Karin brings in an email from the prison administration signalling a concession: the presentation can take place on Friday 2, 2007 from 2.30 p.m. to 3 p.m. in the course room for inmates and staff members who are interested. The presentation will be given in German; there will be no translations because that would take too long.

The women do not feel in any way victorious. Only half an hour for two weeks of work! I try to comfort them and tell them that I regularly have to present ten years' work in half an hour to a large audience, and that each time I look at it as a sporting challenge. What matters is the impression that the presentation leaves behind on the audience. In the afternoon we talk about how the content and technical aspects of our joint work can be practically displayed in the best way. We take a look at the course room—a neutrally furnished room with tables, chairs, and cupboards, with a video projector, a monitor, and a DVD player.

Karin prints flyers and posters announcing the presentation giving the names of the participants. Printed in boldface is the prison's proviso: Anyone who is not at the sally port at 2.20 p.m. on the dot will not be allowed in.

With the video equipment we can show a photographic documentation, and also pictures from the other prison projects. We talk about how we will set up the room so that the various work processes are clear and comprehensible. The tables will be set up in a row in the centre of the room, everything else must be moved out. The women decide amongst themselves who will do which task. They take down the A3 sheets of paper with the matrix terms of the first and second phases from the walls in our workroom, sort them, and hang them on the steel cupboards in the course room. On the back wall, they stick the matrix sheets and the biographies, plus the long lists and maps with the Drop Zones. "That looks good", they decide, "a room full of words".

Lying on the eight tables are also the Baby Dolls of Rebecca, Tessa, Hester, and Karin and the as yet unassembled Swiss series. It must be possible to walk around them so that they can be viewed and touched from all sides.

Renée has decided to come after all, though she doesn't want to say anything. She will look after the video equipment. The other three are very happy about Renée's decision. The women are satisfied with the presentation of the project in the course room; what of course is missing is the Drop Off, the intervention that soon will make Mella's, Kristine's, Maria's, and Renée's biographies a public matter. For the Swiss women too, like the others before them, the Drop Off is a painful notion. They think it is highly unlikely that they will be accepted in the shape of the Baby Dolls by a population that hitherto has always reacted very defensively to them.

At birth, my hart stops beating

At age three, I frequently live away from my parents

At age eight, I suffer from racist behavior directed against my father and myself

At age ten, I get homeopathic treatment against sadness and world-weariness

At age twelve, I ask too much of my parents by being ill, and I drink excessive amounts of alcohol

At age thirteen, my parents may refuse to see that I drink alcohol

At age fourteen, I escape from intrusive men by maiming myself and making myself ugly

At age fifteen, I drift around, drink myself unconscious, and desire to flee from my surroundings in the company of my lover

At age seventeen, I suffer my life as a housewife with my boyfriend

At age nineteen, I complete my second course of training and function on alcohol

At age twenty, I enjoy my male job

At age twenty-two, I work, addicted to drugs, under the obsessive interference of my employer

At age twenty-four, I try to kill myself

At age twenty-four, I live for months without the solace of alcohol, need more drugs, and start hallucinating

At age twenty-four, I escape from being publicly exposed by my boss by going back to my parents and try to get help

At age twenty-five, I feel at home in the company of drug addicts

At age twenty-seven, I am a beloved dealer and am happy in my relationship with an addicted man

At age twenty-nine, I am busy day and night trying to organize drugs for my friend and myself

At thirty, I embezzle money from a friend and suffer from feelings of guilt and lack of drugs

At age thirty, I panic, rob a gas station, and get arrested

At age thirty, I enter prematurely into custody, am treated with methadone, and need fewer drugs

At thirty-one, I am for the first time in my life diagnosed on the causes and nature of my addiction

One of the women suggests that to represent the as yet unfinished Baby Dolls, we could lay the completed biographies on the floor, as a kind of imaginary Drop Off. Between tables and wall, she wants to create a road, a path, with them. “But then the people will trample around on our lives”, one of the women says. Perhaps, but we would see whether anyone actually dares to. During the course of the discussion on public space, they agree on installing them on the prison floor. They stick around 30 A3 prints of the biographies on the floor around the tables.

After the lunchbreak, the four Swiss TBDWBAJ participants arrive dressed for a special occasion. We drink coffee, talk, fall silent, and kill time until 2.30 p.m. In the corridor, the seven of us take turns in sitting on three chairs. It is good to finish our collaborative work at this point. Renée will shortly be transferred to the semi-open prison; Mella is awaiting her trial and is convinced that she will be allowed to go home in fourteen days.

2 MARCH 2007, 2.30 P.M.

## PRESENTATION

In the corridor of Living Group I, a few prisoners gather, a few prison officers move towards us. The members of the prison administration stand next to the sally port in the corridor. During the next five minutes, more visitors arrive; slightly shyly they enter the classroom and wait. The prisoners greet each other, and position themselves with crossed arms along the cupboard wall. The room is full; I estimate the number of visitors at around 40 to 50, mainly prisoners.

The project participants greet the guests, and introduce themselves. Mella and Kristine begin to speak; on the screen, in chronological order, the German, Dutch, Frisian, and Swiss biographies appear. The individual biographies are obviously far too long to be read out during the presentation, although Mella takes the time to talk about Rebecca Mertens, and explains the special role that Rebecca has in this project. Afterwards, Maria demonstrates the vocal function of the Baby Dolls.

After the presentation, there are lively discussions; the background noise is comparable to that of openings at galleries or museums, only that here nobody has the obligatory glass of wine in their hand. It is a strangely attentive audience. The people read the biographies on the floor not just superficially, but thoroughly, sentence by sentence. Several of them even kneel down to do so. Instructed by Maria, the guests pick up the Baby Dolls, hold them against their ears, and try to pick out understandable words from foreign languages.

We talk to our guests, answer questions. Several prisoners are interested in creating their own biographies. One woman asks why I don't also do the project with murderers and normal criminals. I overhear a scrap of conversation among the prison's administrators while they are looking at the biographies:

That must definitely have been terrible for the women. All the participants will have to receive post-therapy.

Because this charge about my work with the women was not made directly, I make a note to ask the women myself later on whether something of this kind had taken place in order to write a complete record<sup>97</sup> of the course of events.

Shortly before three o'clock, the prison director addresses the audience. She welcomes everyone, and thanks especially the participants of the project for their courageous collaboration in this demanding work, which had not been possible to evaluate properly beforehand. She speaks about working conditions that are not easy to set up in a closed prison—as we all had experienced during this project's implementation. And making exceptions is difficult, because experience has shown that then everybody demands them.

How will it continue, someone asks. I speak about the technical steps that will follow, and that I hope for the further support of the prison administration, so that we can return to present the finished Baby Dolls to the Swiss participants. We agree to get in touch when the time comes.

The prison administrator directs her closing words once more to the participants. She hopes that they can cope with the wounds that the project has opened in some individuals, and offers professional help within the prison.

<sup>97</sup> I sent the record to the prison administration one month afterwards. I received no answer. From the participants with whom I stayed in contact, I learned that no post-therapy had taken place, and the project was not discussed further on any level.

## FAREWELL

For the goodbyes we all meet in Karin's office. Karin thanks the women and praises their fantastic performance. Maria gets angry and asks whether Karin had expected that they, the junkies "... would never manage to do anything?" I meet one of the representatives of the prison administration at the gates, and thank her for her support. She says she believes that the project has helped the women a lot, and wishes me a good journey home.

Karin ends her traineeship in the Anstalten Hindelbank and continues her studies. In her report on the traineeship for the university, she mentions our project as an important example for the successful socio-pedagogical care of prisoners. From another source I learn that, in the future, the prison administration intends to react more reticently to suggestions of this kind for art projects. In the following years, I do not succeed in comprehending the reason for this "reticence", nor do I manage to present the completed Swiss series of Baby Dolls to the participants and the prison administration.

BREMEN, 21 FEBRUARY 2007

## REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca has got herself transferred from Vechta to Blockland, the women's prison in Bremen.

Not that it's better here than in Vechta

she says,

but nobody knows me here, neither inmates nor screws, that is already an advantage.

She writes while sitting in the pen,

where people are doing everything except for learning. First of all, the good news: notification that my costs will be paid has arrived. Now my lawyer will first make an appointment for my admission to Moorkieker (the therapy in Oldenburg where I will go) for the middle / end of March. If everything goes smoothly, I will be out in six weeks latest! As soon as it's possible I will give you a call! Somehow, at the moment I just can't manage to put on paper what's going on inside me. I feel as though I am completely full and up to my neck in water. I am so happy that I can finally go into therapy, to give the chaos of my feelings a direction – I don't know, I'm not even able to express myself, let alone explore my feelings. Everything has slipped my grasp. I just can't bear prison any longer. I feel as though I have thinner skin! At some point in time I have lost the layer, which keeps everything away from me. In therapy that's probably OK, in the pen though, it wears me out. Not just in here though, outside too I was not doing well at all.

7 p.m., lock-up

I am so psyched! I have received my admission date from Moorkieker!!!!

21.3.2007

I'm sure you felt something along these lines in A'dam. We'll see, perhaps I can go into detox a week earlier – to Wehnen again – you remember? Not that I need a detox, but the thought of leaving a week earlier is just too lovely! As I said, we'll see! I would so like to speak to you! And see you again! It's not so easy here though with visiting. You would have to fill out a visitor's form, then send it back, then your data is checked – by the police, whether you're criminal, known to take drugs, or if you're any other sort of bad company for me. And that crap takes ages! It's not worth doing it here anymore. Also, the visitor's room here is so tiny that the warder virtually sits at the table too!

OLDENBURG, 20 APRIL 2007

## REBECCA MERTENS

We don't speak on the phone again until after the communication ban during detoxification.

Yes, it's quite nice here, really quite OK, some of it is like at Loxstedt, some of it's different, don't know yet. Better than jail.

In the summer Rebecca is allowed to invite me to visit. Like the Loxstedt therapy centre, Moorkieker,<sup>98</sup> a half-timbered building with a thatched roof, lies deep in rural Lower Saxony, far away from the pressure exerted by drugs in the hometowns of its clientele.

After my first visit to Loxstedt, where I met Rebecca in a very enthusiastic mood, I could have sworn that This is it. Give Junkies a place like this and let them live there for an unlimited time. In a community of like-minded people or fellow sufferers, surrounded by animals, fields, and vegetable gardens. With a roof over one's head and therapy at hand to help. In a functioning community of self-supporters. Planting vegetables, stroking animals, maintaining the farm. Following a few rules, but apart from that, just allowed to be.

Just a few years ago, the period of in-patient hospitalisation in therapy facilities such as Loxstedt was two years; in Rebecca's time only a nine months' stay was approved. Whether clients who transfer to a "clean" residential community after two years have less relapses cannot be answered satisfactorily. There are no statistics on this; however, therapists agree that a longer period of treatment definitely increases the likelihood of staying clean. Already after three months, Rebecca is worrying about her approaching release in six months' time. Like her fellow cohabitants, she has built up a relationship to this place, and the prospect of the completion of therapy scares her, because she knows that just this one time, she gets these nine months and then has to manage everything on her own. She will have to function in an unfamiliar city: Rebecca knows the pain of an independent life. Yet after a few months, this safe place, with its systems of control and sanctions, also brings out her rebellious side: she starts to miss things, for example, her life in Osnabrück, the running around the city and meeting people there. Sometimes she forgets the reason why she can't listen to her favourite music, can't flirt, and is not allowed to go out. She starts to question the rules and criticises them. She begins to cheat. Once she calls me from a pub in Loxstedt, where she and a few other clients secretly drank one beer – which was wonderful, that should be possible.

98 "Moorkieker Special Clinic: We are a rehabilitation facility for drug-addicted women and men, recognised by the healthcare service. The treatment offered by our highly qualified team is based on the latest findings of scientific research and their considerable experience. It is based on an ICF-compatible treatment concept and tested treatment modules, which take into account the optimally individual problem situation of our patients and the potential for working on and solving them. Moorkieker offers 34 treatment places for men, women, and couples, four full-day treatment places for outpatients, and eight adaption places in city houses in Oldenburg". Source: former website of the clinic, which is no longer available; the clinic was closed and continued elsewhere in a different form.

OLDENBURG, AUGUST 2007

## REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca shows me the Moorkieker farm. Hardly anybody is around, most of the inhabitants are on a weekend holiday, in the afternoon, a carer briefly

drops by. Only Axel, one of the clients, joins us in the kitchen; we talk about hepatitis C, which two of the clients are being treated for at the moment, which is pure horror.<sup>99</sup> Whereby I learn that Rebecca, too, is infected – always has been, she remarks laconically – Axel as well, although he had only started doing drugs a few years ago. Axel is in his late 20s, a computer science nerd. He had increasingly neglected his studies at the technical university for his work as, at first popular and then an over-taxed programmer, who had kept his head above water for a while with "uppers" and "downers", until he discovered heroin as the best of all anti-stress drugs.

Axel suggests a canoe trip on the canal. Rebecca keeps jumping from the boat into the water. Despite her obvious pleasure at this, I can't fail to notice Rebecca's latent nervousity, which I had got to know as the harbinger of an uncertain desire. She doesn't dodge my questions about her condition, answers honestly as always. She doesn't feel very good here, she can't find any proper contact to her cohabitants, the therapists, or to the group. We don't get much further. She wants Axel to piss off, he may be quite nice, but after all I am her visitor. Then the two of us talk about what she feels are the weak points of the therapy in this place, although she is very aware of the fact that this is all secondary as long as she does her thing, and copes with the therapeutic measures. She doesn't call it by name yet and still tries to fend it off, but in junkie terminology, this state falls under "to start to wobble".

A few weeks later, my letter comes back to me with the hand-written remark that the addressee no longer lives there.

99 At the time, high doses of interferon were subcutaneously injected several times a week. Heavy side effects resulted. At the beginning of 2000, to increase the chances of healing, ribavirin was given in addition. Ribavirin was already being used as antiviral medication, for example, for treating haemorrhagic fever that is triggered by hantaviruses. In 2002, the dose of interferon was simplified. As a result of the PEGylation of interferon, its half-life in the body was increased many times over, and the dose could be reduced. Depending on the genotype, the therapy period was between 24 and 72 weeks, and the chance of healing was at around 50% with the treatment possible at the time. The side effects of the standard therapy of the time were grave: from changes in the haemogram to thyroid problems and strong skin reactions and depression. Source: <http://www.hepatitis-c.de/behandlung>

HINDELBANK, 4 MARCH 2007

## MARIA VON BANK

Maria just wants to let us know that, in four hours' time, she will introduce our project, including the video documentation which we had sent the women, to a prison officer who is interested. As the meeting will take place in the staff member's office, Maria will also be able to show her the TBDWBAJ website and let her hear the Swiss biographies. Later on she reports that the



presentation was a total success, and the prison officer now has a better understanding of what TBDWBAJ is all about.

Apart from that she is doing well, the visit by her husband yesterday was a little boring.

HINDELBANK, 12 MARCH 2007

## MARIA VON BANK

Maria thanks me for my letter.

It was a crap day again, and that on my birthday. The weekend after you left was totally bad, because my husband came home to find two coppers and a doctor. In these circumstances, we feel LOUSY!! Jail is totally wearing me out ... hello to you all from everybody.

In her P.S. Maria reports that she was able to achieve quite a lot regarding her medication, and she is now feeling better. She has also had an answer to her letter to the prison director: despite the package ban, she is now allowed to receive cigarettes.

HINDELBANK, 13 MARCH 2007

## KRISTINE STAM

Kristine enquires at length whether we all arrived home OK. The packing up and saying goodbye all went so fast, so everything she had wanted to say she will now write. She often talks to her friends about the project and the indescribably great time together. I'm very proud of what we accomplished, and being part of a work of art gives me strength and energy. I feel – except for being deprived of liberty – good.

Regarding my question as to how they are all doing and what's happening with the post-therapy that was announced, Kristine answers:

No idea who is making trouble. I have also had discussions with inmates and some thought it was a shame that the presentation was so short, because people were interested. I am happy that the recordings sound so great. I hope I will be able to take a look at your new website next week.

She reports that her boyfriend had to have her dog put to sleep last Monday.

I am very sad because of that, I was really attached to that animal. A great loss to me. Animals are so uncomplicated and faithful.

Renée Gasser [1960]

I am the daughter of working parents who have little time for their five children

At age nine, I have my first period and hide this fact during five years from my parents

At age fifteen, I am raped by a man who hits me and threatens me

At age fifteen, I do not suspect my pregnancy

At age sixteen, my unwanted child dies

At age seventeen, I use my mother's tranquilizers

At age eighteen, I cut and burn my body and drink alcohol

At age nineteen, my suicide attempt fails

At nineteen, I feel safe in the comfort of my shared life with my beloved wife

At nineteen, I drink excessive amounts of alcohol

At age twenty-four, I am being asked too much in my role as a mother/ I am being asked too much by my wish-child

At age thirty-one, I divorce the father of my second child and am sober

At age thirty-six, I am independent, and secretly drink

At age forty, my boyfriend is dependent on drugs and on me

At age forty-one, my boyfriend rapes and abuses me every day

At age forty-one, I drink and my friend gives me cocaine without my knowing

At age forty-one, I am submitted to enforced psychiatric treatment after a nervous breakdown

At age forty-two, I snort heroine, drink continuously, and no longer defend myself against being raped and abused

At age forty-two, I am convicted for the illegal possession of guns, after my boyfriend has shot at me

At age forty-three, in a state of apathy and self-neglect, I allow my boyfriend to terrorize and blackmail me, use heroine and cocaine, and deal in drugs

At age forty-five, I live in agony, am arrested, convicted, and endure my punishment

Maria von Bank [1962]

I am the unwanted child of my loveless mother

At age five, I suffer from my father's violence, violence imposed by my mother

At age six, the school confirms my hyperactivity

At age seven, I suffer from loneliness and start drinking my parents' alcohol

At age eight, my brother is sent to reform school

At age thirteen, I find comfort with friends and smoke hashish and marihuana with them, and take LSD

At age fifteen, a friend gives me my first shot of morphine

At age fifteen, my parents put my out in the street

At age sixteen, I shoot heroin and morphine

At age seventeen, I start school at the wish of my parents, and am expelled because of my drug addiction

At age nineteen, I also use cocaine, tranquilizers, and medicine

At age twenty-one, my mentally retarded son is born

At age twenty-two, I am detained and lose, through my parents' intervention, the custody of my child

At age twenty-two, I am in love with a woman, use fewer drugs, and escape from prison

At age twenty-four, I fall back into polytoxicomaniacal drug abuse and deal hashish to finance my addiction

At age twenty-seven I use no drugs apart from methadone to get two wish-children

At age thirty-two, I relapse into drug abuse with my boyfriend and have my children placed in a foster home

At age thirty-eight, I live in fatal dependence of a man and of drugs

At age forty, I am homeless, and live in shelters or on the streets

At age forty-two, my boyfriend forces me into prostitution, and I stab him

At age forty-three, I break down and am committed to a psychiatric hospital

At age forty-for, I am taken into custody

At age forty-five, I fear dreams that announce my death

Mella will shortly stand trial and is very optimistic that she will be allowed to go home afterwards; Renée will by now have made herself at home in the Steinhof – and she probably, like the rest of them, won't need or want post-therapy. Kristine doesn't know anything about Maria, but she is certainly not doing extremely badly.

HINDELBANK, 31 MARCH 2007

KRISTINE STAM

Kristine is happy about our letters,  
I then hear things from the outside, from you guys.  
She is happy about the progress of the project, and is eager to see the finished work.  
It is now her favourite time of year, she enjoys the warm weather and the spring flowers.

As of Whitsun I am allowed to go out again at the weekend, that's good for me. Now the worst is over, and at the end of September I'm out of here. [...] There are now new, stricter rules for drug consumption, really severe. Bunker and a ban on going out for up to two months – when they can only punish. Apart from that, everything goes on as normal, boring and tedious. I have to keep motivating myself in order not to fall into a hole.

She says that Mella is still very sad about her trial, which turned out entirely different than expected:

It costs her a great deal of effort to get out of the hole she is in and her bad feelings at the moment. I am not in contact to Renée, though as far as I have heard she is doing well in the Steinhof. Maria is a little defiant as usual, bad-tempered, and written off sick at the moment.

Apart from that, she says, there is nothing to report, it's all always the same and something extraordinary happens rarely, occasionally a new arrival or somebody leaves.

HILDESHEIM, 8 APRIL 2007

WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika writes that by chance she found my address again on the Internet, and had immediately wanted to write a few lines. Everything is ok with her.

Since January 24, 2005, she is in Hildesheim prison and will be released soon. Getting her child back has been underway since last month, she says, she sees Marvin twice a month, and tries to make the best of it. She has already completed a 15-month outpatient therapy, and for six months now she has been having behavioural therapy. Further, she is now in her third semester at an adult education centre to do her A levels.

I really have to learn a lot.

Apparently, she didn't send off the card immediately, because on the other side she writes that she has just returned to prison from holiday, and thus is nervous and excited, which is why she (unfortunately) still makes a lot of spelling mistakes. She gives telephone times, a cell phone number, a postal address, and her mail address. I should address my letters to Weronika Menke – this will still be her name for three more weeks, then it will be Mazur again,

because I was married for three weeks, and there was a name change.

In a long letter I tell Weronika about the editions of the TBDWBAJ project in Unna, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. From then on we exchange letters, and I invite her to continue to participate in the project.

STEINHOF, 10 APRIL 2007

## RENÉE GASSER

My letter to Renée is sent back, "Addressee unknown".

HINDELBANK, 17 APRIL 2007

## MELLA AFFOLTER

Mella writes about the shocking trial, which she has been through. All of them – meaning lawyer, carers, and other advisors – had been, like her, optimistic, and presumed that her release was imminent.

First of all, they were already wearing me down a bit before the trial ... that I am supposedly a very bad girl. Even during the trial, the lawyer assured me I didn't need to worry ... even if the judges were demanding a higher sentence, I could almost certainly go home. Some brief information: The victims at the petrol station, which I had tried to rob, had from the beginning – after they knew who I was (regular customer), and I had apologised – declared they do not wish to press charges or take any further steps ... In their statements they put on record, they stated that at no

point in time were they scared or had really felt threatened ... they were not hurt ... had even served a customer during my holdup – until I gave up ... and this is the way it was referred to the court, as "simple attempted armed robbery" – at least a twelve month sentence ... which concluded the first part of the trial; I was then put in a cell (where I was actually supposed to wait for around five hours until sentence had been passed). I hadn't been in the cell for a moment when I was taken back – they had forgotten ... that they had to "extend something" ...!? I couldn't believe it, the "extension" was that the court had decided no longer to view my case, like before, as "simple attempted armed robbery" (12 months), but as "aggravated attempted armed robbery" ! ? ! ? ! ? (40 months) shock – panic – helpless – disbelief – hate !!! Their explanation was that with my knife (7 cm blade), I had nevertheless risked hurting somebody – and that for the probable sum of approximately 300 Swiss Francs (this was known from the beginning, had so far even been viewed as "mitigating") !?" Mella asks, whether I can even vaguely imagine what had gone on inside her at that moment. "My lawyer "demanded" twelve months conditionally ... I figured 18 months conditionally – in the worst case 18 months unconditionally. The sentence handed out was 24 months unconditionally!!! (2 / 3 ≤ 16 months approx. 12 June / while + after jail therapy) ... honestly, it took me a very long time to "accept" that, especially because it really is too much. Anyway, enough of that.

A few days later, Mella receives the news that one of her dogs, Mori, twelve years old, had suddenly died – just like that. Her baby! She knows she doesn't need to elaborate. Mella asks about the status of the project and asks whether we have already decided on one of the biographies.

Oh yeah, you asked about the "post-therapy" because of the project. Bullshit!!! I personally felt that the entire project and the work with you guys was "therapy" ... that was ... not easy, though – good like that.

She encloses the recipe for her chocolate cake for my daughter's birthday. In her P.S. Mella answers my question as to what I could send her from Amsterdam.

You know it's difficult to buy black lipstick in Switzerland.

HINDELBANK, 19 APRIL 2007

## MARIA VON BANK

In my case, very, very much shit has happened, that's why there haven't been any letters from me. Well, it started before Easter. I had a terrible dream, and generally wasn't in a good mood. OK, then I had to go to the Insel hospital, where I got better again. Fine. Then I got back here, and while I was in hospital, my cell had been totally cleared out, and then they took me to the HSI.<sup>100</sup> It would *only* be for *three* months, so that I could calm down a little!! I am there now, and can still hardly believe what they have done. Of course I am not doing at all well here, I definitely do not belong here. I have already written two letters to the director, and have also already had an appointment with her. If I'm lucky, it'll be less than three months.

Maria wants to report something else as well; namely, about the mean “jail dealer”, who is now only called “jail witch” by the inmates,

because she deals with pills and takes 7 Francs off the poor people here, just for one pill!! Normally, one costs between 4 to 5 Francs. She also came back to the prison without any pills at all, although the people had given her money. Nobody saw their money again or pills either. Now a lot of people are in a clinch with her, me too of course. If I wasn't sitting here, I would know what to do.

Mella is doing well, Maria says, she still has three or four months left, which in the beginning was a shock for her. Then she talks about an altercation with one of the project's participants whom she lied to “as a punishment”, she said she already knew whose biography will be spoken by the Baby Dolls.

Because she brags the whole time that she will be the chosen one ....

She asks me to send her some millet after April 28 when she can receive packages again.

100 High security integration department (bunker).

HINDELBANK, 30 APRIL 2007

## KRISTINE STAM

Kristine asks about the current situation regarding exhibitions and the next project, which we may possibly be able to do in Hungary:

a great country, where the people are very open. On Saturday, Mella will be allowed out of here for the first time for five hours, she is very happy. Now things are going forward for her. I hope she writes to you too ... now that she is feeling better. No contact with Maria, she is still in the HIS at the moment. Not a nice place.

Kristine is looking forward to Jolanda's visit, to perhaps take photographs of Drop Zones with her during day release.

As of the 28th of May I am allowed to go on holiday again, and on the five hours EXB.<sup>101</sup> I have not had an answer yet whether I can go into open prison in Zurich at the end of May, when I know for sure, I will let you know. There I can go home every weekend, though I don't expect it will happen. Nevertheless, if it does, I will be doubly happy. Here everything is the same as it's always been, [...] they never cease to let us feel that we are cons, evil, and they think we are stupid.

The weather is good and a comfort during free time.

Occasionally I have some dope to smoke, but apart from that I am forced to be abstinent. Luckily, my imprisonment is over in October, I have received an extra four days in prison because I smuggled hash and heroin into the prison. That's how it can go in life. Despite all that I'm healthy and have good friends, which makes the time here a little more bearable.

Tomorrow her boyfriend is coming to visit her, she is looking forward to that, also to sharing the grief over the dog that has died, who is still very close to her heart.

Now it's five o'clock already, and in jail that means meal time, medication, and soon lock-up, there is no way of sugarcoating it, it remains shitty. So, stop the moaning. It's my own fault, I have learned what is right and wrong and when you do it nonetheless you shouldn't let yourself get caught.

101 Release without supervision.

HILDESHEIM, 8 MAY 2007

## WERONIKA MAZUR

I'm doing well; I just have a lot of stress regarding imprisonment and with the youth welfare office. I was only married for three weeks, but in that short time my husband wanted to kill me, and an immediate divorce followed. Marvin is doing well; he will come to me six months after my release. I will probably be transferred to day release soon, and then I will have a bit more free space than before. You see, Hildesheim prison is very basic. Am not in such a good mood today; just saw Marvin and now I'm down. I've got a lot of stress, I just wanted to say hello today. I agree to participate in the project, but during custody, holiday abroad is not possible.

HINDELBANK, 23 MAY 2007

## KRISTINE STAM

Unfortunately I didn't get your package; they put it in with my personal effects because the sender's address was incomplete. I told them that it is probably news about our art project, but nobody is interested in that here. A pity, I'm always happy to hear all your news.

She asks about the status of the project, the exhibition in Amsterdam, and when Jolanda is coming to Switzerland.

Mella is doing well, she was on day release; from Maria I don't see anything at all, she is probably still sitting in the HIS. Really shitty for her. As for me, it's still not clear yet whether I'll be allowed to go to the Neugut to Zurich, though it's also not so important anymore, in October I'll be home, free; to me that means concerts again, occasionally a good party and sex.

The prison officers are the pits; they would know that the package was from me, but they wouldn't make an exception. She will tell Mella though, that I sent something.



# LIEFDE IN DE STAD [LOVE IN THE CITY]

Various exhibitions and interventions in Amsterdam

“It’s not about romantic love”, says Lisa Boersen from the Paradiso<sup>102</sup> cultural centre, “but about love as an alternative to fear. The kind of love that makes living together in a tight space so much more pleasant. Using unorthodox means Liefde in de Stad explores human behaviour within urban culture and how it can be influenced at the interface of art and science.” Since 2003, each year Paradiso invites artists, scientists, scholars, writers, and musicians to realise their concepts for Liefde in de Stad all over the city. Together with Paradiso and SKOR,<sup>103</sup> Gijs Frieling plans the exhibition *Love Is Like Oxygen* in W139: “Love unfolds its power only in combination with freedom. In art, it seems at times to be only about personal freedom. Love, freedom, and self-determination are an integral part of the *conditio humana*, which in its entirety allows artists to enter into binding relationships with people and ideas. Some of the artists in this exhibition seem to have taken this step.”

Various artists<sup>104</sup> will present their contributions in the large hall of W139. At the same time, Lucia Luptáková’s installation *Somewhere Else*<sup>105</sup> can be seen on all floors and not only includes the audience, but also the exhibiting artists and their works in the way she has changed the rooms. This results in remarkable synergies.

In the interest of these synergies, we redraft the concept of the Dutch TBDWBAJ during a meeting with Gijs Frieling and the art critic Marjolein Schaap.<sup>106</sup> For the *Love Is Like Oxygen* exhibition, W139’s rooms are declared a “human park”, which

contain 82 talking Baby Dolls from the German series Rebecca Mertens and Karin Pausch, the Swiss series Mella Affolter, the Dutch series Hester van de Beuken, and the Frisian series Tessa de Vries.

Visitors can access information about the project on the website,<sup>107</sup> listen to the biographies or read them in English, German, and Dutch translation. For the Drop Off of the Hester van de Beuken series, around one hundred popular and unpopular citizens of the Netherlands from culture, subculture, politics, and science will be invited to an Expert Meeting to discuss intervening in social issues using the means available to the visual arts.



Catalogue *Liefde in de Stad* [Love in the City], published by W139, Amsterdam, 2007

102 In 1960s, the Amsterdam church of the *Vrije Gemeente* community (built 1879–1880) was occupied, and opened in 1968 as the publicly funded youth centre Paradiso, where spectacular gigs of famous rock musicians took place. The Paradiso was one of the first places where the sale and consumption of soft drugs was tolerated. In recent years Paradiso has begun to include readings, theatre plays, classical music, and crossover events in its program. Source: <https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paradiso>

103 SKOR (Stichting Kunst en Openbare Ruimte) was founded in 1999 to develop and realise extraordinary art projects in public spaces. SKOR probes the interactions between art, customer, place, and audience with the emphasis on new media, architecture, urban construction, and landscape architecture. <https://www.mondriaanfonds.nl/gehonoreerd/skor-stichting-kunst-en-openbare-ruimte-amsterdam/>

104 Participating artists: Arno Coenen, Erin Dunn, Gil & Moti, Saskia Janssen, George Korsmit, Ulrike Möntmann, Jonas Ohlsson, and Joel Tauber. [www.liefdeindestad.nl](http://www.liefdeindestad.nl), <http://w139.nl/en/article/12557/love-is-like-oxygen/>

105 Installation by Lucia Luptáková, Amsterdam. See: <http://www.lucialuptakova.nl/index.php?/site-specific/somewhere-else/>

106 In 1992, Marjolein Schaap (1958–2014) from Amsterdam founded the charity Welcome Stranger which had the purpose of organising artistic interventions in the border area between private and public space. <http://stichtingwelcomestranger.nl/about.html>

107 [www.thisbabydollwillbeajunkie.com](http://www.thisbabydollwillbeajunkie.com), online 2007–017. Graphic design, website, and exhibition catalogue: Yvonne van Versendaal, Amsterdam; programming website: Cheryl Gallaway, Micha Bakker (hexaplex), Amsterdam. Since 2017 there is a new website, by graphic design studio Thonik and programming by Ru Nacken, Amsterdam: [www.outcastregistration.com](http://www.outcastregistration.com)

2 JUNE 2007

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Everything is chaotic; the youth welfare office is making trouble about my visits to Marvin. I have school every day from 4 p.m. to 10.30 p.m., outside the prison near the Hildesheim adult education centre, so I get day releases; it's not easy doing A levels from prison, without Internet access or possibilities to discuss things with others or without tutoring.

She especially has difficulties with English and German, because in Poland, she had only had Russian as a foreign language, but her standard is not good enough to take Russian at A level.

I offer to send over her biographical data, which I had written down from memory, so that she can get some idea of the form of a biography.

Yes, send me the sentences but I don't have much time. Everything's not going very well, lots of problems with the prison director. On Thursday I will probably be able to take a look at the sentences. On Sunday, September 23, 2007 I will be released, I may even get out six days earlier because of the release days, if I do not use them before for a holiday.

I ask Weronika, whether I should send her a print-out of the word catalogue to create a matrix.

5 JUNE 2007

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Everything's OK with me. Waiting for your matrix print-out. Don't have much time.

I finally reach Weronika by telephone in the prison. On June 13, 2007 she mails me the drafts of her biography:

Weronika Mazur, Poland and Germany

As a small child I was maltreated by my mother; my father was a football player and had little time for the family, he didn't know anything about the mistreatment, or simply refused to believe it. My mother, who had me when she was eighteen, could not cope at all with bringing me up. I have hardly any positive memories of the time with my "parents". When I was 12, my parents got a divorce. I stayed approximately one year at my mother's, and my father immigrated to West Germany. After a year, my mother decided to send me to Germany to my father's, I had no choice.

I was 13 when I left Poland; it was a trip with my mother's lover to Germany. My mother didn't even say goodbye to me, I will never forget that. Since then, I ask myself: why? In Germany, the first meeting was with my stepmother; she was only 24 years old, and not exactly enthusiastic about me. My father worked a lot illegally at the harbour, unfortunately I hardly saw him at all. He is a man who is basically a good person, though not a good father. He preferred to go drinking with his work colleagues than to devote a little time to me.

At 13 years old, I work for my father as a drug courier.

At 13 years old, I start to smoke marijuana.

At 14 years old, I take cocaine and live off men.

At 17 years old, I am HIV positive and believe that my life no longer makes any sense.

When I am 18, my boyfriend provides for my son.

At 23 years old, I am sent to prison.

At 24 years old, I am clean and provide for my beloved son.

At 25 years old, I wound a German policeman and get a prison sentence.

At 26 years old, my boyfriend kills the man who raped me and hands himself in to the police.

At 27 years old I complete apprenticeships and through this avoid being imprisoned again.

It is very difficult for me to deal with these themes.

HINDELBANK, 7 JUNE 2007

## KRISTINE STAM

Kristine writes about her first release, a weekend at home, which was very sad without her dog. So she got herself "lots of medication", though she still managed to make it back to the castle in time. Today she called in sick, for the first time she feels the enormous strain the medication has on her brain.

Still have afterpains from the weekend, then everything goes slower until my grey cells warm up again and work properly.

She has read my 40 pages long report of our project:

When I read, I see us in the workroom.

Kristine praises the concise description and makes additions that are missing in the report, and also gives me the names of the psychiatrist and the psychotherapist, who visited the project which have also been omitted.

The way things look at the moment, I will be staying here until October 3. Mella will soon have it all behind her, but her boyfriend is not doing well at all, she is very

worried. Maria I don't see at all anymore, not even on the way to work. I think the contact will keep up through you, it is difficult, each of us is going their own way. From Renée there is no word at all.

HINDELBANK, 1 JULY 2007

## MELLA AFFOLTER

Mella writes about her forthcoming release.

You know what, three days ago now, I received the decision that I will be released on June 11!!! H O O O R A Y !!!

Hhmm ... it's really strange at the moment – about two days ago I had the feeling I had never been so happy ... apart from that, for days now I've been by turns happy and sad ... I'm a little afraid ... I'm a little insecure ... I'm totally happy ... I'm full of energy ... I'm excited + nervous ... well, I'm just over the moon that I will finally be able to go home! (You know, I'm soooo happy that I still have the apartment) Ah yes – the reason why it was so difficult recently ...? For one thing, certainly because of the uncertainty: Will I be released after serving 2 / 3 ... or not?

Also, Mella is worried about her boyfriend, who had always missed her a lot anyway, but when he waited in vain for her at home on February 26 – why he had misunderstood her date of release, she doesn't understand – he lost it totally, she couldn't reach him anymore, and he even "forgot" visiting dates. He got knocked down by a car, was taken to hospital a few times, and suddenly started getting involved in fights although he's the most peaceful guy, and he's talking about suicide. It got so bad that last month, he was taken to a psychiatric unit twice, and because he always had Loui the dog with him, the dog was stuck into a dogs' home. When he had wanted to fetch the dog after his second stay in the psychiatric unit, they had told him the dog had been seized by animal welfare, and will not be given back anymore.

M A S S I V E S H O C K !!! You know what it's like – these dogs ... cats ... these animals – they're our kids!!!

After the two of them had written letters and Mella's lawyer had examined the case, the day before they received the decision,

... that the suspicion of "maltreatment" could not be confirmed ... only a certain "negligence" by my boyfriend ... because of his own unstable health condition ... anyway, we can pick up Loui on the day of my release. Well, the whole thing was very difficult for me ... but you know Loui has been with my boyfriend for 12 years and for the last three or four years those two have been my family.

Also, three weeks ago she decided to "confess" everything to her parents.

It was like this: of course I had told them everything about our project ... (just very honestly, without thinking about it any further ... because you know, they knew / didn't know everything – including why exactly I am in prison ... I always told them I am serving time for unpaid fines ...) ... it was obvious that they wanted to know more about the project ... again and again came the inquiry for the Internet address – and

until then I always had an excuse ... it was clear to me that at some point in time I would have to hand it over ... and then they will take a look at it, and will get another mega-shock ...!? ... So I “overcame” my disinclination to confess to them beforehand – so that they can perhaps “understand” a little ... I also talked about some of the things in my “situation” / “phase of life” at that time ...!!

... of course I was a little scared – was insecure too ... although so far they have actually reacted better than I had hoped for and expected anyway!! On July 8, they will come and visit me again ...!

Oh yes, what I have seen of the project so far ... also on the Internet, is great. You mention the argument between Kristine and Maria – well, from what I gathered at the time, it wasn't a big deal at all ...! I was pretty shocked when I heard that Maria is now “full time” in the HSI [high security integration department]. I saw Renée briefly through the window one time – she seemed to be doing well.”

Mella will definitely write to them all and apologises for when it sometimes takes her a little longer:

I will keep in contact with all of you.

Well, OK – in the meantime it's the 4th of July ... and it's getting nearer all the time ... but hell, I tell you, the past two or three weeks have just crept along ... and last few days ... have almost stood still ...!? I am so happy !!!

... will veeery slooowly start packing ... and stuff!

HINDELBANK, 21 JULY 2007

## KRISTINE STAM

Kristine thinks it's right that Mella's biography was chosen for the Drop Off. It means a lot to Mella. In the meantime she has been released, and Kristine hopes that she doesn't fall back into her old melancholy. Maria has been released from high security, and is now living in her residential community; they don't talk much anymore, keep their distance and respect each other.

My situation is slowly approaching the end, in two months I can leave Hindelbank behind me. I will go to Brugg for the heroin assisted treatment programme and with the help of my doctor apply for a 50 % pension. If possible, I would like to work a little on the side, so that there is a certain structure in the day. I still have a few dreams, and some can surely be fulfilled.

Kristine has a new job in the prison kitchen, which despite the low pay does her good.

I learned a lot in our project, which I will certainly take with me. The joy about everything we learned and how a European work of art was created, of which I too am a tiny part of the whole ... simply fantastic. After leaving prison, I will make a great effort to stay in touch because you guys and the project are important to me. To begin with there might not be very many letters, because there is so much that I have

to put back in order. But I will most certainly write, only not so regularly. I know that you won't hold that against me, simply because you know life.

None of us have been given any packages from you, Maria's they even just disposed of, simply threw it away.

Happiness and Money

Love and Sensuality

Courage and Spontaneity

Joy and Rock'n Roll – I wish you all that, my friends.

5 SEPTEMBER 2007

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika writes that she will be released already on September 14, 2007!

Marvin will come to me already in November!!! I'm fine. Are you at home in September? I will probably be coming to Amsterdam for a day with two people from my A level course, and would love to come to your exhibition and visit you????!!

15 SEPTEMBER 2007

## WERONIKA MAZUR

I'm free!!!!

Cannot come to Holland at the moment because I'm seeing my Marvin tomorrow. Have to postpone the trip until the holidays. Everything is going well. What is “Dropping”?

In her following mails, Weronika gives updates on her start into a new life. Strenuous, because apparently the new apartment is not yet ready to move into. She is now laying the laminate flooring herself in Marvin's room, which turns out to be difficult, but she will manage, and is as proud as a peacock.

She sends pictures of Marvin. He is doing well, he is very good at school, and is now going to do martial arts.

He is still a dear and cheeky as well, both, even though this doesn't quite go together. I can take Marvin home to my place every Saturday.



# INTERVENTION AMSTERDAM: DROP OFF AND EXPERT MEETING— HESTER VAN DE BEUKEN SERIES



6 If the passer-by destroys the Baby Doll, her existence ends. When the Baby Dolls have disappeared from the public places, the series has a continued virtual existence as part of the international collection of biographies on the website [www.thisbabydollwillbeajunkie.com](http://www.thisbabydollwillbeajunkie.com)



Arrival of 22 taxis in front of W139. Photograph: Bastienne Kramer

## SCHEDULE OF TAXI JOURNEYS

Time schedule of the taxi rides, Baby Doll, addresses,  
Droppers via taxi:

Taxi 1	Baby Doll 10
Departure	15:00 hrs
Journey time	62 mins.
	Mentrum, Amstelveenseweg 7 Pavement in front of the building
	Erica Wever and Hanneke Oberman
Taxi 2	Baby Doll 14
Departure	15:02 hrs
Journey time	62 mins.
	Valerius Kliniek, Valeriusplein 9
	On the square in front of the main entrance to the building
	Jacobiene de Rooy and Rolf Möntmann
Taxi 3	Baby Doll 17
Departure	15:05 hrs
Journey time	60 mins.
	Vondelpark, Eingang Koningslaan/ Emmalaan, Pedestrian path
	Marion Cornelius and Berletta Scholten

## DROP OFF

The Drop Off constitutes the urban intervention in the public space of the city of Amsterdam, in which THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE is installed in locations that are part of the biographer's life. Around 100 popular and unpopular people with a direct or indirect connection to the thematic complex have been invited to take the 22 Baby Dolls in 22 taxis to their destinations, drop them off there, and leave them to the public without any further supervision.

The Baby Dolls are either accepted by the city inhabitants and visitors, or rejected, ignored, or destroyed:

- 1 If the passer-by ignores the Baby Doll, nothing happens.
- 2 If the passer-by picks up the Baby Doll, her biography fragment will be heard.
- 3 If the passer-by turns the Baby Doll over, they will see the name and date of birth of the person whose biography it is.
- 4 If the passer-by puts the Baby Doll back down, she stops speaking.
- 5 If the passer-by takes the Baby Doll with them, her further existence will take place in the private space of the passer-by, as protected or as defenceless as a child living within a family, virtually invisible to the public.

Taxi 4 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 8 15:08 hrs 60 mins. Schinkelkade corner of Vaartstraat 259 At the waterside near the bank Lies de Wolf and Titia Ex
Taxi 5 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 20 15:10 hrs 58 mins. Olympic Stadium, bus parking lot on Stadionweg Tijs van de Boomen and Irene Houthuijs
Taxi 6 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 15 15:12 hrs 54 mins. Jellinek Kliniek [clinic], Jacob Obrechtstraat On the pavement in front of the main entrance Ingeborg Schlusemann and Leonie Woidt-Wallisser
Taxi 7 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 21 15:15 hrs 54 mins. Huis te Vraag Begraafplaats [cemetery] At the corner of Sassenheimstraat and Rijnsburgstraat 51 Inge Weber and Matthias Keller
Taxi 8 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 19 15:18 hrs 50 mins. Café Wildschut, Roelof Hartplein Near the café on the pavement of the square Jasperine Schupp and Loes Markenstein
Taxi 9 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 18 15:21 hrs 48 mins. Ita Wegmanhuis, Weteringschans 72 On the pavement Rob Birza, Esther Vonk, and Gatra Pesthas

Taxi 10 Departure: Journey time	Baby Doll 7 15:24 hrs 48 mins. Barlaeus grammar school, Weteringschans 29–31, On the pavement in front of the main entrance Jonas Staal and Lucia Luptacova
Taxi 11 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 13 15:31 hrs 36 mins. Nederlandse Bank, Sarphatistraat, on the pavement Janwillem Schrofer, Pauline de Bok, and Bastienne Kramer
Taxi 12 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 5 15:34 hrs 34 mins. Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis Hospital Eerste Oosterparkstraat, staff entrance Jolanda Visser and a trainee from the MDHG association
Taxi 13 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 4—missing 15:37 hrs 34 mins. Onze Lieve Vrouwe Gasthuis Hospital At the corner of Blasisusstraat and Camperstraat, staff entrance Greet Kuipers and an employee of the MDHG association
Taxi 14 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 2 15:40 hrs 34 mins. Keizersgracht 726, On the pavement Yvonne van Versendaal and John Peter Kools
Taxi 15 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 16 15:43 hrs 24 mins. Cliffordstraat 42, in front of the Felix Meritis building Nick Snaas and Anneclaire Kersten

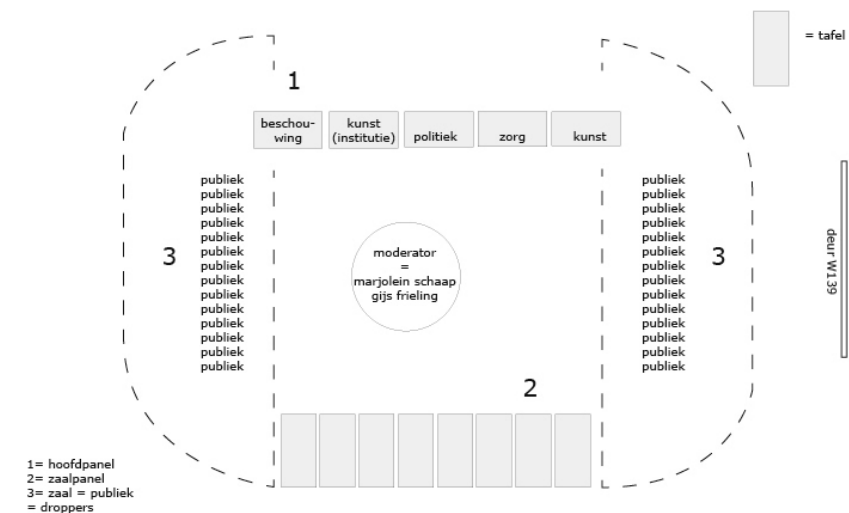
Taxi 16 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 6 15:46 hrs 22 mins. Hortus Botanicus [botanical garden], Plantage Middenlaan district On the pavement Hans Kassens and Margreet Snaas
Taxi 17 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 3 15:51 hrs, 20 mins. De Witte Olifant Primary School At the corner of Nieuwe Uilenburgerstraat and Nieuwe Batavierstraat Playground in front of the school Willemijn Los and Mickey Jannink
Taxi 18 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 22 15:54 hrs 18 mins. MDHG, Jonas Daniel Meijerplein 30 Pavement in front of the entrance Marieke van Doorninck and Saramarie Zijlstra
Taxi 19 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 12 15:57 hrs 14 mins. At the corner of Kattengat, opposite Koggestraat 6 Judith Vega and Koen van der Kroef
Taxi 20 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 9 16:00 hrs 14 mins. Amsterdam Central Train Station Platform 2 Doede Hardeman and Holger Nickisch
Taxi 21 Departure Journey time	Baby Doll 11 16:02 hrs 8 mins. Heintje Hoeksteeg On the pavement in front of a residential house Ruud Kaulingfreks and Puck Kniesmeijer

## EXPERT MEETING AT W139

### Podium

Carolien Gehrles	politician, Amsterdam city councillor of economic affairs, arts, and culture
Ruud Kaulingfreks	philosopher
Greet Kuipers	psychiatrist
Jonas Staal	visual artist

In the audience, amongst others are: Jeroen Boomgaard, art historian, Professor of Art and Public Space at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and University of Amsterdam, Marieke van Doorninck, historian and politician, city councillor, head of the local council, Erik Hagoort, art theoretician, Doede Hardeman, art historian and curator of Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Willemijn Los, director of the aid association for drug users MDHG, Michael Tedja, visual artist, Judith Vegaphilosopher with a focus on gender studies, sociology, and politics, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.



Panel W139. Sketch: Yvonne van Versendaal

Gijs Frieling and Marjolein Schaap moderate the panel. In addition to the experts on the podium there are experts in the audience as well as members of the public. Those present include representatives of various art genres, general healthcare professionals and those working in addiction treatment, and various representatives from the social sciences and politics faculties.

Marjolein Schaap's introduction is about Emmanuel Levinas' theory of the "Other": "According to Levinas, the Other is always alien to me and is not my *alter ego*. Nevertheless, the Other can encounter me and move me, take me beyond my own position."

The private, the self-centred, needs the antithesis of the public, solidarity, and responsibility. Put more strongly: after the failure of the "grand narratives" (Lyotard),<sup>108</sup> the last remaining truth for us is the inviolable dignity of the Other, only the ethical issue.<sup>109</sup>

Various positions, and questions about the development of the perspectives connected with them, are tabled for discussion: How do we behave with regard to criteria, which we do not yet know or do not actually understand? How effective and how legitimate is it to intervene in social issues utilising the means and methods of the visual arts? How can such interventions, such actions be defined, and what consequences do they have for the artist and for an audience that is involved—possibly unexpected and unprepared? Which responsibilities are taken over by whom, upon who are they imposed? Debate continues about the term "the dignity of the Other" and pondered how the separation of private and public matters, which is viewed as social construct, can be prevented. The assertion that the group of drug addicts is excluded by society *per se* is rejected by some of the experts in the audience. The argument is advanced that there are a number of aid providers and institutions, which society funds that are provided for them as participants in society.<sup>110</sup> ARTA and MDHG clients and carers disagree with this: the practice leaves very much to be desired and does not address all aspects of the problem.

Frieling leaves the podium with the microphone in order to include the heckling experts in the audience in the debate.

Along with others, Hans Kassens points out the situation after the law amendment, the consequences of which have not yet sunk into public awareness, and which hasn't been trialled long enough; at this point in time it is only possible to speculate. He says that the prior legislation in force in the Netherlands had always been as unequivocal as in neighbouring countries and demanded criminal prosecution of drug consumers, which however had not been enforced. The resulting win-win situation, which came about because of this toleration, is also generally known: Because the state had preferred to provide addicts with medical treatment, it had saved itself a great deal of money that would have been spent on a high number of senseless and cost-intensive prison sentences, and since the 1990s, the number of drug-related deaths has sunk drastically.

This confrontational discussion, remarks an ARTA client, corresponds to the spirit of the times. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the consumption of drugs has increasingly been equated with drug-related crimes, and declared as damaging for the economy in the Netherlands. Allegedly, especially the earnings from tourism in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Den Haag are negatively affected.

He regards these as excuses, and imputes the general public's alleged demand for "normen en waarden" (norms and values), for the suppression of problems instead of offering tedious and expensive solutions, to the rise and influence of the New Right, which have been meekly taken on board by the government. In general, with the reactionary movements in Europe gaining in strength, a tendency towards zero-tolerance is becoming noticeable, and specifically in the Netherlands also an "anti-gedogen [toleration or sufferance] attitude".

An expert from the audience adds that not only in Amsterdam, but also in Zurich, Vienna, Berlin, and other European cities, clean-ups of the inner cities are taking place. Norms are welcomed as standardised guidelines to which people are then adjusted, she quotes Foucault.<sup>111</sup> The politicians Carolien Gehrles and Marieke van Doorninck confirm there has been a rethink of drug policy, because it should conform to the rest of Europe. Like, for example, the "ISD-strafmaatregel"<sup>112</sup> for "veelpleger", repeat offenders. From 2000 to 2002, the draft law was tested, and in 2004 passed as a bill. Thus, a fare dodger, who has been caught ten times and registered, can be sentenced to two years in prison with the goal of re-education.

Greet Kuipers, the psychiatrist on the panel, and the representatives of various aid organisations complain that more or less all measures, like ISD, too, are tailored to drug-addicted men, although they are also applied to drug-addicted women. Based on their experience, they emphasise the urgent necessity for formulating and applying gender-specific treatment guidelines for women. In reality, however, this suggestion is not pursued, because according to the ministry these women, altogether only 4 to 5% of all drug addicts, are merely a "negligible minority". As an important example, representatives from MDHG report that particularly the female junkies on the Nieuwmarkt, the Zeedijk, and De Wallen are now hardly on the street at all and it is difficult to reach them: "Although illegal prostitution is an offense, the women are usually not prosecuted, merely chased away by the police. In this way, they disappear from the public eye. However, the consequences this can have for the women—to be pushed into Tippelzones [streetwalkers' patches] like deserted harbour areas without any social control or security, are ignored." After almost three hours of lively exchanges of expert opinions, personal experience, and points of view, the discussion is closed, and continues in private conversations in the exhibition for a long time.



Expert Meeting at W139, Amsterdam. Photograph: Rolf Möntmann



After the discussion, I feel reminded of Peter Sloterdijk's<sup>113</sup> comments about globalisation. What consequences does an intervention have in the “cleansed” human zoo in the middle of our comfort zone? Humanism, which everybody accepts as given, and views as their property, has to be constantly reconfirmed and worked on, as recent and contemporary history has demonstrated.

Interventions in socially sensitive issues seem to me a possibility to do this. If the tame world of the consuming members of the educated classes creates both stress and boredom, these two keynotes of existence will always produce discrepancies in communication, a mood of chronic ambivalence, alternating between red alert and immobilisation. An immobilisation that makes an artist on the podium decide to give a junkie in his neighbourhood 25 cents occasionally rather than make the effort to conduct such a project.

108 See: Peter Engelmann (ed.): *Jean-François Lyotard, Das postmoderne Wissen. Ein Bericht*. Vienna 2009. For Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) the failure of modernism's project corresponds to the failure of the metanarratives of modernism. These narratives discredit themselves because they are incapable of realising the values of modernism—on the contrary: the metanarratives lead to terrorism and annihilation, because their demand for standardised and total truth is based on a claim to power that negates heterogeneity. The metanarratives are all-embracing ideas that construct society as an abstract model. Lyotard views this as a violation of heterogeneity and individuality; the normativity of modernism's narratives and the concomitant invalidation of the heterogenous leads to the liquidation of the idea of modernism.

109 From an article about Emmanuel Levinas by Jan Keij: *Plaats en voorbij-de-plaats, wonen en tijd bij Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995)*. *Kunst en Wetenschap*, no. 2, 2004. Keij refers to Levinas' core thesis, according to which the human self only achieves true dignity if it takes on responsibility for other people. This it is called upon to do by a god, who reveals himself in the faces of other people, in the face of the Other, who is unique and whose mortality demands everyone's care.

110 In the beginning, mainly local aid organisations had presented their direct measures, for example, the accessible, daily provision of substitution therapy in “methadone buses”, which are decommissioned city buses at public bus stops. In “*sputruimtes*” (fixing rooms), drugs can be hygienically and privately consumed. These rooms were first set up in Zurich already in 1986. To this day, Switzerland and the Netherlands do not agree about which of the two countries was the first to develop and establish progressive solutions. New approaches in therapy were discussed and tested, for example, to administer free heroin to a few incurable or terminally ill drug addicts in Amsterdam—a measure that was regarded as commendable all over Europe. In Rotterdam in 1999, the first nursing home for terminally ill, older junkies was opened. What neighbouring countries admired as a humanitarian act, was regarded in the Netherlands as a pragmatic political measure. From the aid organisations working on the ground, institutes evolved that operated on an interdisciplinary basis, which to serve public health were tasked with specifically researching drug consumption, and developing suggestions for solutions. One of the main contributors was the Trimbo Institute, established in 1996, named after its founder, the psychiatrist Kees Trimbo (1920–1988). Quotation: “the dimensions and the type of this mental ill health is one of the greatest challenges of our society in evolution.” Kees Trimbo, inaugural speech 1969. In: *Sociale Evolutie en Psychiatrie*, online // [www.trimbo.nl/over-trimbo/organisatie](http://www.trimbo.nl/over-trimbo/organisatie)

111 Foucault says that “disciplined normalisation” is the designing of an optimal model, and the operation of discipline consists in adjusting the people to this model. See R. Anhorn, F. Bettinger, and J. Stehr (eds.), *Foucaults Machtanalytik und Soziale Arbeit*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2008.

112 “Inrichting voor Stelselmatige Daders” (ISD) is directed at offenders who are repeatedly found guilty of small offences, such as shoplifting goods worth just a few Euros.

113 See Peter Sloterdijk [1999], *Rules for the Human Zoo: A Response to the Letter on Humanism*, *Environment and Planning D* (2009), vol. 27, 12–28, trans. Mary Varney Rorty; P. Sloterdijk [2005], *In the World Interior of Capital: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization*, trans. Wieland Hoban, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013.

## POSTSCRIPT TO THE DROP OFF

A day after the Drop Off, unexpectedly for me, a photograph appears on various Amsterdam digital news platforms in which a participant can be seen with a Baby Doll in a taxi. The photograph was posted anonymously and without comment. It is marked as “viewed” hundreds of times.

In the picture, a young woman is visible, who shortly before the Drop Off was introduced to me by her companion as Ronnie Honcoop. Ronnie had been released from prison on that day, and really wanted to take part in the intervention. She and her attendant joined the next Drop Off team. Ronnie Honcoop is one of the relatively large group of Dutch-Surinamese junkies, who have been sentenced to time in jail—but I had not encountered any of them at ARTA, or in the Jellinek Kliniek, or at other aid organisations. Until now, she is the only woman “of colour”, who, thanks to her attendant, has taken part in TBDWBAJ.

A day after the Drop Off, the MDHG receives an angry mail from someone responsible for a children's playground. Near this playground, in the underpass at Waterloo plein, a Doll had been found. She thinks that the innocent children who play there should not be exposed to this “disgusting thing”. What if one of them had found the doll? Willemijn Los has the Baby Doll picked up. The MDHG office wants to take in Baby Doll No. 6. A few days later, Willemijn reports that one of their clients has brought another Baby Doll to their office. The confused woman had stolen the Baby Doll from the W139 exhibition (Baby Doll No. 4), and taken it home. She had dressed her carefully and had actually wanted to bury her in the woods, though she changed her mind when she got there and instead handed her over to the MDHG.

3 NOVEMBER 2007

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Am stressed out at the moment. On 13.11.07 I will know when Marvin will finally come to me to stay. Apart from that, three therapies at once.

Stress with the authorities

Money difficulties

Missing Marvin

He sleeps at my place for 3 days every 14 days

Just wanted to say hello. Till soon, I hope.

9 NOVEMBER 2007

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika wants to come to visit us with Marvin on November 17 and 18.

14 NOVEMBER 2007

## WERONIKA MAZUR

There's a guy at the school, who would be willing to drive Marvin and me.  
 He's only a good friend  
 Not an Asshole  
 No false ambitions  
 I will have to interrupt my A levels for three months until 20.2.08, so that Marvin can come and live with me as fast as possible.  
 Of course, we will do the matrix etc.  
 I'm delighted!

OSNABRÜCK, WINTER 2007

## REBECCA MERTENS

I receive a text message from Rebecca with the information that she is in the AMEOS<sup>114</sup> clinic in Osnabrück:

You know, that's the former LKH, on the Gertrudenberg.  
 In spring 2008, her son Ben will be born.

On the phone she says she had always assumed that she would never be able to have any kids. Anyway, that's what the doctors had told her, who had saved her life in her early twenties with an emergency stomach operation. That's why it took her until she was five months gone before she got the idea she might be pregnant.

She was immediately transferred as an in-patient to the addiction department of the psychiatric unit to put her on methadone. Her pregnancy is being supervised in the Osnabrück clinic in a special department for addicts. There she will also give birth, and the child will be detoxed because it will be born addicted; that is, born with withdrawal symptoms. The detoxing will take a few weeks, and she will be included in the treatment.

She tells me who the father is, who is also happy to recognise the child. First, however, the question of how she can provide for Ben has to be resolved, and until then she does not want to get involved with anybody.

114 <http://www.ameos.eu/standorte/ameos-west/osnabrueck/ameos-klinikum-osnabrueck/leistungen/suchtmmedizin/>

OSNABRÜCK, SPRING 2008

## REBECCA MERTENS

I visit Rebecca and Ben. Since her release from the maternity ward, Rebecca has been commuting between AMEOS and the clinic to feed Ben and look after him.

He is doing well considering the circumstances  
 Rebecca says.

Look, you can recognise the withdrawal by the sneezing  
 she explains. Ben looks like Rebecca; he is a delicate, very pale, beautiful baby with red hair. When we arrive, Rebecca is being informed about the medication, blood test results, and everything that has to be considered. The caregivers attend affectionately to Ben and Rebecca, her attendants give both of them time and space so they can be together. They are supportive and not patronising or condescending.

When he gets restless, she gives him to me and we walk up and down the corridor of the maternity ward. How should I know what I have to do with a baby, she asks, and how should she or could she know? She seems to enjoy very much seeing her child in the arms of someone else, to study the phenomenon of a "child".

Only after she has completed therapy will it be realistic for her to provide for Ben, Rebecca thinks. In her current state, she cannot, and she does not wish to embark on an experiment at the expense of the baby.

I have to be farther on; I need at least six months to work intensively on a stable basis. The child welfare service is of the same opinion. They support me; we had already talked about that during the pregnancy. We will look for an acceptable interim solution together. The main thing is that I get taken in somewhere soon, and that I don't have to serve my full sentence.

22 MARCH 2008

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika sends Easter greetings via a large mailing list. The recipients are private people and aid institutions, including Sweetheadgies  
<http://afrikanische-weissbauchigel.com>:

Hello,  
 I wish you a happy and nice Easter

27 MARCH 2008

## WERONIKA MAZUR

I'm doing well, only I have very little free time at the moment.  
I'm working at a therapy institute in Dinklar until midday, and then school, A levels,  
that is.  
3 therapies  
Marvin was baptised  
Thousands of doctor's appointments etc ...  
When I find a little time, I will write more to you.

2 APRIL 2008

## WERONIKA MAZUR

My life only consists of Marvin, African pygmy hedgehog, work and school.  
I don't even have time to eat; you are probably quite accustomed to this, but I'm not  
really used to it, and I often feel it's all a bit too much.

She works in a therapy institute in Dinklar, evaluates the data of the therapists,  
and creates graphics.

Interesting job, it demands a lot of concentration – I mean it would be daft, if a  
patient with depression got pills against aggression, or something like that ... very  
droll. The babysitter has just arrived; I've got appointments and have to go to school  
... always on the run ...

15 APRIL 2008

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika sends pictures and talks about her spoiled hedgehog.  
He occasionally eats a prawn but he likes a few worms best. He also is a little  
cheeky, though very tame. He needs to run around for 1 ½ hours and of course he has  
to have warming lamps.

22 JUNE 2008

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika wants to take the driving test this year, and then finally come by with  
Marvin. However, she is working a lot at the moment.  
On July 5, I will be at the airport in Amsterdam for an hour, just passing through.  
Whether I've got time to have a coffee together ...?

VECHTA, 4 JUNE 2008

## REBECCA MERTENS

It's time again, you're getting a letter from Vechta, yahoo! Have you actually ever  
gotten a letter from me that wasn't from here?

Because of the "jail hooch" found in her cell, Rebecca is locked up for one  
week, prohibited from working for a week, and has 25% shopping ban.

The new head of department is a real honey, fresh from school! You don't know her,  
but you haven't missed anything. By the way, on 12.7.08 I have done 2 / 3!  
I hope soooo much, that I will be released then. I'm ready to go into the methadone  
programme for it, and I am also pushing for assisted living in Hagen aTW. At the  
moment, I am quite cheery, I'm actually doing well! Ben is in a foster family, as you  
have probably already guessed... He is going to come and visit me next week. Well,  
he is not actually going to come running just yet... I'm OK with the decision that Ben  
is in foster care, I can cope quite well. It's just the best thing for him. I mean, who  
can judge my situation better than me!? It will only get difficult, if I don't get my 2 / 3,  
because then I will probably not be seeing him for quite a while longer. I miss the  
little guy! That the whole thing isn't totally getting to me is probably because all my  
life I've been a professional at suppression. Whadya think?

In any event though, he is being taken great care of, and he's doing really well.  
Whether I will ever manage to handle my life properly – no idea. There were such  
good attempts, which are now like completely blown away again!

To my question, whether I can do anything for her, she answers in the P.S.,  
could I send her some cards?

You know, just cool, funky, funny, freaky, nice cards. My place is just bloody bare!

## TBDWBAJ AUSTRIA

Vienna Favoriten Prison, a special institution for treating offenders

## WELCOME TO FAVORITEN

My usual work to persuade the prison authorities turns out to be quite unnecessary even at the first meeting with the prison director Wolfgang Werdenich and the head of the women's department Corinna Obrist: TBDWBAJ complies with the treatment approaches of the two psychologists. We can immediately work out how the project can be brought into line with daily life in the prison. That the future participants will be exempted from regular work for the entire day, is just as self-evident, as that they will continue to be paid. Within the context of prison leisure activities, I, too, will receive modest compensation. For my associate Nina Glockner and me, the so-called singles apartment<sup>115</sup> of the prison will be reserved.

In 1914 the then new Favoriten county court with an attached prisoners' facility for 200 inmates was opened, and in the course of a major reform of the penal system was repurposed in 1975 when it became a specialised facility with around 100 therapy places for alcoholics and drug addicts in custody. According to Austrian law § 22 StGB,<sup>116</sup> there the inmates undergo therapeutic treatment as ordered by a court. During their time in prison, addicted prisoners can also be offered therapy even if this has not been ordered by a court. The therapy concepts applied are proven methods used outside the prison, and are internationally recognised as state of the art.<sup>117</sup>





Doorbell Hardtmuthgasse 40–42, Favoriten prison, Vienna.  
Inner yard of the Favoriten prison, Vienna. Photographs: Nina Glockner

- 115 In this well-equipped three-room apartment colleagues from outside Vienna can stay for short periods.
- 116 22 § StGB Austrian law for placement in an institution for drug-addicted offenders; see [https://www.jusline.at/22\\_Unterbringung\\_in\\_einer\\_Anstalt\\_f%C3%BCr\\_entw%C3%B6hnungsbed%C3%BCrftige\\_Rechtsbrecher\\_StGB.html](https://www.jusline.at/22_Unterbringung_in_einer_Anstalt_f%C3%BCr_entw%C3%B6hnungsbed%C3%BCrftige_Rechtsbrecher_StGB.html)
- 117 [https://www.justiz.gv.at/web2013/ja\\_wien-favoriten/justizanstalt\\_wien-favoriten/de.html](https://www.justiz.gv.at/web2013/ja_wien-favoriten/justizanstalt_wien-favoriten/de.html)

VIENNA, OCTOBER 2007

## CENTRAL DETENTION CENTRE FOR DRUG WITHDRAWAL IN AUSTRIA

The procedure whereby a visitor is admitted to the Viennese institution is no different to those found in German or Swiss prisons. The path leads us through a sally port and several locked gates and, as a clear indication that we are in a men's prison with only a small section for women, opposite reception is

Alma Kahn [1983]

I am the daughter of a violent drinker and an anxious mother

At age three I receive medical attention for the first time after my father's violence, without my mother protecting me

At age six I am raped by my father and placed in a children's home for a year

At age nine I am raped by my sixteen-year-old cousin and my mother brands me a liar and the traitor of the family

At age eleven I learn to smoke hash and feel good in the company of outsiders

At age eleven I am sent by my parents to a closed psychiatric unit, fight desperately against it and am given tranquilisers to keep me quiet

At age thirteen I survive my first suicide attempt, am disowned by my father and flee from the city together with a friend

At age thirteen the friend gives me my first shot of heroin and takes me with her to walk the streets

At age thirteen I am a drug addict, move in with my pimp and live in shame

At age fifteen I hope that my divorced mother will take me in and am rejected

At age sixteen I marry my pimp

At age seventeen I fall in love with a male drug addict, am happy, clean, and become a mother

At age nineteen I go back to heroin and prostitution

At age twenty-one I provide for my lover, who is in jail, and my son, by dealing

At age twenty-one I break off contact with my father

At age twenty-two I am diagnosed as having cirrhosis of the liver and I break off my first course of treatment

At age twenty-three my boyfriend is released and we escape to Germany because of my court case

At age twenty-three I am arrested, convicted, and given a long prison sentence

At age twenty-three my boyfriend leaves me

At age twenty-four I understand and forgive my mother's betrayal

At age twenty-four I am depressed, deliberately harm myself, and seek help

I am the grand-daughter of an alcoholic woman

At age six my mother and her boyfriend take me to Austria, to escape from the poverty in Poland

At age twelve my schoolteacher informs the Child Protection Service that my stepfather is abusing me

At age twelve I enjoy the kindness and attention of the counsellors at the crisis centre

At age thirteen I run away from home and seek the protection of a children's home

At age fourteen my mother is not willing to leave my brother's father for me

At age fourteen my mother regularly comes to visit me in the home and brings me sweets

At age fifteen I am an aggressive child, fight with my carers and refuse to adjust

At age fifteen I smoke marijuana and drink alcohol, together with other children in the home

At age sixteen I take XTC and speed, am transferred to a boarding school and adapt to the drug-use of the other girls who live there

At age sixteen I steal a dealer's hash, copy his behaviour, feel proud of my power as a drug dealer and can afford to take unlimited quantities of heroin

At age seventeen I am given a prison sentence and my lover insists that I change my life

At age eighteen I wander the streets, seek out the company of other foreign addicts and use more and more drugs

At age eighteen I go to my mother for help, have myself admitted to a closed psychiatric clinic and am treated and put on inhibitors

At age eighteen I drop out of treatment and turn my aggression on my mother

At age eighteen I leave the commune (?) and rent my own place

At age nineteen I am sent to prison and my girl-friend ends our relationship

At age nineteen I am afraid of being alone, get hold of a gun and throw my weight around in the drugs scene

At age nineteen I am sent to prison and accept treatment for the first time

At age twenty I am clean and get over being hurt about having been used as a scapegoat and being an outsider

At age twenty I pray to god for a life free from poison

the weapons cabinet with 80 glass-fronted lockers, in which pistols, batons, and handcuffs of the guards are stored outside of working hours. Sitting in the guardroom are several officers in uniform, who address each other with military titles. Usually, security measures of this kind don't exist in women's prisons. The guards don't wear uniforms and are not armed.

At the time approximately 90 men and 14 women are incarcerated here. Around a dozen semi-open places for men exist in the prison's branch in Münchendorf.<sup>118</sup>

The women's department is located in the top floor of the building. The access points to the living groups and workplaces are laid out so that encounters between men and women are ruled out. Yard times are either for women or for men; screens on the windows to the yard prevent any eye contact or talking between men and women. That the drug addicts could enter into "toxic relationships" with each other is seen as a danger. Although they never see or speak with each other, the attraction is so great that both men and women take advantage of even the smallest opportunity to contact one another, for example, by throwing screwed-up letters through the transom windows onto the yard.

Access to the wood workshop is from the inner yard. Here, women are trained and work; the men mainly work in the laundry. All inmates are accommodated in living groups each with a communal kitchen. Because inmates are supposed to learn to provide for themselves, they set up duty rotas in which all of them take turns in being responsible for cooking, cleaning, or doing the washing. They make a list of the food they want, and after it has been approved by the administration, it is delivered.

118 The Münchendorf branch is a semi-open prison that offers therapy and special programmes to selected inmates of Vienna Favoriten prison; [https://www.justiz.gv.at/web2013/ja\\_wien-favoriten/justizanstalt\\_wien-favoriten/de.html](https://www.justiz.gv.at/web2013/ja_wien-favoriten/justizanstalt_wien-favoriten/de.html)

VIENNA, OCTOBER 2007

## PROJECT EXECUTION

DAGMAR LEICHTHART

IVANA LANDMANN

KARA LINASIELKA

ALMA KAHN

INGEBORG KLEINBERG

We hold our introduction describing the project in the group therapy room to the entire women's section; Corinna Obrist, head of the department, and the psychology trainee Monika Domjan, are also present. Later on, Monika Domjan will assist us in the project's execution.

Everyone is already familiar with how a biography is developed, and conversations about biographies take place both in individual and group therapy; thus the women are curious to see what added value the matrix method will have. They view their internal and external living circumstances critically, they try to create and recognise connections to their addictive disorder that characterise their behaviour. What strikes me is the openness—not only at the introduction but throughout our entire work together and even beyond—with which they speak in the presence of the psychologist, who is at the same time head of the department and therapist.

Four young women wish to participate because they consider the publishing of their vitae, especially in their current active phase of reflection and in the context of the European comparison, to be important and appropriate.

Dagmar, at the time the oldest inmate in the section, would like to learn something about porcelain production, but she has nothing to do with the subject of drug addiction. Corinna Obrist does not contradict her; she strongly encourages her to take part.

In the end, Dagmar decides to participate after all, although she creates her matrix in a kind of rejection mode. She does not see her drug or medication addiction, or such insane acts as setting her house in Spain on fire while under the influence of drugs, nor her compulsion to undergo plastic surgery, in the context of a psychological disorder. She is the only participant, who is convinced that she has been wrongfully convicted and admitted to the special unit without any reason. However, she likes it here better than in other prisons, especially compared to those in Spain, she says.

The four very young women and Dagmar, who is in her early 50s, form a group that is just as inhomogeneous as those in previous editions of the project.

Ivana and Alma became friends during their current term of imprisonment. Despite numerous scars from earlier injuries, they are both beautiful young women, who style themselves very similarly and apparently also swap clothes with each other. Together they form a strong unit, their demeanour is like a statement.

Ingeborg seems downright defenceless. Her characteristic avoidance strategies seem to make her a predestined mobbing victim. She does her thing though, and does not let herself be hindered by the others. Yet for everything she contributes, she has to stand up for disproportionately or even defend.

Kara, the youngest participant, intentionally irritates all the others. As a foreigner and lesbian, she views herself as an outsider, and provokes and sabotages whenever she can: She takes more than her share of the chocolate that was brought in, wastes the valuable prison coffee, and so on.

We work in two rooms. The work on the porcelain takes place in a provisionally furnished tiny room; all the “clean” work is done in the training and computer room of the women’s section. Because there is no ceramic kiln in the prison, we are allowed to fire the porcelain in Eva Werdenich’s studio, the prison director’s sister, who is so kind as to offer us hers. We take the 300 unfired parts in boxes to her studio with a police van. Three of us sit next to an inmate in handcuffs on the back bench, and we do our best to hold the fragile parts as still as possible during the fast ride through Vienna. When we

get out, the man wishes us a nice day. He apologises that he couldn’t assist us to hold our cargo tight because of his handcuffs.

The presentation of the workshop takes place outside the prison in a room of a charitable organisation, because there is no suitable one in the prison. The five women are allowed to go there on their own; Corinna Obrist will accompany one of the inmates. Not to guard her but simply because the woman does not know her way around Vienna very well. If she makes a break for it, she is certainly not going to run after her, Corinna Obrist says.

Surprisingly, the audience turns out to be large. The majority are women from the project participants’ circle of acquaintances, who are in a therapeutic institution under compulsion or of their own free will, as well as interested prison officers. What the women have to say about the project and the exhibits on show provides material for the audience to ask detailed questions. After the official part of the opening is over, everyone stays together and discussions continue in smaller groups.

VIENNA, 19 DECEMBER 2007

## DAGMAR LEICHTHART

Dagmar hopes that she will soon be transferred to the open prison. She thanks us for the letters, photographs, and presents as well as our work together and looks forward to seeing us again.

VIENNA, CHRISTMAS 2007

## IVANA LANDMANN AND ALMA KAHN

Ivana and Alma send us Christmas greetings and good wishes for the New Year, especially for the continuation of the work

... which will hopefully also reach many people after our collaboration has ended.



I am the second child of my single, underage mother

At age six I am my stepfather's scapegoat and he starts to abuse me

At age twelve an unsuccessful attempt is made by my brother to report the fact that I am being abused to the police

At age thirteen I fall in love with my boyfriend

At age thirteen I hang out with older kids, start smoking hash and drinking alcohol

At age fourteen I use cocaine and other drugs for the first time

At age fourteen I am admitted to hospital and given treatment for months because my kidneys are not working properly and I am not put on drug substitution because I am a minor

At age fourteen my boyfriend starts using drugs

At age sixteen my mother decides that my child must be aborted

At age seventeen my boyfriend kills himself with a pump-action gun

At age seventeen I lose my mother and my faith in life

After my boyfriend's death I try to kill myself in any way I can find, and my grandmother suffers from my misery

At age seventeen I have myself put on morphine at the same as taking methadone illegally

At age eighteen I live in isolation and depression and spend the nights on my lover's grave

At age nineteen I am diagnosed as having cirrhosis of the liver and given treatment

At age twenty I am committed to a psychiatric clinic and after two months I try to escape by making fresh suicide attempts

At age twenty I am convicted of a violent offence and given a prison sentence; I refuse the treatment imposed

At age twenty-one I leave forced treatment, am clean for four months and after a relapse have myself put on methadone

At age twenty-two I no longer resist getting into a new relationship with a man

At age twenty-four I am happy with the birth of our daughter, three days later I am put in prison and given psychiatric treatment

At age twenty-four my child has disappeared and I discover that the Child Protection Service has placed her with a foster-mother

At age twenty-seven I hope to put my past and my isolation behind me

I am the religious child of my beloved parents

At age three my father forces me to watch as he rapes my mother

At age five my mother's lover starts sexually abusing me

At age eight my father abducts me and declares my mother dead

At age nine my father terrorizes me and my mother with sexual violence

At age ten my father orders me to punish him by inflicting physical harm on him and tries to kill us both

At age eleven my brother is born and my stepfather stops raping me

At age eleven I have to leave grammar school, suffer from anorexia and receive psychiatric treatment for hallucinations

At age thirteen I use speed, tranquillizers, alcohol and methadone

At age fourteen I discover my bisexuality

At age fourteen I lead an intense, restless life without knowing how I can prove myself

At age fifteen I run away from boarding school, communal residence projects and homes, and become a prostitute to get an endless supply of heroin

At age fifteen I look for, and find, a sense of belonging in the community of outsiders

At age fifteen my stepfather accuses me in court of seducing him and is released from jail early

At age sixteen, as a result of taking fewer drugs, I suffer from paranoia, psychosis and hallucinations

At age sixteen I am diagnosed as having cirrhosis of the liver

Since I was sixteen, my life has been saved several times by emergency admissions after polytoxicomaniac drug use

At age seventeen my father has me forcibly committed to a youth psychiatric clinic

At age seventeen I am given my first prison sentence

Since I was seventeen, I have been given prison sentences for illegal prostitution, drug dealing, robbery and theft and dealing in stolen property

At age seventeen I rent some space to live in the villa of my uncle and his whores

At age twenty-two my poison relationship with the man I love comes to an end

At age twenty-three I am clean and have no idea what to do with my boundless energy



## TBDWBAJ CROATIA

Ženska Kaznionica Požega—Požega State Prison for Women



Ženska Kaznionica Požega. Photograph: Ivana Borovnjak

Even before the Austrian edition of the project has ended, my colleague Ivana Borovnjak,<sup>119</sup> operating from Amsterdam and Zagreb, starts to prepare the ground for a further TBDWBAJ edition in Croatia. Via the telephone and in letters, she approaches the only women's prison in Požega, the Ministry of Justice, lawyers she knows, and the only women's organisation in Zagreb. After receiving a lot of vague information and references to other public authorities, she finally gets the name of a person to contact. The commissioner of the Ministry of Justice, Vesna Babić, vaguely understands our request, and invites us to Zagreb first to discuss details, and then she and Zvonimir Penić from the Department of Health will accompany us to the women's prison in Požega.

119 Ivana is a designer working in the fields of product design and visual communication; she holds a BA in Design from the Zagreb School of Design; and a MA in Conceptual Design in Context from the Design Academy Eindhoven.

## CROATIA: FIRST CONTACT

During the first meeting in Zagreb Vesna Babić emphasises Europe's common interests and sees in our request an excellent possibility for cultural exchange between the Netherlands and Croatia. The following day, a chauffeured car of the Ministry drives us 175 km to Požega and the women's prison, where director Slavko Orešković awaits us with his staff for a lavish lunch.

The journey through the countryside brings back memories of the towns and landscapes that I got to know as a teenager on a holiday trip to a still intact Yugoslavia. At the time, the dark sides of the country passed completely unnoticed in the Germany that I grew up in. Now, though, the places and landscapes that we pass I see the "contaminated landscapes" that the war has left behind that my young Serbian, Bosnian, and Croatian Rietveld Academy students speak of, and often thematise in their works.

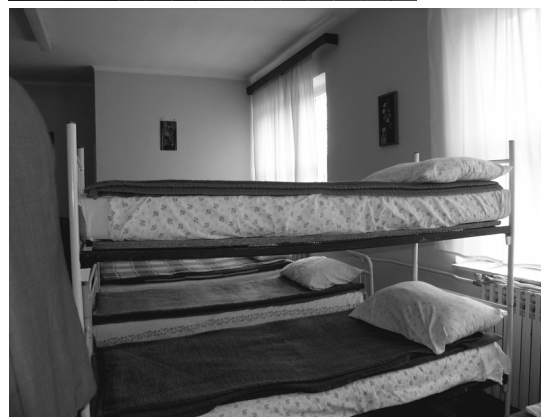
The visit to the prison is a purely visual experience for me; no one here speaks English, Dutch, or German. Without Ivana's Croatian, and her translation, the TBDWBAJ proposal would have failed. The atmosphere is splendid; Ivana translates the prison director's jokes for me, sometimes a little embarrassed, while he and Vesna Babić finalise the details of how the project will be conducted. Nothing is a problem. If I understand correctly, the project's execution on site is not discussed as a possibility, but as a fact. As important European guests they also decide to take us on a sightseeing tour of the surrounding area.

My question about how many drug-addicted women are detained cannot be answered, neither by the prison director or his staff. The psychologist Magdalena Zivkovic says that there are many drug addicts in the Ženska Kaznionica Požega, but drug addiction has no effect on custody conditions, and there are no statistics on the number of drug addicts.

Požega state prison for women, a former feudal country estate, which in the 1970s was transformed into an agricultural collective, is located next to the men's prison, which we cannot even see from where we are. The women's prison currently has 82 inmates and to it belongs a huge area with fields, plant nurseries and market gardens as well as many buildings which house the provincial court, the prison administration, several factory halls, the training centre, and the closed prison.



Workroom in the training and education building, Ženska Kaznionica Požega.  
Photograph: Nina Glockner



Ženska Kaznionica Požega, dormitory and dining hall. Photographs: Ivana Borovnjak

On our tour, we walk past the outbuildings into the closed prison, which seems to be a lot less secured than the women's prisons in Western Europe. We pass a small control post, with a security guard behind glass, who checks the identity of the inmates and visitors and collects their cell phones before admitting them. There is no sally port here, nor at the main entrance, only old walls and heavy iron gates. In one of the outbuildings are the classrooms where training usually takes place, which will be put at our disposal for the project work.

The closed prison is located in the mansion of the former country estate. The interior looks more like a youth hostel than the cell blocks of a prison. Inmates sleep in communal halls, which each have 12 to 15 iron bunk or camp beds. There are communal washrooms with large, low basins and cold water. Located on the ground floor are a communal refectory and the shop where the inmates can purchase things at certain times. Like in all prisons I have been in so far, the most coveted item seems to be hair dye.

The most important workplace is the textile factory, which is located in a massive hall outside the walled prison complex. Here, outer clothing is made, mainly men's suits and ties and women's costumes, though also lace doilies are crocheted, and other hand-made objects are produced. The majority of

the factory's output is destined for export; a small part of it can be bought by staff in the prison shop at very reasonable prices.

education building, washroom, dormitory, dining hall, prison shop, textile product. Photographs: Nina Glockner and Ivana Borovnjak

Back in Zagreb we meet up with Sanja Sarnavka, the chairperson of Croatia's oldest women's organisation, which she also co-founded. The NGO B.a.B.e.<sup>120</sup> teams up with women artists<sup>121</sup> to draw attention to social injustices in large-scale campaigns. Sanja Sarnavka offers that we cooperate with her NGO, because through this we would fulfil the formal and contextual requirements for the cultural exchange programme of the Dutch embassy MATRA,<sup>122</sup> and can apply for funding.

With curators Marta Kiš and Karla Pudar we discuss the exhibition of the project at the SC and HDLU Gallery. In the huge exhibition hall of this gallery for experimental art we can also hold the Expert Meeting.

120 Be Active Be Emancipated. Headed by Sanja Sarnavka, Koraljka Dilić, Mirjana Hrga, and Zdravka Sadžakov.

121 For example, with Sanja Iveković and Barbara Blasin.

122 MATRA: Dutch support for Croatia's accession to the EU: From 1996 the Netherlands actively supported Croatia's efforts to build civil and government institutions through the MATRA social transformation programme, the Matra-Kap, and the G2G programme. This was done to help Croatia meet the EU's entry standards. Dutch support specifically targeted, amongst other things, modernisation of the social security administration, establishment of a new real property registration and cadastre joint information system, and stronger border veterinary inspections in Croatia. (Source: <http://croatia.nlembassy.org/you-and-netherlands/matra-dutch-support-to-croatia-s-accession-to-the-eu.html>—the website no longer exists)

## LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

For the first edition of the TBDWBAJ project in a foreign language we assemble a team of six.

Ivana Borovnjak takes care of the supervision, organisation, and communication with the prison administration, the ministry, B.a.B.e., and the planning of the exhibition. As in Vienna, Nina Glockner supervises and documents the entire execution of the project.

Mirela, the Serbian Rietveld student, will join us for one week as a trainee in the project. The bilingual art historian Iva Prosoli from Zagreb will support us in the second week to help formulate the biographies in Croatian and German.

To be able to read the Croatian word collages, we write the German translation in smaller letters next to each of the terms. The interviews will be conducted by Ivana and me in Croatian and English.

Every day the prison psychologist Magdalena Zivkovic will give us access to all the workrooms, and she will be available on call as contact person.

Accommodation for the team is provided in the state villa, a half-hour drive away from Požega, where we can even order food and drink to be delivered.

## VOCABULARY AND UNDERSTANDING

When we introduce the project to an audience of 36 inmates in the training room, it immediately becomes clear how important it is to have an accurate translation of the TBDWBAJ word catalogue used for compiling the matrix and, ultimately, the biography of a participant. Ivana has repeatedly to correct Mirela, our trainee. Into the explanations of the enthusiastic newcomer to the topic of "project and prison", well-meaning downplaying of the contents sneaks in.

For inmates to participate, a deal has to be struck: all the people participating are obliged to get involved with each other—something that also entails confrontation and interference. Because only if we view each other as equal partners—despite being in different positions in this mutual undertaking—can exchange of experiences and ideas develop that excludes condemnation and victimisation.

POŽEGA, OCTOBER – NOVEMBER 2008

## PROJECT EXECUTION

JOSIPA BOŽIĆ

JUSTINA KRALJ

PIA HERC

VANA KNEZ

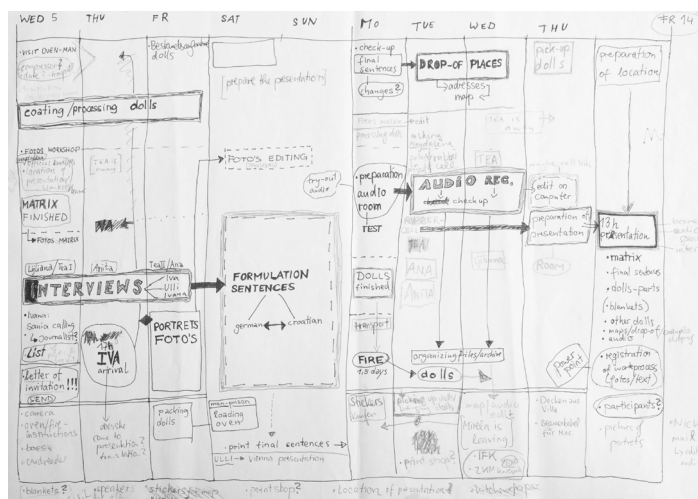
32 women apply to participate. For the first time, we are obliged to select participants. We decide on the youngest mother (four children) from Zagreb; the oldest woman without children from the southern group of islands of Croatia; the young dealer with one child; and a foreign language correspondent, who grew up in Germany and Croatia and speaks German, Croatian, and English fluently.



We are the only people in the education and training building; the eight of us meet up every morning in our workroom. The four participants change in the next-door room; they have to take off their prison wear, and put on work clothes.

We spend the breaks in a balcony cage, but for lunch we split up. We are expected to eat with the administration, and the participants go to the inmates' canteen. We only attempt to circumvent this order once and sign up at the prison canteen, but neither the staff nor the inmates welcome this.

During working the indirect conversations may be a little inconvenient because they have to be translated, but in no way does this hinder communication and understanding. Justina becomes the third translator yet without changing her position as a participant. She is a professional, translates objectively and precisely, without adding anything to questions and answers.



Visualisation of the project planning: Nina Glockner

The problems that the women have to deal with here are not very different to those of our biographers of past projects in the neighbouring countries. The bonds with their families seem to remain intact longer and are more intense in the lives of the Croatian drug addicts, exclusion or a final break with the family occurs less frequently or later in their lives than their counterparts in western European countries. Parents often send their daughters to relatives so that they can exert an influence on the situation, or relatives take in their grandchildren or nieces to get them out of deadlocked situations. Sexual violence, or rather all forms of violence and drug prostitution are hardly thematised at all and hover around the grey area of what remains unspoken. It is unclear whether sexual abuse and prostitution take place or not, whether these are taken for granted or not talked about because the victims are ashamed. In our conversations and interviews we stick to what is in the word catalogue for the matrix.

The drug problematic is not a priority for the prison administration or the officers. They do not view it as a major problem in the still relatively young Croatian state, to them it is more or less a bad side effect after the federated states of former Yugoslavia became autonomous and opened up to Western influence. In the opinion of the participants this explanation is just one of the

many examples of typical attempts by those in power to suppress engaging with the country's recent history.

As in all previous editions of the project, the production of the Baby Dolls is the calm anchor. The large amount of time, which we need for the work on the biographies, the team compensates by an outstandingly high production of porcelain parts.

Beforehand, Vesna Babić had arranged that the requisite implements and the ceramic kiln in the neighbouring men's jail are reserved for us for the various work processes. When we inspect the ceramic workshop, we hear that the men have not been allowed to use the large kiln since the project started, because it should be available to us at all times, although this has halted commercial production for one week now. We arrange a test firing and the firing of all porcelain parts in one go.

## MATRIX AND INTERVIEWS

We demand precise accuracy in the translations of the interviews, and discuss in detail possible interpretations and even misinterpretations of the statements. In the evenings we continue to discuss the terms in the daily agenda, weigh different translations against each other, and compare the Croatian junkie jargon with that of the drug addict scenes familiar to us from Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Austria. When in doubt, we always ask the advice of experts. Certain terms, for example, "toxic relationship", seem to exist only in the German-speaking countries in the lingo of therapists.

Three Croatian women—Pia, Vana, and Justina—absolutely want to use "toxic relationship", because they say the term describes certain aspects of drug-specific relationships. This sometimes leads to a new Croatian word and sometimes something has to be described using other words.

We check the biographical sentences in all the languages available to us and translate back and forth for a long time. We do this until we are certain that the statements are absolutely authentic; we do not let unclear lines stand, but even reduce the language to a skeleton, and allow breaks and their ugliness to remain. Similarly, in this context we override the rules of punctuation. The irritations during reading and reading aloud bring forth further fields of meaning.

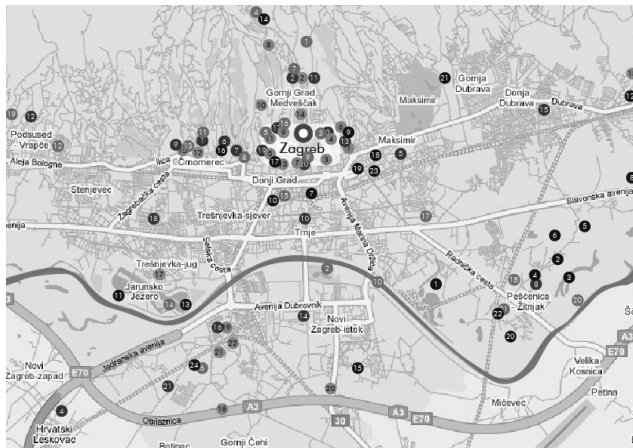


# PADDED CELL SOUND STUDIO

For the audio recordings we are allowed to use the padded cell in the main building. The equipment barely fits into the 100 by 200 cm, small, narrow, and dark room. Ivana crouches on the floor to operate the machines, while the biographer stands in a corner and speaks her sentences into the microphone.

## DROP ZONES

We determine the Drop Zones in the inner city of Zagreb. Some of them are authentic, and some represent places that are further away which we cannot reach.



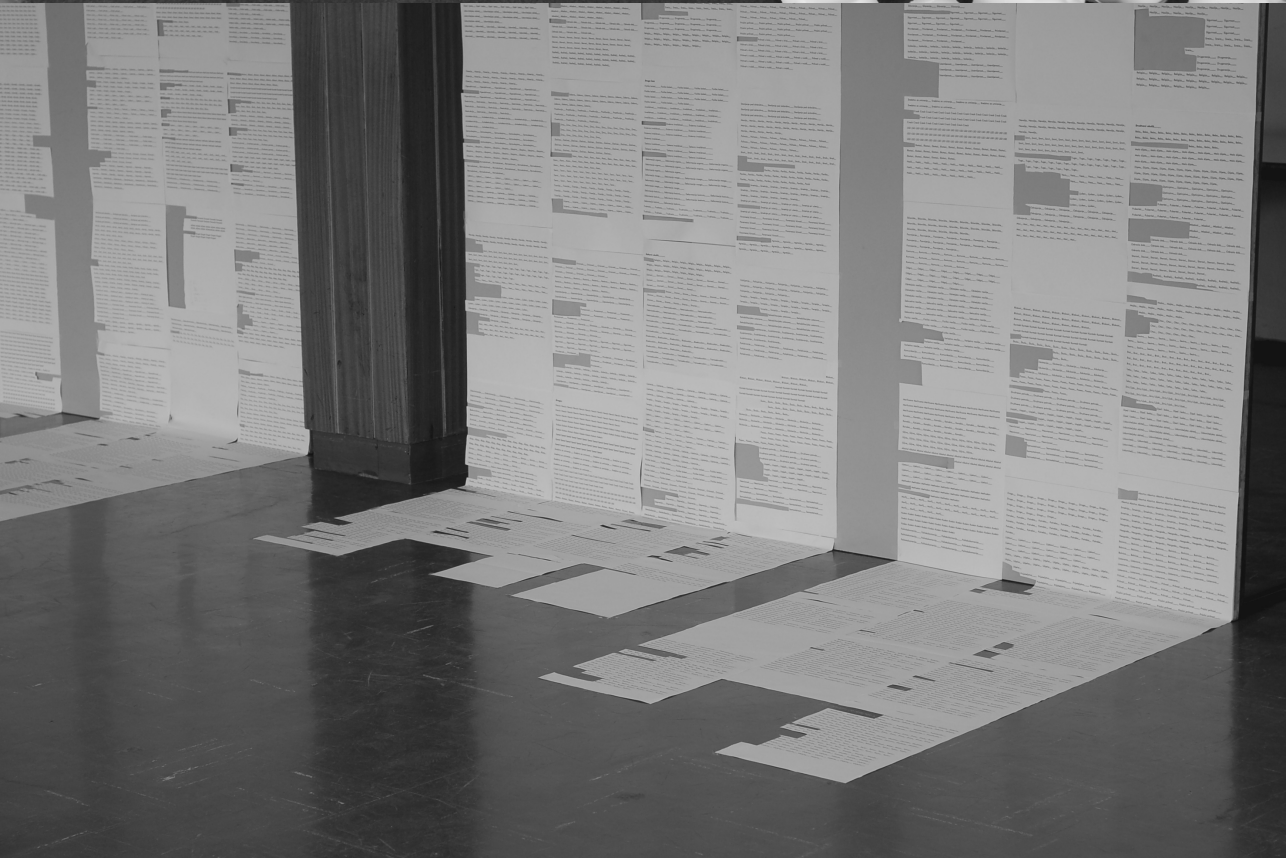
POŽEGA, 14 NOVEMBER 2008

## PRESENTATION IN THE PRISON

An exception is made and the presentation of the workshop is permitted to take place outside the closed prison in the central hall of the assembly building. During the setting up of the exhibition and the presentation prison guards stand in front of the closed hall. The four women practice their lecture that







will be accompanied by images and sound. Each one of them will speak about certain partial aspects of the project.

Although the invited civil servants from the ministry and the Dutch embassy, as well as the representatives of B.a.B.e. and the curators, send their excuses because of the long journey to the prison, interested members of the staff and inmates turn up in large numbers. The lecture by the four women sounds impressive, serious, and confident in the great hall, and carries over entirely naturally into inspired conversations between guests and the biographers.

VECHTA, 24 NOVEMBER 2008

## REBECCA MERTENS

I am a lazy cow when it comes to writing. But it's really difficult for me to write a proper letter! I stare at the piece of paper – like I'm doing now – and frantically think about what I should write. My thoughts then wander off from here to there, and so I think of a thousand things but have still written nothing!

It's now Saturday evening. At the WE, you know, lockup is already at 5.45 p.m., so there's a lot of time for doing absolutely nothing! I'm lying on the bed, listening to Pink Floyd, drinking my millionth coffee, and forcing myself finally to finish this letter. I have no idea why writing is so strenuous for me. Probably because it has to do with thinking. Suppressing things is more what I'm into at the moment! I shall just stop right now at this point, otherwise this letter will join the other 1000 started letters as well.

Everything is just like massive chaos. What other great things do I have to tell you? My job makes me sick, and the totties here are shit. The new prison director has no interest in getting anyone to understand anything. Did I ever talk bad about the former director? Impossible, the man was a saint!

If I didn't have Ela here, I think I would totally break down. God I love that woman! She's really unbelievably cool!!! I don't know the last time I laughed as much as with her. What's more important though, I can trust her!

It's around half past three at night, sleeping is somehow impossible. It was really nice talking to you again, I would love to call more often, but that shit is really expensive.

Do you actually still want to come to visit? You have to give me exact dates so I can apply for the visit: Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, or Sundays. I would need to know around 3-4 weeks beforehand, so that there is actually an appointment free.

# WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika gives everyone her new email address via a large mailing list that includes administrative bodies, doctors, aid organisations, training and therapy institutions, sport and animal protection organisations.

In December she answers my enquiry about her biography. She has already written some more passages!

On December 12, she will undergo a further breast operation (I had not heard about that from her before), and hopes we will meet again soon.

She is doing well, except that she is drowning in work.

I tell her about the project in Croatia, and suggest an appointment in January for a visit.

ZAGREB AND VIENNA, 2008–2009

## INTERVENTIONS

18 biographers from five different countries provide information about their lives and what the revolving doors are all about through which they go from private areas of violence into public and institutional ones.

We wish to continue the discourse, which had begun in the isolated space of the prisons with word collages, on a European level, record the research as a stock of information, archive it, and evaluate it within a larger context: Where do we find consensus, where do the differences lie, and who or what decides over the status of incasts and outcasts?

I seek contact with institutions and platforms<sup>123</sup> that work on the thematic directly or in a broader sense, as well as with people<sup>124</sup> who wish to contribute their expertise to the discussion.

123 I had already approached Helmut Lethen of the International Research Centre for Cultural Studies of the University of Art and Design Linz in Vienna (IFK) in 2007 to talk with him and suggest TBDWBAJ as a research project. "The International Research Centre for Cultural Studies of the University of Art and Design Linz (IFK) in Vienna was until 2011 a non-university and independent institute for advanced study with the goal of developing and supporting interdisciplinary forms of cultural analysis and cultural studies." Source: <http://www.ifk.ac.at/>.

124 Since the beginning of 2008, I regularly meet with artist and curator Peter Weibel who is also the CEO of the Center for Art and Media (ZKM) in Karlsruhe. We discuss the interactions between art and politics and the necessity for intervention, activism, and taking action.

Pia Herc [1976]

I am born because my mother is against abortion as a deadly sin

From the age of four my mother hits me violently whenever I ask about my father, who I know nothing about

From the age of nine I play basketball and my mother rewards me

At the age of eleven I defend myself from my mother's sadistic abuse and humiliation of me

At the age of fourteen I lose any prospect of a career in sport

At the age of fourteen I leave school and am beaten by my sisters and my mother

At the age of fourteen I try to kill myself so that my mother will be rid of me

At the age of sixteen I drop out of my course and help Bosnian refugees in a UN refugee camp

At the age of sixteen I learn from UN peacekeepers to smoke dope and to use XTC and LSD

When I am sixteen my mother forbids me to marry a Muslim Arab

At the age of seventeen I have a job and I can afford to take speed, LSD, XTC, hash, marijuana and magic mushrooms at techno parties

At the age of nineteen I fall in love with the party dealer and we get into a symbiotic relationship

At the age of nineteen I am adopted by my mother-in-law as a much-loved daughter

At the age of nineteen I use heroin as a downer after consuming extreme quantities of cocaine, XTC and speed

At the age of twenty-two I am happy within our junkie relationship

At the age of twenty-two I am clean and happy with the birth of the first of our four children

From the age of twenty-three my husband takes care of the drugs and money and I make sure we have a nice home.

When I am twenty-three my mother reports me to the police to get my children taken away from me

When I am twenty-three the police threatens to take my children away if I don't confess to an offence

At the age of twenty-six I am relieved after my mother's death and miss the continuation of our conflict

At the age of twenty-nine I am put in a coma while on remand so that I will survive withdrawal

At the age of thirty I take methadone while my husband is in detention and suffer from the unbearable separation of living apart from him

At the age of thirty-two I am sentenced to time in prison, I am clean, and I despair at being separated from my husband and my children

At the age of thirty-two I feel guilty about what my children are suffering



# ART SPACES AND THE PUBLIC

Thomas Mießgang, the chief curator of the Kunsthalle Wien (exhibition hall for contemporary art Vienna), sets up contact with KÖR (Public Art Vienna)<sup>125</sup>. The art projects, which the institution co-hosts and supports in public spaces, have to be organised by the artists on their own initiative.

We discuss with KÖR's project coordinators which art space would be suitable for our Expert Meeting and as a point to start the Drop Off. The Passage Gallery is located in Karlsplatz underground station, which was acquired by the Künstlerhaus Vienna<sup>126</sup> and can be rented for projects. The gallery is interesting because of its basement location: through the narrow skylights one can see the pavement of Karlsplatz and the constantly moving feet of passers-by. Directly in front of the exit taxis can stop. A drawback is the current situation in Karlsplatz, I am told by various people. The square and the central underground station are being renovated, and the drug scene is supposed to be pushed out, which is generating significant unrest.

125 "KÖR (Public Art Vienna) is committed to breathing new life into the city of Vienna's public space with permanent or temporary art projects. Its endeavors are aimed at strengthening the identity of the city and of individual neighborhoods in terms of contemporaneity and at reviving public space as an *agora*—a place of sociopolitical and cultural discussion." <http://www.koer.or.at>

126 "The Vienna Künstlerhaus—by and for artists. The Künstlerhaus is an autonomous, interdisciplinary, and internationally oriented union of artists. It supports the production as well as the exchange and communication of contemporary art, and with its communities works out topical programmes that reflect on and advance artistic and social developments." <http://www.k-haus.at>

## KARLSPLATZ VIENNA

Ever since the 1990s, Karlsplatz is one of the main scenes of drug problems in Austria. According to the police and the Addiction and Drug Coordination Vienna (SDW),<sup>127</sup> Karlsplatz cannot be compared to drug spots such as the Gumpendorfer Strasse or the Schottenring. While in the 1980s on Karlsplatz it was actually all about using and dealing heroin, and every day one would encounter hundreds of addicts, towards the end of the 1990s and 2000s it was almost exclusively about medication and substitution agents, which the addicts swapped with each other. According to the SDW, Karlsplatz has a completely different structure to all other drug addresses, because there it is much less a question of classic dealing in heroin, cocaine, and marihuana. Karlsplatz is the main contact point for drug addicts and a thorn in the side of many citizens.

Vana Knez [1981]

When I am born I am happy to be alive

When I am nine months old my uncle saves my life and loses his own life

When I am two years old, my alcoholic father regularly ill-treats my mother, who is constantly accusing.

At the age of three my parents get divorced and I am tormented by my mother's lover

When I am six, my father hits my mother so hard she ends up in hospital and I am glad that my parents are back together and that we move to the family's countryside commune

When I am nine we move to the city and I hit the boys who tease me at school

At the age of ten I identify with the love-story of Christiane F

When I am eleven my drunken father says that I am to blame for my uncle's death

At the age of twelve I drink and smoke dope

When I am thirteen, the boy I look up to rapes me

At the age of fourteen I am happy and doing well at school by using heroin

At the age of fifteen I am in love with a man who is eighteen years older and we each keep our drug addiction a secret from the other

When I am sixteen my parents report me to the police and forbid me to go on with the relationship

Wt the age of seventeen I am in a depression and deal heroin to provide for my own habit

At the age of nineteen my father reports me to the police and I am sent to prison

At the age of twenty-one I am released and start dealing drugs on a large scale

At the age of twenty-one I meet my husband and introduce him to the drugs scene

At the age of twenty-three I hope that the beneficial effects of the shaman plant Ibogaine will help me to have a child while being free from drugs

When I am twenty-five my daughter is born and my husband is imprisoned

From the time that I am twenty-five, my single father supports me in my drug dealing and I provide him with money to live on

When I am twenty-six my father claims part of the responsibility for my possession of drugs, as a result of which my sentence is reduced

At the age of twenty-seven I am clean and live from one day to the next



Although the KÖR basically approves of my project idea, as an intervention they see the concept as problematic. Because the so-called addictive drug meeting points are being redeveloped, this intervention in public space could take on—as is desired—political importance, and this might work in a totally different direction than intended. It will have to be carefully checked if, and in what form the intervention is possible without counteracting the city's interests. KÖR recommends including Vienna's drug coordinator during the reworking of my concept, which I would then be welcome to submit again for the next jury meeting in the late summer.

During the meeting with the manager and coordinator of the SDW, we first assure each other of what we have in common. He praises the sensitivity of the project, and gladly accepts my invitation to the Expert Meeting in Vienna. The SDW also wants to support the project financially. However, the planned intervention in public space will have to be debated in more detail, also with his city councillor, whose attitude toward the project is also basically positive.

127 Investigation report by Andrea Jäger, Addiction and Drug Coordination Vienna (Sucht und Drogen Wien, SDW). Since 2006 the SDW is charged with implementing the strategic and operative goals of Vienna's policies on addiction and drugs and allotting the respective funds. Implementation of all measures is done in close collaboration with the decision makers and the magistrate's departments of the city of Vienna, the executive, the federal agencies, and the operatively active facilities of the addiction and drug aid network (SDHN), consisting of the SDW, its subsidiary the Drug Aid Vienna non-profit limited company, as well as its sponsors and partners from the inpatient and outpatient facilities. In this network, the SDW is tasked with coordinating the facilities and harmonising the various measures and offers. <https://sdw.wien>

ZAGREB, NOVEMBER 2008

## CROATIA: INVITATION ACCEPTANCES

Ivana Borovnjak is now receiving acceptances from the invited experts working in the fields of psychiatry, psychology, sociology, and jurisprudence, from people who work for the ministry, from aid organisations and NGO associations concerned with the interests of drug addicts, from socio-politically committed artists, art theorists, and curators. Together with all the institutions involved, we set the dates for the exhibition in the SC Gallery, the Expert Meeting, and the Drop Off for the end of April 2009.

The bilingual moderation at the events is done by the curator Alexandra Landré from Amsterdam and the journalist Nataša Škaričić from the daily newspaper Slobodna Dalmacija in Zagreb.

I research on the Internet—as well as I am able because most of the websites are written in Croatian—the people whom Ivana suggests as experts. Some of them I have already met in person, such as Vesna Babić, Sanja Sarnavka, the artist

Justina Kral [1968]

I am the little sister of my dead sister.

When I am one year old my parents leave me behind with my grandmother, furious, in the Yugoslavian countryside

When I am five years old my parents come and get me and take me to their guest worker Germany and leave me alone while I go through the lonely adjustment to the strange new place

When I am eleven my father is my confidant and our nostalgia is replaced by prosperity

At the age of fourteen I am not afraid of the use of cocaine among my circle of rich kids

At the age of sixteen I escape to follow a course in the city, far away from my parents' supervision

At the age of eighteen I marry a Yugoslavian criminal and adapt to a traditional wife's role

When I am nineteen my husband escapes from a German prison to Yugoslavia, he doesn't like it there, and I get him to come to Switzerland

At the age of twenty I am living a life of bored luxury and every day I do some money-laundering for my husband's drugs and arms trade

When I am twenty-five my husband terrorises me with violence and death threats and I start taking cocaine regularly

At the age of twenty-five I abort my unwanted child and try to kill myself

When I am twenty-six my parents come and take me home and have me locked up in a psychiatric institution and my father threatens my husband

When I am twenty-six my husband shoots his way into the institution and frees me, and I use his cocaine, alcohol, crack and heroin

When I am twenty-six I use my power as a wife to put pressure on another dealer and accept lovers with money and drugs

At the age of twenty-eight I lose my Swiss residence permit and deal Swiss drugs in Germany

At the age of twenty-nine I am sentenced to five years in prison in Germany and let myself be carted off to Croatia

While aged thirty and thirty-one I am clean, lead a normal life and am frightened

At the age of thirty-four I deal, and use endless quantities of heroin and cocaine

At the age of thirty-four, I follow my husband to our seaside house, am helpless in the fatalistic use of drugs and allow myself to be terrorised, raped and abused

At the age of thirty-seven I leave my husband and start a relationship with a young Croatian war invalid

At the age of forty I am serving my prison sentence, suffer from Hepatitis C, am clean and will sacrifice kicks for a happy family life

My father is the only person who is pleased that I am born a girl

At the age of two I am surrounded by the god-fearing aunts of my father and of my mother who sleeps around

At the age of four I want to be a priest and don't feel at home in the girls' world

At the age of six I am ashamed of my father, who drinks and swears at my mother, calling her a tart and a whore

At the age of twelve I run away and stay with my aunt and live a normal life

At the age of fourteen I have to return home and am unable to concentrate at school

When I am fourteen my father is admitted to a clinic and I tell my mother it's her fault

At the age of fifteen I hang around in the streets, pinch stuff, start drinking and take my aunts' tranquillizers

At the age of sixteen I leave school and get a job. The court threatens to have me forcibly admitted to a reform school

At the age of seventeen I feel sorry for my sick father

When I am twenty my little sister, who I have been taking care of as my own child, dies of meningitis, aged eight months

When I am twenty my mother sinks into a deep depression and we are all devastated

At the age of twenty-two I am addicted to alcohol and my mother sends me to my aunt in Germany

At the age of twenty-three I try to keep my friends on the island away from drugs

At the age of twenty-five I fall in love with a boy from the drugs scene

At the age of twenty-five I share the feelings of loneliness and isolation in an exchange of letters with my boyfriend, who is in detention

When I am twenty-seven we both deal marijuana, we are convicted, and the prison system shocks me

At the age of twenty-nine I am released from prison, I use heroin and deal

At the age of thirty my life consists of heroin, depression, blaming, endless loneliness, chaos and a sense of solidarity with my boyfriend

When I am thirty-one we are sent to a drugs rehab commune in Spain and my mother threatens to report me to the police if I break off the treatment

At the age of thirty-one my psychological dependency on cocaine is stronger than the physical dependency on heroin

At the age of thirty-six I am treated for my hepatitis C while I am in prison

At the age of thirty-six I am in detention for the fourth time, expect to be convicted again, and am full of fear of life with and without drugs, of sickness, isolation and freedom

Iva Kovač, and the curators Marta Kiš and Karla Pudar. The artist Barbara Blasin has already done sociocritical projects in Zagreb in collaboration with B.a.B.e.

I am glad that Ljubica Matijević-Vrsaljko has agreed to take part, for as a lawyer she specialises in international human rights-compliant treatment of marginal groups. Three experts for drug problems, two psychiatrists, and a psychologist represent very different views and treatment methods.

VIENNA, JANUARY–MARCH 2009

## FUNDING

At the end of January 2009, KÖR requests further documents pertaining to my re-submitted, edited application: Apart from the statement of the SDW, they also ask for letters of recommendation or support by people involved, partners, and institutions on official letterhead paper. These should also state in which form the writers participate in the project, and possibly financially contribute to it. In their letters, Wolfgang Werdenich and Corinna Obrist, Peter Weibel, and Helmut Lethen support the project and the intervention in Vienna's public space.

The WochenKlausur artist group comments on the necessity of letters of recommendation as follows: "The WochenKlausur has so far not done anything of the kind, and after extensive discussion, we agree that we will continue not to do so in the future. It is highly inappropriate that public funding bodies should demand recommendation letters from artists. In actual fact, this is even a democratic impertinence. Firstly, in this way they explore the network (who supports whom), and also this way they give more leverage to those who have the most supporters and already have a lobby, while precisely those who do not (yet) have one fail. Whoever participates in this system, supports it. WochenKlausur rejects a Big Brother system in art, in which the artists kick each other out."

At the beginning of March 2009, the coordinator of the SDW first sends me, then KÖR a little later, an explicit letter of support for the project plus his objections to the Drop Off in Vienna.

ZAGREB, 27 APRIL 2009

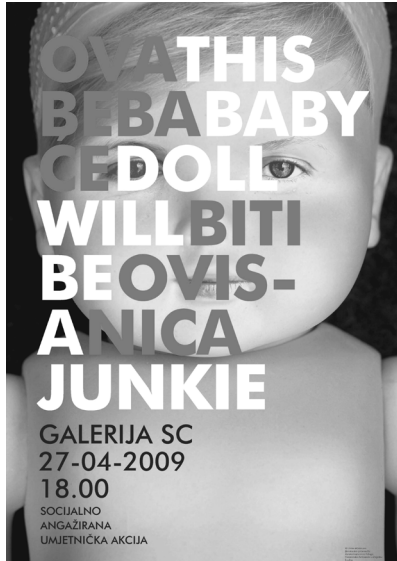
## INTERVENTION ZAGREB: DROP OFF AND EXPERT MEETING—PIA HERC SERIES

Although I am slightly cautious when it comes to depictions of matrix and Baby Doll artefacts in TBDWBAJ publications and documentations, Ivana



uses the picture of a Pia Herc Baby Doll's face and a translation of the title TBDWBAJ for the announcement of the intervention in the brochure, flyers, and on posters. It is common practice in Croatia to use illustrations to announce art projects on posters and in the Croatian language.

The taxi control centre of Zagreb sponsors the taxis for the journeys to and from the Drop Off locations. At 2.30 p.m. 24 limousines are parked in front of the gallery. Marta Kiš and Karla Pudar coordinate the distribution of the Baby Dolls to the Drop Off groups.



Billboard, Drop Off, Zagreb

## EXPERT MEETING GALERIJA SC, ZAGREB

### Moderators

Alexandra Landré and Nataša Škaričić

### Participants

Vesna Babić

Barbara Blasin

Dubravko Klarić

Iva Kovač

Kristina Leko

head of the government office  
against drug abuse

artist

consultant to the government  
office against drug abuse

artist

artist



Galerija sc, Zagreb. Photographs: Borko Vukosav, Ivana Borovnjak

Željko Mavrović	former European heavyweight boxing champion today active in aid organisations for drug addicts
Benjamin Perasić	sociologist
Slavko Sakoman	physician
Sanja Sarnavk	chairperson of the NGO B.a.B.e.
Robert Tore	psychiatrist
Ljubica Matijević Vrsaljko	lawyer and former ombudswoman for children
Maja Vučić	psychologist

#### Transcription Iva Prosoli

Alexandra Landré gives an introduction to the project and a résumé of our observations and questions from five editions of the TBDWBAJ project:

#### Observation I

What is most striking about the matrix of all participants is that they all experienced violence in early childhood, and that even years later they do not view this as deviant behaviour of people in their environment, but as “normal”. They place the blame for their situation in life—as a drug addict in prison—on themselves and the way they lead their lives.

#### Questions

Do we need to view this violence as a commonplace way of behaving in our society? To what extent can one speak of collective acceptance of violence in the private sphere or is it a general ignorance of what actually happens behind closed doors?

How applicable are the circumstances obtaining in the private closed sphere to the prevailing socio-political structures of individual countries? This is discussed based on the following key words:

Power	state authority, power	self-determination
State authority	parental authority	
Appreciation	grief	

or rather the confirmation by society that one has indeed experienced things that are unequivocally and without any doubt to be grieved over.

#### Observation II

The results and knowledge attained through the TBDWBAJ project were not achieved with the intention of triggering short-term emotional dismay or compassion that remains without consequences, for this only consolidates

existing biases in hierarchies. For this reason, TBDWBAJ refuses to present shocking or sensational images from inside the prisons, or of junkies marked by their suffering. Rather, the project is about the finding and naming of facts, so that the subject of incasts and outcasts can be viewed from various perspectives, circumscribed, and carried over into a more extensive discourse. However, the finding and naming of facts is only possible if everyone involved is prepared to be open with each other, and a relationship of mutual trust has evolved. The purpose of exchanging views is to find a way out of the private sphere of intimate relations and into the public sphere of human intervention, which requires and includes reflecting and taking a stance.

#### Questions

To what extent can carrying the discourse forward and extending the radius of action, as well as the knowledge gained from this, influence or change the treatment of a marginalised group and each of its members, and can this initiate critical reflection of accepted or established positions?

#### Observation III

Action is one of the instruments through which a democratic, pluralistic society continuously realises itself and re-forms. This process is mirrored in the public sphere, for example, in the processes whereby decisions are made about which kind of groups are welcome and accepted, and which are actively marginalised—incasts and outcasts. The exclusion of a particular group in itself puts a question mark over both pluralism and democracy. Further issues are: according to which criteria are such decisions made about which individual is assigned to which group, whether somebody is welcome or not, or is even repelled. Is it possible to intervene in this process?

#### Questions

Can one actually still speak of a democratic public sphere if marginalised groups are denied access or excluded, and who makes which decisions on this matter?

Is the de-democratisation of society the consequence of this de-democratisation of the public sphere?

#### Observation IV

TBDWBAJ operates at the interface of violence and power, action and the public sphere. To shed light on a socially isolated marginalised group and make these “invisible ones” visible via their biographies in an art project, is a sensitive matter in any society, because immediately the finger-pointing and recriminations start. A predominant majority is of the opinion that drug addiction is based—like every other instance of non-functioning—on personal incapability and the addicts themselves should shoulder exclusive responsibility for the consequences of their addiction. The use of the repertoire of art in the process of researching and the creation of objects that represent the results, passes on information to others, and brings out past events from the shadows into the light. This can initiate a more differentiated way of treating the subject.





Drop Off Baby Doll 14, Zagreb. Photograph: Bastienne Kramer



Expert Meeting, Zagreb, Galerija sc. Photograph: Bastienne Kramer



## CONVERSATION

Nataša Škaričić thanks the Dutch curator for her observations and questions. Moderation of the following discussion takes place in Croatian. The transcription, which is translated by Iva Prosoli, records the progress of the debate, in which mainly the significance of the TBDWBAJ project for the Croatian judicial system and health care is discussed: Is this kind of art practice a sort of luxury, or is it a good alternative to the current treatment of drug addiction? Can art projects which have emancipatory effects compensate for the weaknesses of institutions? What could be taken over from TBDWBAJ into treatment concepts, and do the results of the project change established views?

Slavko Sakoman is a recognised authority in the field of psychiatric treatment of drug addicts. He, too, emphasises the importance of a gender-specific approach in addiction treatment. Women are disproportionately often the victims of psychological, physical, as well as sexual abuse.

A recent study done in many European countries—including Croatia—on the victims of social intolerance confirms that at the top of the list of various social categories are the drug addicts, whereby women are far more affected than men. Especially in the case of pregnant women or mothers, rehabilitation contains far too many negative factors, which make it almost impossible.

In the view of Robert Tore, a practicing psychiatrist for drug addicts, TBDWBAJ is not art therapy, but one of the first projects in which contemporary art engages with this subject both socially and politically.

The sociologist Benjamin Perasović supports everything that contributes to the “evolution of awareness”: “TBDWBAJ makes it very clear that we live in a society in which the socialisation patterns of patriarchy and traditionalism are accepted completely blindly and without question.”

Perasović’s first experience with strategies and treatment of drug abuse were around ten years ago in California and the Netherlands with interest groups organised by women: “... and if TBDWBAJ leads some women in or out of prison to organise in a similar way, then I will support it.”

Vesna Babić, head of the government office against drug abuse, praises the fact that the inmates of Požega prison shared their life experiences so optimally: “If something can be brought into the closed prison system from the outside, then the therapeutic efficacy for the participants is really superb and thus legitimises the project.”

Chief of police Dubravko Klarić defends the existing institutional system in Croatia. The institutions are not incapable of engaging with the problem of drug abuse. In his nearly forty years with the police, he has frequently been confronted with drug addiction and drug-related crime. The government increasingly invests more funds in resocialisation, education, and aid, and since 2009 has launched a new strategy with a focus on prevention and resocialisation.

The lawyer Ljubica Matijević Vrsaljko thinks that TBDWBAJ does indeed demonstrate “the inability of the institutions”. In this context she has often

defended indicted women in both the criminal and also in the general sense. She gives keywords: rape, poverty, drugs. And it is very important to raise questions about the children of these drug-addicted women. What chance does such a child actually have at all? “When women are released from a penal institution, they are confronted with problems such as unemployment, stigmatisation, and poverty. The custody of their children has often been taken from them. What chances do they and their children actually have at all?”

She believes that this project could engender a new sensitivity in the audience: “It is extremely important that society is not indifferent to the problems of these women and their children.”

Nataša Škaričić enquires about the significance of socially committed art in Croatia and notes that here in fact two areas are addressed where Croatian society lacks awareness: art and social problems.

The artist Barbara Blasin disagrees. Socially committed works are by no means a rarity in contemporary art production in Croatia, and they play a significant role in raising public awareness, in spite of the fact that the media seldom perceives them as art projects. She thinks that situating the TBDWBAJ project in different spheres is very effective, because the personal stories of the women are brought out of the isolated environment of the prison into the public sphere in such a memorable way.

The artist Kristina Leko confirms that there is considerable interest in community art. Although her own projects are mainly done outside the country, she also creates works in Croatia together with socially precarious groups such as immigrants and workers. Here the concepts of “democratisation of art, and social participation in realising an artwork” are of great significance. In the Croatian situation this has developed well as collective art practice; collaboration with institutions, however, is non-existent. She commends the prison for making TBDWBAJ possible, and sees this as a good sign that these social institutions are actually interested in this thematic complex.

In projects staged in public spaces, the artist Iva Kovač especially looks at how a work of art articulates itself: “It is of special importance to find the right model for communicating with the public.”

That TBDWBAJ operates in several different spheres is, in her view, the appropriate method to best articulate prison work and the associated discourse. She queries, however, whether the people who find the Baby Dolls after the Drop Off are clear about what it is actually all about.

In Kristina Leko’s opinion, everybody is responsible for what happens to the Baby Dolls. She and her colleague simply could not abandon the Baby Doll and leave it on the ground: “Our Drop Off spot was in front of a police station. We agreed with the head of police that the Doll will in future be a demonstration object for police work.”

Sanja Sarnavka describes the strategy of the NGO B.a.B.e., and in this context emphasises how important it is to collaborate with institutions, because this makes projects such as TBDWBAJ possible. She also mentions successful examples of collaborations with artists like Sanja Iveković and Barbara Blasin.

After the discussion, Vesna Babić hurries off into the city. She was hoping to adopt one of the Baby Dolls. However, all of the Dolls had already vanished.

VIENNA, JUNE 2009

## FUNDING 2

In the third round of evaluations, my application to KÖR is approved, with the proviso that the originally planned Drop Zones at Karlsplatz, Stephansplatz in front of St. Stephen's Cathedral, and near other tourist attractions are relocated, places which in the future are not supposed to be associated with junkie meeting points. The changes in the Drop Off spots have to be arranged with the SDW and they request that we ensure the intervention and the Expert Meeting are taken note of and made known to the public in an appropriate way. We decide to apply for the project to participate in City Lights in Vienna.

## PUBLICISATION

The question about publicisation is repeatedly posed in connection with the entire TBDWBAJ complex as well as other contexts, and not only when the art intervention is about to take place. Already during every edition of the project in a prison or a therapy facility, each biographer decides whether to make events public that have taken place in the shadows and which she has hitherto remained silent about, and thus whether in so doing to leave her private sphere. For then there are witnesses.

The Baby Doll, the artefact, which was developed with private and secret knowledge about an individual's life, is in the literal sense "laid down in the world". However, without the voluntary or involuntary inclusion of the public that finds it, without the imaginative power and the judgement of the individual, nothing would be made public.

The making things public that is aspired to here, says Hanne Seitz in her essay titled "Unsolicited Gifts",<sup>128</sup> should be understood in the sense of the *polis*. For this she quotes Hannah Arendt: "the term 'public' signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. This world, however, is not identical with the Earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather, to the human artefact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together. To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common,

as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates men at the same time."<sup>129</sup>

Hanne Seitz continues: "As though the table has somehow been made to disappear by a conjuring trick, these days people simply face each other and are not separated by anything, but neither are they connected by anything tangible, and have therefore lost the power to assemble." It seems to her that Latour is on the right track of this (missing) in-between with his "Dingpolitik".<sup>130</sup> With reference to the exhibition of the Baby Dolls, which as a series has something of the nature of an *assemblage*, and the Expert Meeting, which is an assembly, his search for traces is definitely illuminating: the modern German word *Ding* (thing, object) derives from proto-Germanic *thing* or *ting* (Old Norse, Old Frisian, and Old English *þing* means the same) which originally stood for "an assembly, a coming together of parts"; then there was a shift in meaning to "subject, affair", and later a further shift to today's "thing, inanimate object". Thus the Baby Dolls could be viewed as a "*Ding*", around which people come together, who because of disagreements, rifts, and disputes assemble at a neutral, enclosed site, to come to some kind of improvised and provisional accord or non-accord.

128 Hanne Seitz, Unerbetene Gaben: Die Kunst des Einmischens in öffentliche Angelegenheiten. In: Ingrid Hentschel, Klaus Hoffmann, and Una H. Moehrke, eds., *Im Modus der Gabe*, Bielefeld, 2011.

129 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958, p. 52.

130 Hanne Seitz: "To see things (in the sense of Bruno Latour's non-human actors) in social interaction not only as mediators but also as directly involved, would probably have been impossible for Hannah Arendt. Although she regards public life as a thoroughly human affair, I also see connections to her *The Human Condition*; thus it is all the more surprising that Latour does not refer to it". See: Bruno Latour, From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public, in: *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel. ZKM Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe and MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2005, pp. 14–41; Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

## ORGANISATION —ART SPACES AND THE SEMI-PUBLIC SPHERE

The urban renewal organisation VIEW (Vision Entwicklung Westgürtel; a vision for redeveloping the Westgürtel Road area) works on revitalising the area along Vienna's Westgürtel road, and wants to reactivate use of the neglected Kubus EXPORT<sup>131</sup> at Lerchenfelder Gürtel, Bogen 48, as an action space for feminist art.



VIEW invites me to exhibit the Vienna edition of TBDWBAJ at the opening of the resumption of the art space's programme in the cube. This walk-in show-case is exactly the right venue to store the twenty-three Baby Dolls temporarily on their journey from isolated space into the public sphere. KÖR thinks the junkie meeting point on Währinger Gürtel road is a problematic place for the exhibition. The Expert Meeting is relocated to the centrally located project venue of the Kunsthalle Wien at Karlsplatz. Following the meeting, the Drop Off can begin; the twenty-three taxis can line up in the Treitlstrasse next to the Kunsthalle without interfering with the through traffic.

131 "This permanent glass installation by Austrian artist Valie Export is impressive. The sculpture is an art space. It also has to be viewed as an active space, as a place for events. The project was co-financed in 2001 with money from the European Fund for Regional Development (EFRE) in the context of the EU Urban Community Initiative." <https://www.wien.gv.at>

14 MARCH 2009

## WERONIKA MAZUR

I'm fine, I just finished detoxing from THC, and now live entirely drug-free. A short while ago I began working on my biography again.

As Weronika is written off sick until May, she would like to come and visit me together with Marvin for two or three days.

I have time as of April 9, we would come by train then. A lot of things have changed for me, I will move to Hanover because of a new job, etc.

She really wants to talk to me.

I am just sorting out "our life, me and Marvin". Marvin is great in school, he is developing quite well, and he's just a little cheeky, which is probably normal with boys.

As of June 1, the two are going to a health resort for mothers and children, which they are both looking forward to. I could also visit them as of September in Hanover, in their new, big apartment – in case I don't want them to come and visit me in Amsterdam.

21 MARCH 2009

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika is pleased about my answer and just wants to say that it's high time to meet again. However, she does have a lot of stress at the moment, because

she is working on several projects at the same time, and has also to complete an MPA<sup>132</sup> because of her driving licence.

Additionally, I constantly have to go to the doctor. I am doing much better now that I don't smoke pot anymore.

She is really looking forward to our reunion. For now she has to get back to her studies, English, together with a friend.

132 Medical-psychological assessment (MPA), used as a basis for the decision to revoke or reissue a driving license.

17 JULY 2009

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika writes that the judicial system has thrown a spanner in the works. The planned short trip to Amsterdam has to be postponed; because of the MPA her driving license won't be approved until three months' time.

This makes me very angry, but I can't change it. Marvin has settled down very well in Hanover, he has new friends and is in a football club. After the holidays he will start Kung fu. The new apartment is located in a nice area of Hanover.

We agree to meet up in the late summer in Hanover, as soon as I return from Zagreb.

POŽEGA, AUGUST 2009

## VANA KNEZ

Vana writes in English; she has asked someone to help her with the translation. She didn't receive her exhibition catalogue until after the art intervention in Zagreb and was disappointed that she had to find out from a newspaper what it had been like. After the two weeks of working so intensively together, she finds it incredibly difficult to go back to the everyday prison routine and to readjust. So she had done some stupid things and taken drugs, without thinking. Now she is over the worst of it and emphasises again how difficult it is to put up with life in prison; now for more than a year.

She had lost my address, but her brother finally managed to find it. She asks me to send her photographs of everything that took place in Zagreb, and also some more colour photos of the workshop and the presentation in Požega. Ivana had sent her a postcard a while ago, and she hopes so very much that all of us, including Nina, Mirela, and Iva, will at some point come back into her life.

VIENNA, SEPTEMBER 2009

## ALMA KAHN

I visit Alma in Vienna's Favoriten Prison, and am permitted to talk to her for one hour in the visitor's room. All the other TBDWBAJ participants have either been transferred to other facilities, have had a relapse, or been released. Alma is now serving the last year of her four-year prison sentence.

She says she's doing really well, and one can see it. She talks enthusiastically about her new activity: running up walls. Last year an acrobat had given a course at which she had discovered her hidden talent. After completing the course she was allowed to continue her training, and now she is able to run up the wall of the inner courtyard high enough to jump back to the ground with a double backflip. It does her good to improve steadily and confront new challenges daily. She shows me her muscles. Staying clean is not difficult for her, and the contact to her son is very good, she says. She sees him regularly, when her mother visits her. Unfortunately, she has no contact with Ivana anymore; the two had gotten into an argument. Ivana was then released, and they had gone their separate ways without resolving the conflict.



The 36 City Lights Posters and the display cases positioned very near the Drop Zones announce the exhibition, the Expert Meeting, and the Drop Off

VIENNA, 8–21 OCTOBER 2009

EXHIBITION  
IN KUBUS EXPORT

The exhibition title and text on the glass front of the cube are clearly visible from the Währinger Gürtel road. It is only this glass facade that separates the Baby Dolls from their next destination, the street.

The see-through room is not only suitable as a walk-in showcase, but also as a mega sound board. Ivana Landmann's biographical sentences resonate when the Baby Doll is picked up, while all four Austrian biographies can be heard via loudspeakers in the room—depending on the location of the viewer, separately, or in the centre of the room, as a choir, an "outcast choir".

VIENNA, 15 OCTOBER 2009

## KIDNAPPING

One day before the art intervention, the Baby Dolls are kidnapped from the cube. The kidnappers in overalls bearing the logo of the Kunsthalle pass themselves off as an in-house transport company, who have been instructed to bring the objects to the Drop Off at the Kunsthalle. The attendant in the cube does not suspect a thing, because the transportation of the Baby Dolls had been announced, although it was scheduled for the next morning. In the afternoon, the kidnappers contact me via telephone and via email, to announce they want to stop the Drop Off from taking place. In their view the problems addressed seem inappropriate for an art context. I am invited to send a written statement to the email address [thisbabydollwontbeajunkie@gmx.at](mailto:thisbabydollwontbeajunkie@gmx.at). I am assured that the objects will not be harmed.

I don't report the incident to the police until the evening, and the officers then discuss deep into the night what offence description would be correct for the act of kidnapping a work of art when the kidnappers are not demanding a ransom and probably won't demand one. Should the representative of the biography, Ivana Landmann, report this, so-to-speak because of the emotional trauma sustained? If yes, then the process by which an inmate could report this would have to be evaluated. Or could it be classed as collective damage, because it is a Europe-wide project with many authors? How might the damage be estimated and who is the damaged party? Is it today the artist, who states that she is the owner of the objects with a material value of 20,000 Euros? Or is it as of tomorrow the city of Vienna, because the objects then become public property or the property of the city? The legal situation has to be checked, they will keep me informed.



## INTERVENTION VIENNA: EXPERT MEETING AND DROP OFF— IVANA LANDMANN SERIES

### Participants

Ivana Borovnjak

Christine Hohenbüchler

Marty Huber

Alexandra Landré

(moderator)

Tina Leisch

Lucas Lenglet

Thomas Mießgang

Ulrike Möntmann

Corinna Obrist

Iva Prosoli

Eva von Rahden

Shird-Dieter Schindler

Hanne Seitz

Peter Weibel

(keynote speaker)

Wolfgang Zingg

### Transcription and Text

Nina Glockner

designer, design theorist, Zagreb

artist, Technical University, Vienna

spokesperson, dramaturge, and queer activist,

IG Kultur, Vienna

art theorist, curator, Amsterdam

director, journalist, and political activist, Vienna

artist, Amsterdam

head curator of the Kunsthalle Wien

(2000–2011), publisher, Vienna

artist, Amsterdam and Vienna

psychologist and psychotherapist, women's

section of the Favoriten prison, Vienna

art historian, Zagreb Museum, Zagreb

communication and theatre studies graduate,

Volkshilfe Wien, Sophie Education Centre for

Prostitutes, Vienna

psychiatrist, director of the Sociomedical

Centre Baumgartner Höhe, Centre on

Addiction and Substance Abuse, Vienna

professor of the theory and practice of

aesthetic education, University of Applied

Sciences Potsdam

artist, curator, art theorist, professor in the

Department of Media Theory, University of

Applied Arts, Vienna, and CEO, ZKM Center

for Art and Media, Karlsruhe

WochenKlausur artists group, spokesperson

for art and minorities, MP of the Green Party,

Vienna

In the following excerpts are presented of the lively discussion at the Expert Meeting.

At the beginning of the discussion, Hanne Seitz, who as an art historian works “with artistic processes and approaches, which make an impact”, summarises the TBDWBAJ project by describing the path of the Baby Dolls as a



TBDWBAJ in Kubus EXPORT, Vienna. Photograph: Ivana Borovnjak



movement through four distinct spaces: The first place of the art intervention is prison, which as an “isolated space” represents a microcosm of social conditions. In this space, the Baby Doll is produced in order to continue its journey as the carrier of the biographies that have been produced of the drug addicted, incarcerated participants of the project. In the “cultural space”, the Baby Dolls temporarily occupy a place as “representatives” of these women, a place that the women had so far not been accorded by society. From here, the Baby Dolls are taken and abandoned in “public spaces” as an art intervention; in places that the women had designated as fitting the events in their lives. After the Drop Off, the biographies (text, audio, places) are archived in “virtual space” on the project’s Outcast Registration website, where they are accessible to all.

The decision, which the finder of a Baby Doll makes in a public place—to adopt or to ignore—Hanne Seitz sees as a potential path to a fifth space, the “private space.”

### The Outcast and Society

To get the discussion started, Peter Weibel, who from the viewpoint of an artist and theorist sees the project as very important for understanding contemporary art practices and also contemporary society, takes a close look at the term “outcast”: “How does one become an outcast? Is it something one is doomed to be, which we also call “fate”, as the title *THIS BABYDOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE* suggests, or is “outcast” a social construction?” The related term of “outlaw”, which describes a person who stands or is forced to stand outside the law, points to the inherent connection between “outcast” and “law”, and how it leads on to violence, power, and equality: “Outcasts, in this specific case drug addicts, are in many cases removed forcefully by police from places where they are visible, and stuck into prison or psychiatric units.”



Expert Meeting, Kunsthalle Wien, Karlsplatz. Photograph: Bastienne Kramer

Referring to the work of Michel Foucault, Weibel analyses the separation into criminals and patients, which has been in operation since the nineteenth century, and which “does not in the slightest sense comply with the right to equality before the law”. Weibel continues: “Problems lie in democracy’s demand—formulated by commentators from the Frankfurt School down to

Judith Butler—that all individuals must be accepted as “equal”. Is it possible in practice to view all individuals as ‘equal’?”

Our society, Weibel continues, feeds on “an ideology of the term equality”. However, the construction of marginalised groups, that is, groups which are pushed to the very brink of invisibility at the margins, he sees as an attempt to abolish the principle of equality.

For him this raises the pressing question of how “we in this democracy, as a mission and task of democracy, can protect outcasts in general and these women in particular from violence and the authorities as subjects under law and not as psychiatric cases.”

### Art Intervention

Besides looking at the content of the project from a socio-political point of view, Weibel discusses the possibility of intervening in society using the tools of art, which is one of the goals of TBDWBAJ. He notes that interfering in a situation that is judged to be unjust is commonly frowned upon by the “art of representation”: “‘Social intervention’ as an art form is viewed as being hostile to art.”

Here, it’s not only about the resistance of institutions, but about the resistance of society in general, which one encounters “... if one attempts to transfer art from the realm of representation, the pretense of the image, into the realm of reality in which we intervene, where we, as Hanne Seitz has stated, enter into temporary collusion with the actors.” In his opinion, art still offers, as Foucault termed it, heterotopias: “spaces, where alternative action is possible.” Whereby it is actually a question of art itself, how with or in art something can be created, which makes action possible, favours action, so that in this way it can »... embrace extremely different experiences of democracy’s plurality through action.”

Confronted with a society in which marginalised groups are constructed and are excluded from the public sphere, as action art interventions could de- and reconstruct the public sphere—“conquer and utilise it”—and challenge the hierarchy of what is accepted as being in the public interest.

### The Consequences of Art as Intervention

Peter Weibel’s contribution is followed by a discussion of what consequences and/or effects, art projects with and about marginalised groups entail or imply, both specifically for the participants of the project as well as for society in general.

Psychologist Corinna Obrist remains highly critical, although her employer, Vienna’s Favoriten prison, is basically open-minded about art projects. She says she is responsible for the inmates, and wants especially to avoid that in the context of cultural projects, they are “named and shamed”. She is enthusiastic about Ulrike Möntmann’s prison project and how the women reacted to it, but she refrains from any definite judgement about the effects the project might have: “I wouldn’t say that anything has improved. What I have noticed though, is that the project has unsettled the participants. And disturbed the order of the prison.”

In Hanne Seitz’ view, it is not the task of an art project to bring about a change or an improvement for any individual. It is good if this occurs, of course,

but at the end of the day it is more relevant that it's about making things public. Through art, the public can be made aware of the separation of society into "outcasts" and "incasts": "Although we do not speak of 'incasts', we assume that there is a middle, a centre, and there are the margins, or rather that a majority exists as well as those who do not belong to it and detract from the image of a 'good' society."

In her opinion, the mission of art is to be unsettling on a very general level, and to make hierarchies of visibility perceptible. She refers to the project "Platform 1: Democracy Unrealized—Democracy as an Unfinished Process" of the Documenta 11 (a world famous exhibition of contemporary art that takes place every five years in Kassel, Germany), which discussed whether democracy is a process that is actually impossible to complete, "because it is always dependent on the outside, of what does not belong to a society, although democracy nevertheless remains a project, which has to be addressed over and over again. And precisely this process is about action."

Hanne Seitz thinks that art can direct the attention to "sore points", and with its attempt to take action is in line with the "project of democracy".

"In TBDWBAJ a question is posed in such a way that one does not actually want to answer it."

For Thomas Mießgang, strong reasons to get involved and support the TBDWBAJ project from the perspective of the Kunsthalle Wien, a government-funded institution, are because it ventures into other spheres and addresses other recipients, and in this way reacts to the inherent "barriers" of the art institutions—areas that are set apart—which even exist when avant-garde, contemporary art is presented. "Since the 1960s at least, art has long since discovered the necessity of moving onto other areas and to stage interventionist art, which encounters the unschooled viewer. [...] Especially political art that is presented in the White Cube, I always end up with a certain section of visitors, who are predictable and relatively homogeneous."

Back in the 1960s, there were many subversive art actions performed in public places that took on the state and its doctrine, and were answered by the "full force of the law". Even though TBDWBAJ takes place within the context of subsidised institutions, Mießgang attests that the project certainly does represent a gain in knowledge at the structural level: "We will surely not change society with this project, nor will we directly influence the fates of individuals, but we can at least draw attention to an issue on a symbolic level, which will possibly lead to productive further discussion."

Additionally, the project could also be viewed—both with reference to the "bureaucratic obstacle course" beforehand, and also to its execution—as a "tolerance barometer" of a society.

Drug Addiction: Personal Responsibility or the Result of Societal Structures?

At this point, Weibel queries to what extent drug addicts should be brought to justice or receive punishment when they are found guilty of an offense that

results from their addiction: "In my opinion, here the law not only operates on extremely shaky ground terminologically, but actually operates on meta-physical ground. There is not a single valid, juristic argument for this. Except if one assumes that the drug addict is a free subject, who at any given time has the ability to decide what she/he does or does not do."

To enlarge upon the issue of personal responsibility, Thomas Mießgang refers to the core of the TBDWBAJ project: "Are the women of the biographies people who commit wrongdoing subjectively and individually, and are thus taken out of the body of society and punished for their individual wrongdoing? Or is the issue a structural problem, whereby a certain societal framework produces a specific percentage of people, who will almost inevitably have to take this path in life, because they are unable to live life any other way?"

The individual biographies exhibit strong similarities with each other in the violence experienced by the women within the family, in institutions, and so on: "This means it is also about structural violence, which at the end of the day emanates from society."

Correlation between Social Injustice and Violence

Wolfgang Zinggl takes up Peter Weibel's idea from the beginning of the discussion: Which society produces which outcasts, why it does so, and what can be done by art against this. Although he considers art productions that uncover societal connections important—as an example he cites Michael Haneke's film *The White Ribbon* (2009), which "... shows the eternal circle of violence and legitimised social oppression in an analytical way"—Zinggl also sees possibilities for art to effect direct changes or to intervene, without presenting these connections. In view of the current state of society and politics, he thinks it absolutely vital that these activities of art increase.

As an example of the structural problematic, Zinggl cites the correlation between social injustice and violence that is confirmed by all studies: "countries with a relatively good redistribution have less crime, fewer acts of violence, and less social problems than those with a great social inequality between the rich and the poor." The widening gap between poor and rich within society is exacerbated by all political austerity measures with the consequence that it is not possible to address individual problems, and the result is that outcasts are increasingly being "produced".

The consequences of the interlinkage between structural violence and the legal framework for the participants of the TBDWBAJ project are described by Eva van Rahden as follows: "This project has to do with drugs and soliciting. These women who go soliciting would not describe themselves as prostitutes. [...] As a matter of principle this group is observed very closely so that it does not enter 'respectable' public places; thus, although these people provide a service for which there is a considerable demand, the women or men who offer this service are supposed to be invisible as far as possible."

The consequences of drug-related crime in a domain governed by structural violence can be seen, amongst other things, in the fines imposed on women who go soliciting: "administrative penalties that are not paid are converted into terms of imprisonment for these women, which means: jail. [...]"

This is a group, which is not perceived as belonging, as a true part of society, and therefore one thinks one does not have to accord them any rights.”

The women themselves, van Rahden continues, accept the punishments and pay them off, if they can: “There is no resistance to being punished, because they perceive themselves as without rights, disempowered, and guilty.”

The women already make themselves liable to prosecution, if they are unable to fulfil the mandatory provisions for street workers because of their addiction: “They often do not manage to attend the compulsory health check once a week, and then they are immediately on the wrong side of the law.” Non-professional prostitution to finance their consumption of illegal drugs lies in a “judicial grey area”, and forces the women into situations in which there is a high probability of more, mostly sexualised experiences of violence. This has to be discussed in the context of gender-specific structural problems, says Eva von Rahden. “How can prostitution in order to procure drugs with its associated criminalising and jeopardising of these women be prevented?”

Corinna Obrist, who works in prison with the “tip of the iceberg”, is also the opinion that structural violence has to be tackled with a gender-specific approach. The biographies of many women contain experiences of violence and are comparable with conditions to which women in general are subjected. She also complains about the continuing lack of specifically female-oriented therapy: The traditional institutions for treating addicts are usually oriented on male clientele.

Shird Schindler describes the position of psychiatry with reference to drug addiction: “In my opinion, we still do not really know what the problems are.”

In connection with the biographies published in the project, he introduces the term “life event”—setbacks or important happenings in one’s life. The biographies of Schindler’s patients, too, exhibit six to eight of these “life events”, which is surely above the average of society as a whole. In the treatment of addiction, for a long time abstinence was the ultimate goal, but reality shows that this is unrealistic for many patients: “In our work with patients, we always try to develop a kind of hypothesis: Why, from the patient’s perspective, are drugs useful to him/her in a specific situation? There are very few patients whose motivation we cannot understand. Naturally, there are better alternatives to taking drugs, but basically it is just one of many possibilities.”

#### Gender-specific Concept of Morality

Thomas Mießgang enquires why the “abstinent society” is such a common idea: “What is so attractive about the unattainable ideal of an abstinent society? [...] Which intoxicant is acceptable, which is not, and why not?”

Non-compliance with the “social imperative” that is expressed by the media and politics defines the outcasts of a society.

Obrist, too, queries how society handles intoxicating substances and intoxication, for example, the differentiation between hard and soft drugs, and the toleration of alcohol. As far as she is aware, there are very few cultural models for how intoxication is handled: “Intoxication is something that somehow has a place in every culture. We western Europeans react to it with sanctions, and even in a way that is a little bit anti-pleasure. Those who do get intoxicated,

must not do it in front of us. If they do it notwithstanding and we find them out, then they should be penalised for their inappropriate behaviour.”

She also points out that a strong gender-specific difference exists in the moral judgement of female and male junkies.

Eva van Rahden states that the moral yardstick, which society applies to drugs, abstinence, and the domain of sexuality, is also very different for women and men: “This tabooing, this sharp moral dividing line between the “whore” and the “decent woman” also functions as a powerful instrument of control.”

Shird Schindler says that from a psychiatric point of view, abstinence is a questionable goal, because neurophysiologically, it is actually impossible. The brain only manages to not want to do something for three months. “We can only motivate ourselves to not to want to do something for a very limited period of time—that is a problem *per se*. One can choose other goals, which are of a positive nature, and through this make drug use highly unlikely.”

Shird Schindler describes the addiction to substances as a tendentially chronic illness with different phases that alternate. He also cites a long-term study in America, in which drug-patients were monitored for thirty years: “The probands alternated between the phases of abstinence, treatment with medication, followed by phases when they were out on their own and left to their own devices. There may be an abstinent phase but this does not mean that it will last forever; it will probably end at some point. The relapses are usually triggered by life events. [...] Despite interventions, the lofty goal of abstinence is not always achieved.”

Despite the many arguments in favour of a liberalisation of drug policy, he finds this approach fundamentally problematic, because every contact with drugs represents an irreversible experience: “If I have once made the experience that I can feel better through the use of a substance, then this cannot be erased from the brain. A biological program is switched on.”

This experience creates massive difficulties especially for susceptible people, and the degree of an individual’s particular susceptibility to addiction can only be determined *a posteriori*.

For Schindler, the reason why alcoholics are less stigmatised than other addicts is due mainly to economic reasons: “Alcoholics are—this is formulated pretty nastily—economically cheap, for although they may start drinking at 15 or 16, they generally stay fairly capable of working until around their mid-40s. Only then do the secondary diseases begin to show, of which they die relatively young. Because of this, they do not put a strain on the pension funds or the pensions offices, and finance themselves for a long time. Drug addicts, however, immediately cease to function due to the effects of the drugs, and because drug addicts are not socially accepted they often do not even embark on the process of earning money, and have to be immediately supported by society.”

The question about the possibility of responsibly using drugs is discussed in connection with the importance of drugs for women with mostly sexualised experiences of violence.

According to Corinna Obrist, who in the context of her function as a prison therapist has had numerous conversations with the women affected, drugs often allow them to survive. “The use of drugs is very often an active and conscious decision to somehow fight against the pain experienced in some form.”



She supports the idea that the women should not be reduced to the role of a victim: “At the end of the day they all are fighters for survival.”

“Society is confronted with the consequences of drug consumption, which has its own dynamic”, she continues, “whether this is in a psychiatric institution, in the drug aid institutions, or with us in the prisons, as the last link in the chain: What did not work for those affected, or did not work long enough, they bring with them when they end up with us.”

Following a discussion about the interdependent relationship between the individual and society, put forward by the Dutch artist Lucas Lenglet, with reference to experiences of violence and drug use, Corinna Obrist again insists that this debate cannot take place without considering the unequal treatment of men and women, because this is ultimately one of the roots of the problematic. Statistically, women are predominantly to exclusively victims of male violence: “This magnitude of inherent structural violence, which is what makes individual or domestic abuse possible at all, has to be addressed—as a political question, and ultimately also as a question of civil courage of each individual.”

#### Art as a Symbol or an Intervention?

With the key question, whether art can improve the world, the discussion again turns to the relationship between art and society at the end of the debate.

Wolfgang Zingl mentions the artist group WochenKlausur’s intervention “Sleeping Places for Drug Addicted Women”, which took place in 1994 at the invitation of the Shedhalle Zurich, an art institution supported by the City of Zurich: “For women, who are exposed to violence by their customers, the police, the pimps, and the dealers, there are hardly any services of a social nature on offer, no possibilities to find some rest somewhere. We have created a kind of hotel, which—in the centre of Zurich and exclusively for women—offers women a place to sleep during daytime. And this institution actually existed for eleven years before it was shut down.”

As an exponent of an art form that profoundly intervenes from the art context in existing social structures, Zingl criticises the view that art can do anything except intervene. “I don’t understand that at all. Why isn’t art capable of doing what is the most important of all? It is one of my goals in life to demonstrate that this is indeed possible.”

Whereas Eva von Rahden emphasises that the TBDWAJ project breaks up and unsettles each of the spaces as an approach, which shows the double moral standards of society, Marty Huber mentions the potential danger, when the difference discourse is reduced to an individual’s problem, as very often occurs in the mass media. Both enquire as to possible strategies in the media and arts, which consider both individual and structural problems.

As one possible strategy, Wolfgang Zinggl mentions engaging critically with the existing art and culture consensus: “This means that we have to detach ourselves from this cultural collaboration. Not everything that is art and culture is good. We have to become more political within the art and culture discourse and really think about what we actually want.”

After Wolfgang Zinggl’s question whether art is really the place where today, or once again, social interventions take place, Hanne Seitz mentions

a dilemma: “What art is, we negotiate, including here and now. It is social discourse. This discourse, however, lives from the fact that there is a place attributed to art, which is free and which signifies: art is autonomous. If this place no longer existed, WochenKlausur, too, could not function like it does anymore. This is an internal dilemma, so to speak. WochenKlausur can afford to work this way, and luckily this model exists, although it is based on something that the group actually rejects. This is a contradiction, but one which I can certainly live with. I do notice, however, that it makes it difficult to generalise.”

Because the art system is “extremely adaptable”, the question arises for Thomas Mießgang whether art should in principle have to stand outside the systems of subsidies in order to be socio-critically effective: “In the social democratisation of art that has taken place since the 1970s, both in Germany and Austria many of the formerly illegitimate art avant-gardes have been re-incorporated so to speak. [...] Social criticism, which was not even capable of slightly shaking the foundations of the state, has been absorbed, and the cultural and artistic field of action extended.”

Peter Weibel rejects this proposition. Even though with the support of the state he managed to bring projects like those of the Hohenbüchlers and WochenKlausur to the Biennale in Venice—“a highly commercial undertaking”—this manifestation was heavily criticised, and went under after the year 2000.

At this point, Christine Hohenbüchler suggests defining art as a practice, which aspires to abandon gridlocked discourses and to find other forms of language and expression: “Ulrike Möntmann’s project in jail is art, because it installs itself in between rigid institutionally defined aspects and attempts to find another space, in order to override the various support systems, which actually apply there. To me, what WochenKlausur does is art, because the group tries to enter realms and see them with a different perspective than those that usually apply there. Art is what seeks to generate and realise a different kind of behaviour in a certain social space. The criterion is not whether a project receives financial support or not, but how far it dares to question and undermine institutional forms and existing discourses.”

#### The “Shifting” Concept of Art

Wolfgang Zinggl adds that art is a social construct, which has always been subject to constant change. In his opinion, society itself is responsible for the direction in which the concept of art is moved, and he warns that its definition must not be left to specialists: “If we want to change something in society through art, we can actually change something via a definition of art; if we refuse to put up with the same old thing, perpetually repeating, and join forces to politicise art together.”

“Art can”, Zinggl continues, “have various functions—philosophical, critical, inspiring, emotional, soothing, and so on—which we choose and negotiate, and in this way we shift the concept of art: working on the concept of art inevitably creates social dissent, because people confront each other with their own opinions and desires of what art should be. Automatically. And that’s a good thing.”

At this point he clarifies that he is not thinking about expanding the concept of art. “In reality, the concept is only shifted. Not everything can be art; otherwise the concept will disintegrate.”

That the concept of art has to be changed in order to change the world or to exert a certain influence, makes sense to Lucas Lenglet. He doubts though, that an understanding of art can be changed, when society does not recognise or comprehend something as art.

“If that were the case”, replies Zingg, “then art would never have changed. There have always been avant-gardists, who wanted to bring in specific things, experimented, and were despised by society until society caught up with them and followed.”

Hanne Seitz also agrees that “... when new things come from art, they always first encounter rejection. Perhaps this is also one of the criteria: that it takes time until something is generalised and manifests itself within society. Especially for these changes, we also need art.”

## DROP OFF

Shortly after the Expert Meeting, at 6.15 p.m., a taxi driver brings the Baby Dolls, unharmed and still in their original wrappings, back to the Kunsthalle. No, he doesn't know the name of the person who ordered the taxi; he is only delivering these six boxes, the fare has been paid. The Drop Off takes place as planned.<sup>133</sup>

## FOR THE TIME BEING / WITHOUT AN END

If the “expanded concept of art”<sup>134</sup> becomes so stretched and equivocal that the subject drowns in a sea of possibilities, then—as Zingg proposed—the concept of art has to be shifted or moved to a forum where public debate is a shared social affair.

I assume that while it is circulating in various social contexts—from isolated spaces to virtual spaces—the TBDWBAJ material will bring a range of experts together whose disciplines are not normally in direct contact with one another. These specialists will exchange information about their modes of thinking and approaches, their experience, and pose questions. These exchanges can only take place if the experts have got to know one another, confront the issues raised, and if they are prepared to engage with a gender-specific problem complex that is regarded as irrelevant by public opinion. Ideally, such an Expert Meeting would result in understanding and communication between different positions, both among the participants and the audience.

To continue discussion of the issues raised in these public debates, since 2012 I have organised Accomplices' Meetings that are not open to the general public to which I invite specialists from complementary or neighbouring disciplines, such as the arts, art theory, philosophy, psychiatry, psychology, sociology, anthropology, law, and representatives of aid organisations. These meetings give rise to in-depth debates, which function in parallel on various levels, and open up a further space within society that is dedicated to interpretation and reflection.

The editions of the TBDWBAJ project in western and central Europe I regard as completed. Originally, I intended to branch out with the project beyond these geographic areas and to conduct research there; however, this proved to be increasingly complicated, in part due to political developments and events. Notwithstanding, I have not abandoned the idea.

Unlike a book, what I cannot and do not want to end are the relationships with the women whom I met over the years in prisons and who have become friends. I continue to follow their lives: what's on their minds, how they are doing, how their lives have changed because of personal and private constellations or because of socio-political factors such as changes in the law or new therapy concepts. And new aspects, even complexes of themes, crop up all the time that need to be interrogated, analysed, and developed. Finally, I shall conclude, but not close, with a perspective.

133 Six months after the art intervention I receive the Vienna police's report on their investigation. The kidnappers were traced; they are a small group of students from the TU Wien [Technical University of Vienna] who have admitted to planning and carrying out the kidnapping as well as the return of the Baby Dolls in good time for the Drop Off. I refrain from pressing charges.

134 At the end of the 1970s Joseph Beuys coined the term “expanded concept of art” as an element of a new theory of art and social philosophy. Traditional notions about art's sphere of action must be replaced by socially committed art.

POŽEGA, MAY 2010

## VANA KNEZ

Vana apologises for taking so long to reply to my letter. She works very hard in the factory and after seven hours there she is simply completely exhausted. She had to take strong medication for a couple of months; now, fortunately, she is only taking sleeping pills and in a few months' time she wants to be off them completely.

She is very happy that we are doing well and hopes that we will continue to be in touch, for a while by letter, but in the not-too-distant future in person, either in Amsterdam or Zagreb. Our support and the challenges we set her mean a great deal to her; she understands that we want to motivate her to cope with life in prison. The only question is *how* she can master the challenges presented with everyday life in prison. She does her best to think each day about what she can do for herself today.



Is there something that I can achieve today ... make a telephone call to someone, write a letter, write to someone ... I can talk, but what will I achieve by this? I know that I must learn to lead a new life with my family. I know that I can do it.

Vana knows that Justina sometimes sends me an email. Vana understands how difficult it must be for Justina to find a job and how desperate she feels alone out there, but she is certain that Justina can manage it.

Vana replies to my enquiry how she is doing now:

I feel good now and try very hard to concentrate on the nice things. I am satisfied with my situation here and hope that soon I shall be allowed to take a weekend break. I think a lot about my daughter Silvija. I have changed; I am improving my life and I admit that you are helping me a lot. [...] I think about my future a great deal and worry about it. Perhaps you can help me. I saw you in the photos with Z. Mavrović, during the debate in Zagreb. I have heard that he finds work for ex-prisoners, junkies. Perhaps he could find something for me?

Vana has a friend who is in the same situation and they often ask themselves What can we do that goes beyond just surviving for one more day?

She also wants to write to Ivana and ask her for help.

In the photos she recognises everyone; people from B.a.B.e., Z. Mavrović, Dr. Sakoman. That is really super; she really appreciates seeing the efforts we make to show the project to all these people.

You asked after my husband and my daughter: my husband visited me a few weeks ago for three hours; but I don't think that is long enough to solve our problems. I miss my daughter; I have only seen her every two months because of my financial situation. She often says, 'Mummy, where are you, come home.' All our meetings are intense and very emotional and I don't know what to say ... what I would really like to say is 'Where there's life there's hope'. I should pass on to you that Pia is doing well and she will write. Josipa is in prison in Split.

HANOVER, SUMMER 2010

## MAGDA GOMEZ FERRER

Magda's mother dies in 2010. I find the death notice on the Net which is signed by Magda's children. To find out where Magda is, I eventually submit an official enquiry to the Local Public Office in Hanover. I learn from them that Magda was registered in Hanover but she, too, is now dead. When she died, I do not succeed in finding out.



## REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca calls me occasionally or sends an SMS. Once she calls me when I happen to be in Osnabrück and we really want to meet up.

Yes, super, but you know I work evenings, from ten to midnight.

I suggest picking her up at midnight. She gives me the name of the street and tells me how to get there. I start off early. I don't know my way at all around the district where Rebecca said she will be. I have to pull into a petrol station to ask for directions again. It is the only brightly lit place in this gloomy area and appears to be more a meeting point for youngsters than a place to buy petrol. Finally, I see the first women standing at the kerb in this industrial estate where hardly anyone actually lives. Lots of women are standing here, most of them rather young. I drive up to a car parked in the middle of the road where Rebecca is bending down to the open window and talking and laughing with the driver. When she recognises my car, she says goodbye, comes over to me and gets in.

She suggests we go back to her place, that is, to Janne's place, the man she lives with. His name is familiar to me from what Rebecca has told me; he is sometimes a boyfriend, sometimes just a friend, according to the particular situation. Sometimes they are apart due to jail, therapy, or other partners. Janne is older than Rebecca, he is also a drug addict but leads a regular life with a fixed address; he has permanent employment as a mechanic where he has worked for the last fifteen years. He has his drug consumption under control and is always willing to look after Rebecca, to support her and to take her in. For her part, Rebecca earns the money for their daily dose of heroin. In spite of everything, Janne sometimes has problems with her work, says Rebecca, but she has no alternative except for stealing. She would never work a minute longer than necessary to get the daily dose. Even if someone would offer her 500 Euros – she wouldn't do it.

Janne lives in the Schinkel district; Rebecca thinks it's marvellous that I am finally coming to visit her and she darts quickly up the stairs to the second floor. A two-room apartment with kitchen and bathroom. The flat is immaculate and I ask myself what I had expected.

Only the plants are missing at the moment  
says Rebecca,

they froze on the balcony when we put them out there while we painted the flat last time.

Janne has prepared a syringe for Rebecca which lies on a plate and she excuses herself for a moment – she does not want me to see her shooting up. When she returns, she looks from Janne to me and is thrilled that her two favourite people are sitting here together on the sofa! Janne is rather reserved, perhaps he is shy. Rebecca has asked him to buy some red wine for me. Rebecca takes selfies of us on the sofa. She then wants to hear all about the prison projects I am doing at the moment and which countries I will be visiting next. Rebecca says she and Janne have to make some arrangements; she calls a few people in a rather hectic manner and arranges meetings.

I ask her about Ben. Since 2009 Ben is with a different permanent foster family; the first was only a temporary arrangement. No, she doesn't know the family's name or address; the child welfare office has forbidden her to have any direct contact with Ben. She really screwed up there, but for Ben it's better this way. The child welfare office lets her know how he is doing when she asks after him. For example, about the metabolic disorder he had as a baby. To treat this rather rare disease, in his first year she regularly purchased very expensive medication which had to be ordered from Switzerland and which was not refunded by the health insurance.

It appears that he has now grown out of the disease  
she says.

RURAL DISTRICT OF HANOVER, 24 DECEMBER 2010

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Via mailing list Weronika sends Christmas greetings with a photo. Someone has taken a picture of her in a photo model pose: she leans against a birch tree in a wood in a designer evening dress with designer sunglasses and a stylish hairdo. She looks great.

RURAL DISTRICT OF HANOVER, 29 DECEMBER 2010

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika finally wants to send me a few lines because we haven't been in contact for some time.

Marvin and I are doing fine, it's not easy, working, but the main thing is we're healthy! I have now almost recovered from my stroke in November last year and I am now practically completely better, I'm so glad. If I had stayed paralysed on one side I don't think I could have borne it. I am now much better; except that I am quite often tired and a bit weak I don't notice my illness at all.

I have moved again; I had problems with the neighbours because of my dog.

Unfortunately, I can't work in the area that I want to until 2014.

Marvin is fine; he's a bit lazy in school but not intolerably so, he will soon be going to secondary school. Since two weeks he is enjoying himself on a ski trip to Austria organised by Zebratours, they specialise in children's holidays. Happy New Year!

2010–2017

# SPACES OF ACTION

AND

# CIRCULATION OF KNOWLEDGE

A space where communication takes place arises, according to Hanne Seitz, when in “temporary involvements as accomplices”<sup>135</sup> art practices aiming at participation and intervention become increasingly utilisable by non-art spheres and nurture the hope of making an impact that fosters competence, builds community, and establishes identity.

135 See Hanne Seitz, *Temporäre Komplizenschaften. Künstlerische Intervention im sozialen Raum*. In: *Konglomerationen. Produktion von Sicherheiten im Alltag. Theorien und Forschungsskizzen*, eds. Maria A. Wolf, Bernhard Rathmayr, and Helga Peskoller. Transkript: Bielefeld, 2009.

## REBECCA MERTENS

Helmut König lets me know that he briefly saw Rebecca in the courtyard for sports. She looks quite well, but he hasn't spoken to her yet. I discuss the possibilities of doing a project with Rebecca in the prison, amongst other things to make a timeline of the background to her prison sentences and the data of her terms of imprisonment using her criminal files. The prison director<sup>136</sup> agrees to my study. However, I have to apply officially to the Criminological Service in the educational institute of the Celle law enforcement authority of Lower Saxony.

I phone Rebecca and explain what steps she has to take in writing and verbally and what she has to apply for.

136 In November 2005 Oliver Weßels took over as director of Vechta women's prison.

VECHTA, 9 SEPTEMBER 2012

## REBECCA MERTENS

First, I want to tell you that, naturally, I am really happy to work with you. As you will probably show this to the prison director, I just want to say this at the start! declares Rebecca on the first page of her letter.

Now about me: I am on Corridor A, where I've nearly always been when I'm here. Two cells down from where I was during the project. But now there are only single cells, which I think is rather good, because if you were unlucky you'd be stuck with some old lady who you felt like flushing down the toilet – and that applies to about 50 % of the women here.

I've been on methadone now for about two years. Phew, that's the longest I've ever taken the stuff! It robs me of a great deal of my vitality and it makes you so bloody lazy; on the other hand it removes the necessity of getting hold of money because you don't go cold turkey if you don't take other stuff. What should I say; at the moment it's O.K., but in the long term I don't want it. I definitely want to feel more alive.

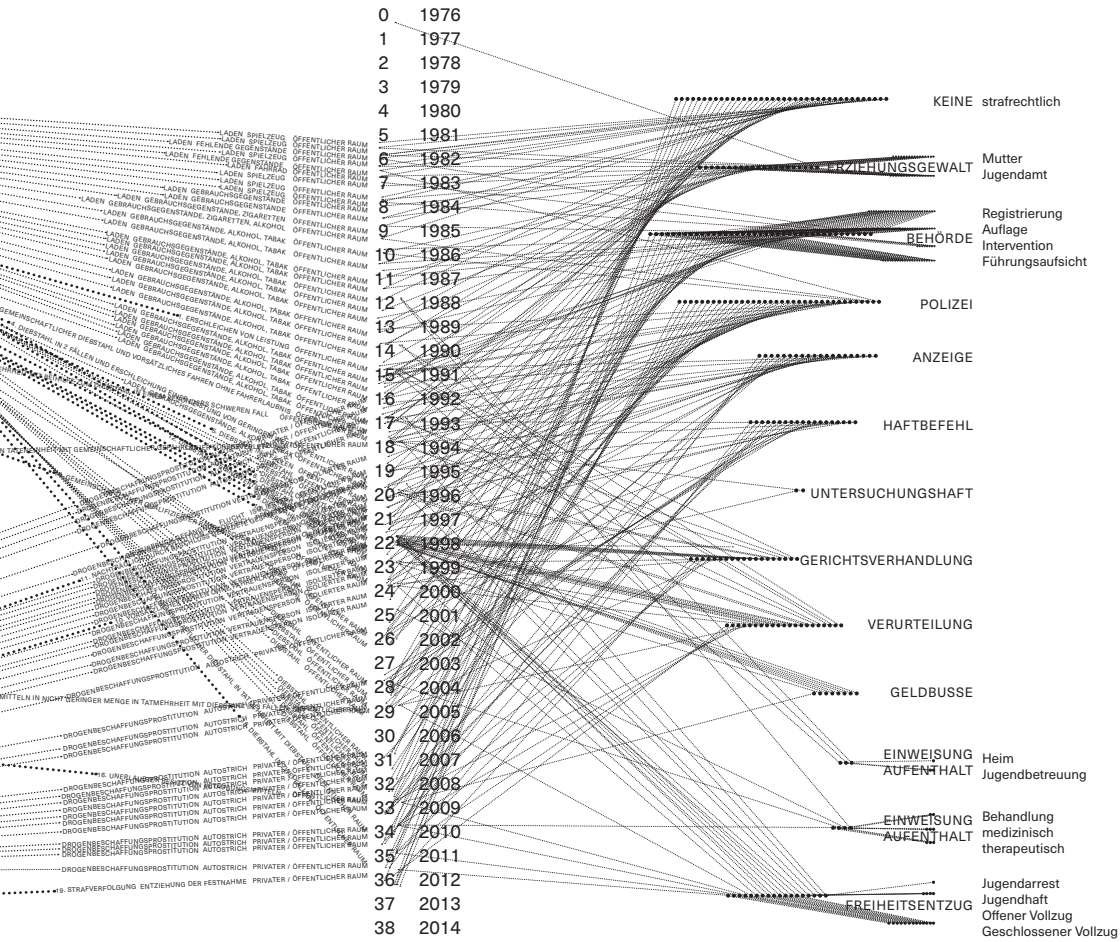
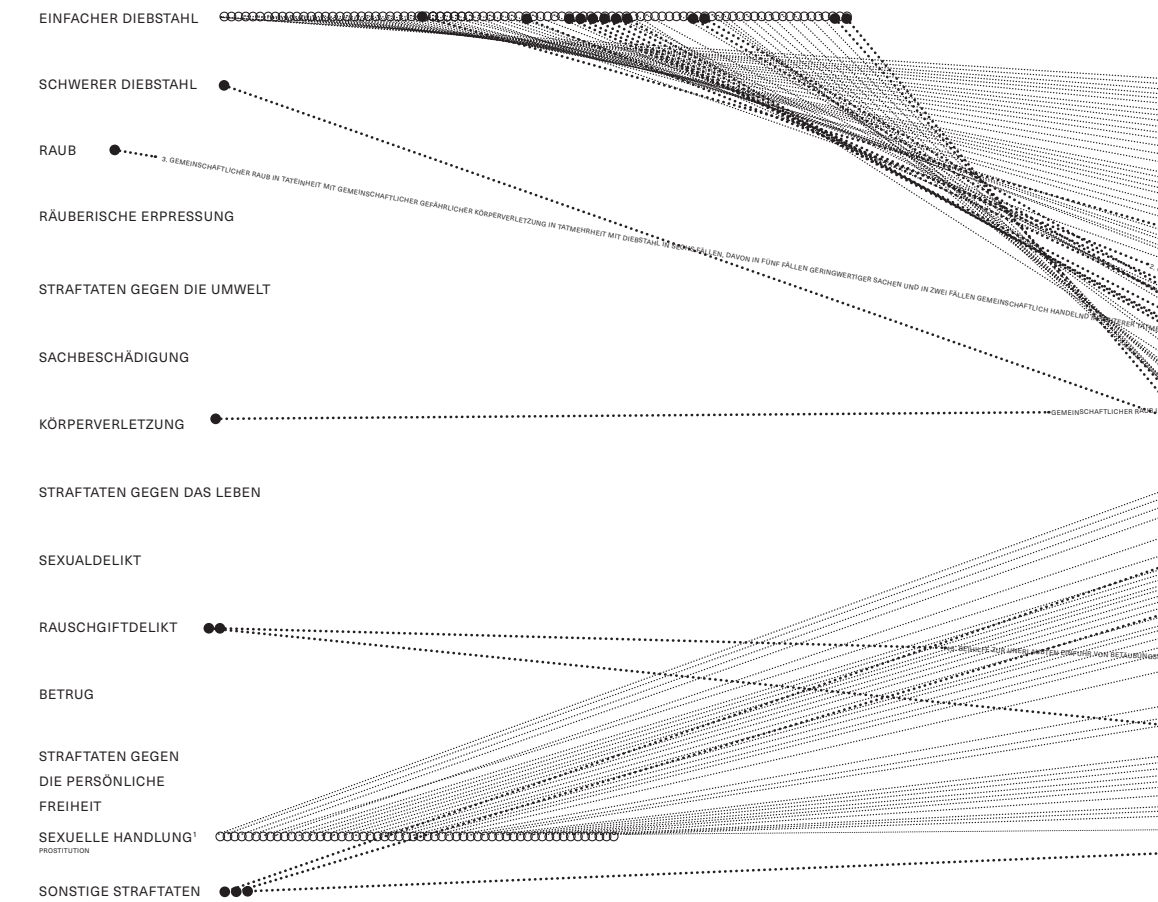
Rebecca talks about her work in the main kitchen:

The work is really O.K., I get a kick out of it. The chefs are super and my colleagues are also great. Before that I did a six-month painting course, for which I got the final grade "good". It was also O.K. but I get better money in the kitchen!

By the way, I will be released on December 5, that's quite soon. That means I will probably be out before you can / are allowed to come here??? But that makes things easier, don't you think? Only then it'll be a problem with my jail file, although I actually doubt whether they'll let me see it. I'm going back to Osnabrück. I'm still with Janne and live at his place – although I would quite like to look for a small apartment of my own. Simply to have a place to go to just in case.

I would be really happy if we did the project together, even if I am already out. I know that in the past I didn't manage it, but thanks to methadone you can really rely on me. Oh, now that sounds really a bit weird. What I mean to say is that thanks to methadone, I don't suddenly chuck everything up because everything revolves around drugs. If you give me the opportunity I'll show you that at the moment I really am reliable! O.K., this much about the time after my release.

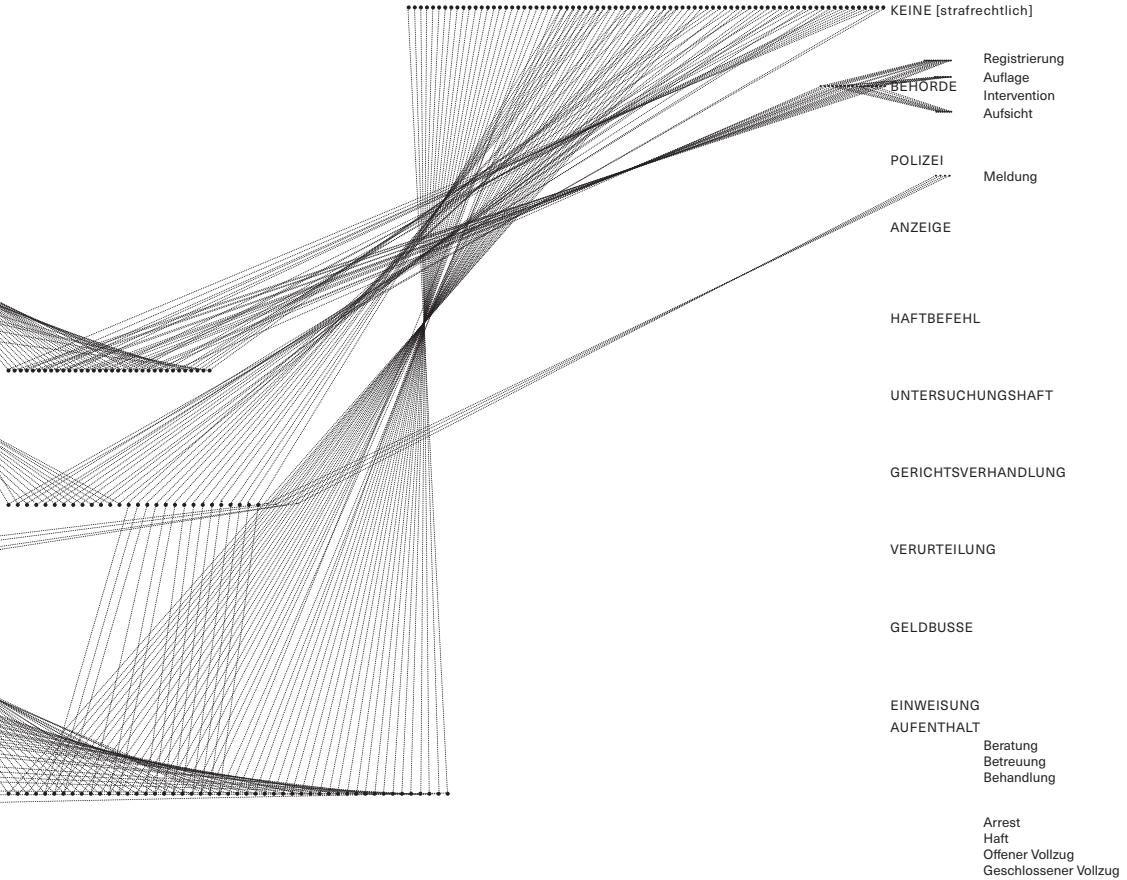
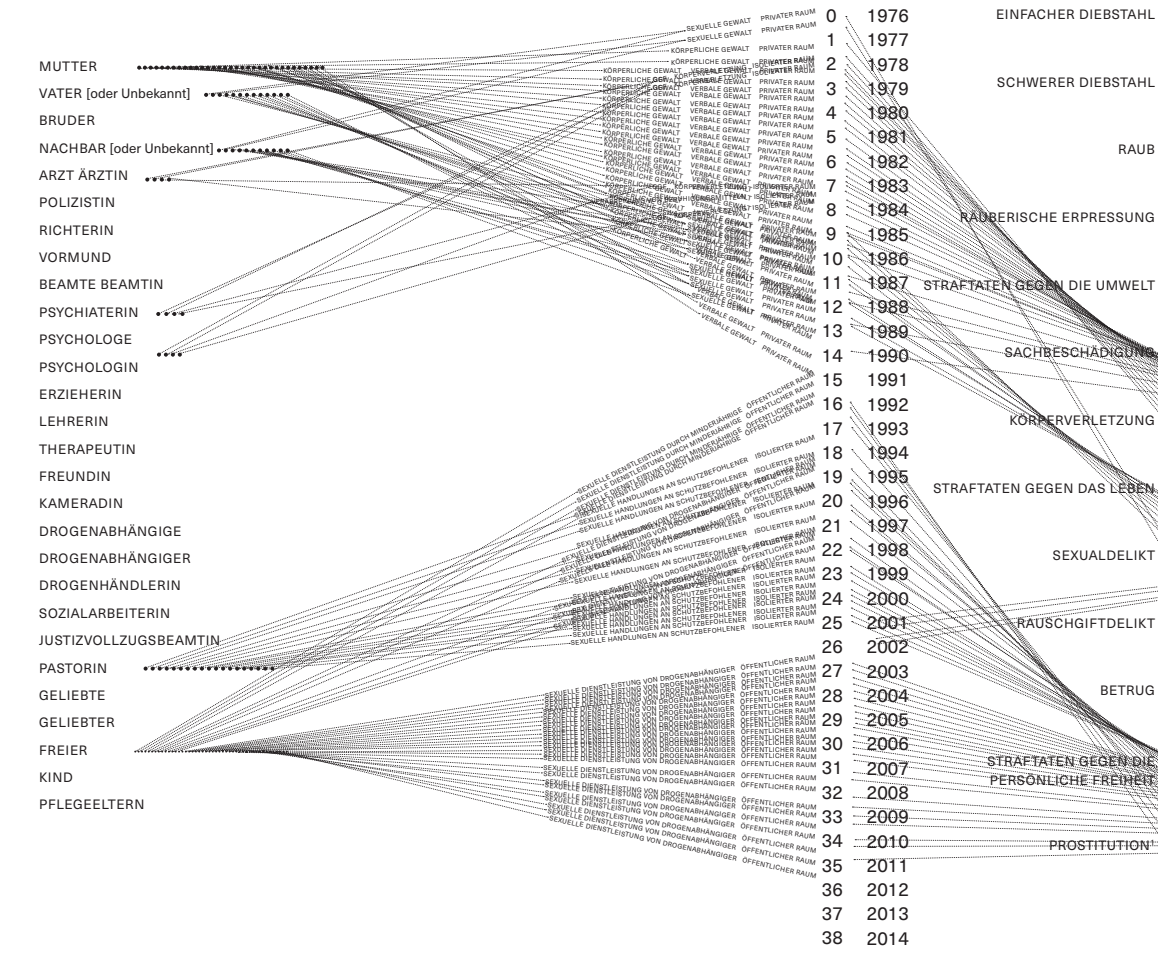




●..... ein Tatbestand, der zur öffentlichen Anzeige geführt hat  
○○○○○... unbestimmte Anzahl gleicher Tatbestände

SPACES OF ACTION AND CIRCULATION OF KNOWLEDGE

This diagram (detail) shows Rebecca Mertens' offences and their social consequences in chronological order giving the dates and her age. The diagram includes a list of the penalties and the laws used to sentence her.



..... Tatbestand inzidentell  
..... Tatbestand regelmäßig

This diagram (detail) shows the crimes perpetrated against Rebecca Mertens and the social consequences for the perpetrators in chronological order with the dates and Rebecca's age. In addition, the diagram lists the laws that could have been applied and the penalties and/or prison sentences that would have been incurred.

# ACCOMPLICES' MEETING I [ART]

ART THEORY /  
ART HISTORY /  
PHILOSOPHY

The first Accomplices' Meeting Art I. brought academic disciplines together which are directly involved in THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE as an art intervention. The meeting took place on two consecutive days and, based on a description of the details of the project and explanation of its theoretical framework and terms used by the artist, Ulrike Möntmann, encompassed a wide spectrum of themes and issues. The object of this summary is to provide a fragmentary overview of the themes that are most significant for the development of the project with regard to practice and research.

## Participants

Elke Bippus

Professor of Art Theory and Art History, ZHdK University of the Arts, Zurich, Switzerland, and Hamburg, Germany (joins the group after this discussion)

Sabeth Buchmann

art historian and critic, Professor of Modern and Postmodern Art and Head of the Institute for Art Theory and Cultural Studies, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria

Alexandra Landré

art historian and curator, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Ulrike Möntmann

artist, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, and Vienna, Austria

Ruth Sonderegger

Professor of Philosophy and Aesthetic Theory, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria

## Transcription and Text

Nina Glockner



### Introducing the Relay Race Method

*Collaboration is a core element of my approach: collaboration with women drug users with criminal convictions, artist colleagues, academics, and institutions. A free exchange of ideas with specialists from the fields of philosophy, art theory, psychiatry, sociology, political science, and law brings people directly or indirectly into contact with each other. And bringing such widely different, yet specifically focused, expertise together results in the circulation of knowledge among the actors of the TBDWBAJ network.*

(Ulrike Möntmann, project description)

At the beginning of the meeting Ulrike Möntmann spoke about her “relay race method” which she has implemented in her practice and research since the very beginning of her project work in prisons. The Accomplices’ Meetings that she organises on a regular basis are important elements of the relay race method: like the baton, the project’s stories, experiences, and methods should be passed on to others and provide a stimulus for experts—such as art theorists, psychiatrists, and sociologists.

Experience has shown that it is not easy to share the perspectives of different disciplines at high level interdisciplinary exchanges, thus the Accomplices’ Meetings seek to avoid treating material in an isolated way and any watering down of expertise through a discussion group that is too large.

As one possible response to “The Death of the Author”, the relay race method implies a rigorous transdisciplinary approach, and in this way, said Sabeth Buchmann, it intervenes in existing research practices, which is “exciting and also often not envisaged in this form by the institutions involved.”

Meetings, conferences, debates and so on the participants frequently found unsatisfactory in their conventional forms. This led participants to ponder the question whether interdisciplinary transfer of knowledge is possible and how it might be organised. Ulrike Möntmann’s approach (Accomplices’ Meetings and relay race method) is a possible candidate for transforming a knowledge base derived from different disciplines on a specific topic.

Ruth Sonderegger remarked that the relay race method requires an openness that is important for political action, “it is not always clear from the outset what will result and what the main goal is [...] but working together and keeping at it—particularly in such competitive contexts as art research—is already part of the critique, part of political action.”

From the very beginning of the TBDWBAJ project the relay race principle included both established experts and project participants. For example, the drug addict Rebecca Mertens wrote down her own biography in eleven sentences for the first Baby Dolls that were produced and this shaped how such biographies would be articulated in the future. Her sober statements recording events in her life, seemingly devoid of emotion, attested to a particular kind of self-observation that is symptomatic of the project participants in prison and their general acceptance of guilt. This is what led to Ulrike Möntmann’s desire to compare the biographies of women in similar situations from other countries in order to investigate the role played by social, cultural, and political conditions.

### Localising TBDWBAJ within the Art Context

*TBDWBAJ enters situations and operates in societal spaces: isolated spaces, cultural spaces, public spaces, and virtual spaces. Opening up and traversing these different spaces enables information about the lives and living conditions of groups in our society who have no political representation.*

(Ulrike Möntmann, project description)

The original structuring of the project around the abovementioned “spaces”, Ulrike Möntmann still finds effective but she drew the Accomplices’ attention to the metaphor’s inherent constraints: “Spaces are limited, often conceived as having walls bounding them, thus the transition from one space to another is not foregrounded in this figure of speech.”

Sabeth Buchmann suggested “topology” as a possible alternative for it poses no obstacles to movement or infrastructures. This would enable the various strata of the project—actions, practices, articulation, and narratives—to be described in a more dynamic way and thus do justice to its complexity.

### Decision-making Processes

In view of the fact that TBDWBAJ is an art research project, the group discussed the relevance of decisions that had been taken.

“A great deal of conventional research consists in stating the reasons why one is making or has made certain decisions”, said Ruth Sonderegger, “what distinguishes your art-oriented practices, Ulrike, from those of conventional scholarly enquiry or at least those of interaction in the social sciences which you give space to or create?” It is interesting to examine the beginning of work on this project and its approach at various stages with regard to the various artistic and methodological decisions that were taken. These findings allow one to make comparisons with the conventional social sciences: “In which contexts does Ulrike make decisions in the project that are different to those of social scientists and for what reasons?” Analysing, examining, and describing these decision-making processes, said Sonderegger, enable one to localise the project in an art context and this opens up further issues for external parties.

Ulrike Möntmann said that she already began to develop the method during her first prison project (LÜCKE [gap] project, 1997). Detailed descriptions and analyses of all these projects will form part of the forthcoming publication, scheduled for 2016, and will include the artistic and methodological decisions taken consciously or accidentally in the course of the work process and when confronted by institutional conditions.

For Sabeth Buchmann, too, decisions made due to the nature of the work process are particularly important in collaborative work as they bring about a better and more productive readability of the material (e.g., visualisation in diagrams). However, Buchmann asked that the localisation of the project within an art context should be specified. Should it be understood as an aesthetic critique oriented on the field of visual studies, as an expanded art project, or as a sociological method that employs the tools of art? Is the concept already the artistic practice? Or does this rather consist in the production of

meaning within the communication and interaction processes with the project participants? “whereby the structurally hierarchical therapy relationship is set aside because in the project it is a joint process of production; for example, the critique of both sides with regard to the issue of the representation of women that consume drugs and have prison records and with regard to the refusal to engage with the conditions”. It is especially important in connection with the publication to decide what one is seeking to render “readable”.

In Ulrike Möntmann’s work Ruth Sonderegger sees “institutional tenacity as an artistic process”, whereby the principle of intervention plays a decisive role. In the context of TBDWBAJ intervening applies both to the institutions and to the direct contacts with the women in prison.

As TBDWBAJ is not a project that has been commissioned but initiated by her, Ulrike Möntmann stressed that the preparatory work is a relevant part of the art intervention. Before any contacts are made, it is necessary to research in detail the specific political, societal, and cultural structures prevailing in particular countries and in every institution (“homework”). These advance negotiations between Ulrike Möntmann and institutions before each stage of the project, said Sonderegger, one could call supplemental institutional research.

### Critical Mass

In view of the fact that Ulrike Möntmann operates from the background of an art context, the question arises as to which public she is addressing:

“Would you say that the concept of art is simply a concept that can be used strategically? Because the concept of art and its aspirations demands and addresses a specific public? Is this public, which ultimately shares your willingness to intervene, a public that participates? If this is the case, in what sense? Or is actually something being shifted here onto the level of representation thus circumventing the arena of the conflict where change could really happen?” (Buchmann)

Turning away from the concept of public space and towards actual practices, Buchmann asked, “How does one build a critical mass, a constellation of people, political subjects, who are not organised around identity, interest-driven policy, or strategic community but around a form of political critique and offers resistance on the basis of analysis?”

### TBDWBAJ’s Articulation Practice

In this context the question of authorship was again raised; this time in connection with the collaboration of Ulrike and the participants on writing the biographies. Sabeth Buchmann: “What form does the conversation take? What information is passed on? In which dynamic reciprocal relationship does the articulation practice stand to the production of space? How are these interdependent?”

Ulrike Möntmann replied that to begin with no questions about participants’ biographies are asked but instead a catalogue of words is compiled to create a matrix in order to avert the danger of repeating possible traumas: “No suggestive questions but instead a metaphorical ordering of life.” The compilation of around 160 words for the catalogue is relatively neutral and, if necessary, missing words

are added. The matrix that results forms the basis of the interviews that follow. After the interviews Möntmann formulates the sentences of the biography which is submitted to the participant concerned for approval and corrections. “These are all actually inventions, or to put it differently an artistic form of thinking: the matrix, the interview, the style and language of the biographies. For me this is the hardest aspect of the collaboration because I am the one who formulates, who determines something. And yet in 98% of the cases the women are really happy when they read their biography for the first time; perhaps because they now have something in black and white that is a kind of justification of their existence.” And it is precisely making this justification of their existence visible that is a goal of the project, and Möntmann emphasised her determination to develop a method that visualises all that has come to light.

In this connection Buchmann identified “hybrid forms which derive primarily from your knowledge of art and your experience with art; forms of visibility including why one thing is visible and another not. Your project not only functions via making things visible, but also to a high degree via encoding of information organised in diagrams. For good reason, because a non-protected visualisation may entail increased control from unwanted quarters.”

Next, the significance of diagrams and statistics in TBDWBAJ was discussed, mainly with reference to project participant Rebecca Mertens. Why are they important, what is their relation to the written information, and in what form can they best express the results? According to Sonderegger, the visualisations of information are both the results of the research and a tool of artistic thought. In her opinion such diagrams are not only examples or illustrations of knowledge, they form the “visual starting point of subsequent reflection”, whereby the question remains open as to whether the diagrams are self-explanatory or require accompanying information: “This is, I think, the danger of diagrams, that they do not lend themselves to unconventional interrogation, but on the other hand text alone cannot make things as clear as they do.”

### Forms of Presentation: Book vs. Exhibition

The discussion about data collection and visual means of conveying information such as diagrams led to a discussion of the most appropriate forms of presenting art research in general and the TBDWBAJ project in particular. Ulrike Möntmann sees the book as her “favourite place” for presenting the entire project and its results: “An exhibition on TBDWBAJ cannot go into the requisite detail. Even an exemplary exhibition (e.g., at the 11th Istanbul Biennial in 2010) only conveys platitudes if the content of a work is not comprehensible.” For comparisons to be feasible, it is necessary to have accounts of experiences and processes, diagrams and other visual material “in order to find a form between language and signs which sufficiently visualises the information on which it is based.”

The environment of “this new knowledge, this new methodology” needs texts, reports, and visualisations of the data in order to function as results. It is planned to hold a presentation, at which the book will be “unfolded” in the context of an exhibition space.

Sabeth Buchmann understands this approach for the reception of a book can be on many different levels and this enables “the nature of the linkages,

mixing, and interweaving” of different practices and discourses” to be made clear: “I think that what your project can achieve very well and in fact has achieved already is on the one hand to give back something to the discourses, methods, and fields from which you have drawn your tools and knowledge. And at the same time to state: yes, I did draw on these things but all the individual elements do not suffice to deal with this phenomenon, to represent it, to articulate it. It requires a combination of all of them.”

#### The Importance of the Baby Dolls in TBDWBAJ

*The implementation of the project in the various prisons is always carried out in collaboration with a small group of women drug addicts. I work with them on writing their biographies and together we produce a series of identical porcelain Baby Dolls who will later “speak” the participants’ biographies; that is, decisive events in their lives.*

*A series of Baby Dolls (each series represents one biography) is exhibited at a museum or art venue in the respective country. In parallel an Expert Meeting takes place in which representatives from the spheres of culture, subcultures, politics, and scholarship debate the themes and issues raised by the project. Subsequently, the Baby Dolls are abandoned in various public places in the respective city that are associated with the lives of the women whose biographies they represent.*

(Ulrike Möntmann, project description)

Ulrike Möntmann then gave a detailed talk about the projects she has conducted in prisons and therapy facilities since 1996. The discussion then turned to the importance and the origins of the Baby Dolls and the act of abandoning them in TBDWBAJ.

During her project PRISON WEAR COLLECTION (1999–2002), a parallel study by a post-graduate assistant, Anneclaire Kersten, found that dolls were objects that were missing in the earlier lives of the prison inmates. None of the women had owned a doll or a soft toy. One of the women told of her mother’s porcelain doll that she could look at in a glass cabinet but was never allowed to touch. In the course of the project *Dutch Souvenirs*, the first series of Baby Dolls was created in 2002, which under the title THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE visualised the biography of a female drug addict as a souvenir of Dutch drug policies. The TBDWBAJ project was developed on the basis of this work.

#### The Object’s Relationship to the Artist’s Practice and Research

“The Baby Doll is a vehicle; it is culturally and emotionally loaded, it corresponds to an idyllic cliché and is thus very well suited to be a means of conveyance”, said Ulrike Möntmann.

The production of the Baby Dolls, Ulrike continued, has great importance for the implementation of the project in the isolated space of the prison as the outcome of a joint work process. The entire production process, including working with the porcelain clay, learning the technique of pouring, and the finishing of the end product, represents very necessary experience that complements the theoretical work.

Ruth Sonderegger sees in this practice “of a way of working and thinking together” an “incredible possibility of articulating” and terms it “a reflection on work”. However, she has doubts about the status of the Baby Dolls when they are dropped off in public places. In her opinion, as isolated objects the dolls fail to communicate all the research and practice involved: “The fascinating thing about your work is that you investigate structures and in spite of this you demonstrate them by fixing on single individuals”, but in its situation of an abandoned object the doll “is too much of discrete and pretty object”, and this does not do justice to the project. For Sonderegger the Baby Dolls play a very precise role as a part of the diverse communication within the work of the project, and thus should not mark an end point for the public but rather have the status of material required for work “similar to an Expert Meeting or an interim result that you present in a visual form.”

Sabeth Buchmann understands the Baby Dolls “as tools, as a possibility of articulating something” and views them as belonging to the practice of articulating in the widest sense. However, like Sonderegger she sees their meaning in isolation as problematic: “I think it is very difficult to apprehend the status of the objects. So if this is the artistic output and one takes a simple approach, one would read them at best as symbolisations. One would not read them as what they are—because one does not have this information—namely, as a form of abstraction.”

#### Drop Off in Public Places: Discussion of Hannah Arendt’s Theory of Action

*The action of dropping off the Baby Dolls is the installation of THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE in the public sphere. The dolls of a series are abandoned in public places associated with the areas of life of drug addicts and simply left unattended to their fate. The city’s inhabitants and visitors will either accept or reject the dolls, ignore or destroy them.*

*When passers-by ignore the doll nothing happens.*

*When passers-by pick up the doll they hear the biography fragment.*

*When passers-by turn the doll over they see on its back the name and year of birth of the drug addict.*

*When passers-by put the doll back down it ceases to speak.*

*When passers-by take the doll with them its further existence will play out in the private sphere of the passers-by, some sheltered, some unprotected just like children within families, virtually invisible to the general public.*

*When passers-by destroy the doll its existence comes to an end.*

(Ulrike Möntmann, project description)

From the public realm, said Ulrike Möntmann, some of the Baby Dolls get taken back into the private sphere where they may be subjected to the same unseen attacks that the women of the biographies suffered. As whoever finds a Baby Doll has to make a decision about what to do this confrontation of the Baby Doll and its finder inevitably leads to an action.

In Sonderegger’s opinion this confrontation is conceived of as “almost too individualistic”, and “not structurally enough”. The action of dropping off the dolls is too isolated from the rest of the work, which viewed as a whole provides insights into “various topographical movements, the relationship between



abuse and drug addiction and ending up in prison” and which succeeds in producing friction between structures and the histories of individuals. Thus against this background the decisions of individuals regarding what to do with the found dolls is relatively uninteresting: “To imagine that something decisive or important will happen when the doll is handed over or handed back—I don’t see this happening at all.”

Ulrike Möntmann drew a connection between the decision-making demanded of finders and Hannah Arendt’s theory of action, because “an action is the only activity in which we are free to make a decision that has nothing to do with any activity or occupation, but which has an effect”.

Neither Sonderegger nor Buchmann agreed unreservedly with this interpretation. Arendt’s action, said Buchmann, addressed a public and was not an individual action. “An individual who is irritated is not the initiator of a discourse.”

These statements led to the question of how the action of abandoning the Baby Dolls generates or could generate public attention. Sonderegger said that Arendt’s starting point was to formulate a concern through debate with others and therefore by definition “extremely anti-monologic. Action by an individual is not really action; controversy for Arendt always involves others. The power of the public is the power of mutual action with others. It exists where one succeeds in opening up a controversial space within society’s prevailing consensus. There another voice must exist. A counter-action.”

Sabeth Buchmann then asked “to what extent does this interaction generate a public—with an interest in art, in politics, and/or a public that participates in discourse—and how do they react to the dolls? I now understand them better than before through knowing about the production process but an audience with an interest in art would probably see them as symbols of something or as therapeutic aids and will not recognise them as stand-alone aesthetic products. In this sense they do have a difficult status, although I find them entirely plausible as articulation practice and as something that passes between you and the women. As well as right and important with regard to the material practice. However, when I communicate with a public far more needs to be communicated to clarify these levels. In this anonymised form a lot of information is lost.”

For Ulrike Möntmann not talking is symptomatic of disinterest, that is, not sharing and not participating in a joint responsibility and therefore represents an essential aspect of the project. By abandoning the women’s biographies in public spaces and on the Outcast Registration website the theme of the project is declared to be a matter of public concern.

However, Sabeth Buchmann as well felt that the translation of the information was too abstract and she suggested—as a thought experiment and with regard to the production of the objects—a souvenir or museum shop as a suitable public place for the dolls: “They really need to be installed in a place where they represent a disruption, engender conflict. On the street they don’t create conflict, but if they were to be put in a souvenir shop they would, because there is a context. I think it’s right to view the dolls as a medium. They are not a medium in the sense that the medium is a direct part of the production; it is part of the circulation. The sphere in which exchange of signs takes place. You don’t want a production that feeds into the level of consumerism; you want signs and meanings to circulate. This must at all costs take place on the level

where the intrinsic symbolism of the object resides; that is, the level of objects that are useless fetishes or decoration. And on this level of interpretation and reception they create a disruption.” Buchmann continued with the question as to the point at which “standardised naturalised discourse” takes a new turn and can transform into something else.

Ulrike Möntmann stressed that in her opinion the situation of the finders of the Baby Dolls, who must make a decision, does indeed contain potential for conflict, although she does not follow up the consequences of this.

For Ruth Sonderegger the resulting conflict that the finders have to resolve with themselves is not a political or public conflict because it takes place on an individual, private level. It does not launch a discourse but rather ensures that things stay as they are.

Buchmann sees the danger that here people will see their middle class outlook endorsed: “I have a bad conscience, my view of people is hierarchical, I know that I am in a better position and I sympathize instead of engaging in discourse with people on an equal footing. In my view, becoming public begins where actors structurally—as Rancière terms it—assume the position of speakers. Where is what can be said? Otherwise conditions remain in their positions and no shifts take place.”

#### Private Space = Protected Space; Prison = Space of Coercion and Violence?

In the context of this analysis Ulrike Möntmann questioned the definition of the private space as an acknowledged protected space, which for the participants of her projects often turned out to be the scene of crimes. “Where do public interests stop and where does the private space begin? It is more or less legal what was done to these women in private spaces. How these conflicts unravel we can hardly verbalise. We need and want private space, but are we aware that potentially this can be a situation in which vulnerable are completely at the mercy of others? To what extent must one intervene?”

Ruth Sonderegger sees the distinction between public and private as a boundary that is not hard and fast. “These boundaries have partly grown and are partly codified law. It cannot be ruled out that sometimes private space is a protected space. That in certain cases this is desired. However, for me the most important thing is that one can make a difference. I think that within the middle class private space there may be possibilities to make certain things public, for example, domestic violence or the rights of children. By comparison the private space in prisons is so over-codified and over-institutionalised that it is far more difficult to bring anything out of it, which you do in part, Ulrike, in spite of this. For this reason in my opinion it would be very important, politically important, to bring information and knowledge out of the prison space and demonstrate that these “cases” are not merely attributable to individuals’ wrongdoing, but that a structure is revealed. There are no boundaries between public and private that are carved in stone. I believe it is good that both exist, but this is a matter for negotiation. But the spaces which cannot be negotiated or hardly at all, like the prison space, are for me pure control, force, and violence that do not allow opposition to be articulated at all. The fact that so little can be brought out of prisons shows what a controlled and coercive space this is.”

CELLE, 20 NOVEMBER 2012

## CRIMINOLOGICAL SERVICE IN THE EDUCATION INSTI- TUTE OF THE CELLE LAW ENFORCEMENT AUTHORITY OF LOWER SAXONY

The sociologist at the criminological education institute examines my request. She approves my study, sends me the documentation, and consents to the length of my stay in the prison, although my police clearance certificate is still in the post. After ten years I am now allowed to set foot in this prison again.

VECHTA, 22–27 NOVEMBER 2012

## WORKSHOP WITH REBECCA MERTENS

Rebecca is not exempted from compulsory labour, but we are able to work together each day from 1.30 p.m. until locking up time at seven in the treatment room of the work section. At the weekend and when she doesn't have to work, we start already in the morning. We are allowed to work without supervision. When I enter the prison, I am given a cell phone for if I need to get in touch with the prison authorities or if I want to be picked up. Rebecca states several times in writing that she gives her permission for me to see all her existing prison files. Helmut König brings the files requested, some of which have to be found in the cellar. I have to tell him which papers I want copied which he then will do.

The data on Rebecca is stored in various administration systems, in different types of files, from handwritten and typewritten detailed descriptions of crimes to computer lists of the paragraphs applied. In the course of a day, two tables fill up with piles of dusty, faded pink loose-leaf prison folders. It will take me days to go through the files and decide what needs to be copied. The objective of our work is to look at the crimes, the court decisions, the application of laws and paragraphs, and the actual periods of imprisonment and to juxtapose them with the events that Rebecca cited in her biography. To begin with, what interests me is everything that comes under the heading "crime related to the procurement of drugs", and how offence and term of

imprisonment relate to each other. Also, which facts lead to a "revolving door" phenomenon in relation to recurrent readmission to prison.

To inventory the offences I have prepared huge tables of categories. We make lists of Rebecca's offences and specify (1) in which kind of environment they were committed (private, public, isolated, i.e., prison or closed facility); (2) in cases of theft or robbery, which objects were stolen and what was their value; (3) whether Rebecca was prosecuted for the offence; (4) what kind of punishment was meted out for the offence (none, intervention by authorities, a caution, an official complaint, prosecution, sentencing, imprisonment); (5) to which type of institution was Rebecca referred (none, a home, detention of a juvenile delinquent, prison for young offenders, suspended prison sentence, open prison, closed prison) and where she served the sentence. In the tables I enter general terms of offences: petty theft, aggravated theft, robbery, extortion, causing harm to the environment, criminal damage of property, bodily harm, offences against life and person, sexual offence, drug offence, fraud, offences against personal liberty. I include prostitution as an indirect crime because the law has changed during the past twenty years with regard to factors such as age limits, definition, conditions of criminal responsibility, and legality. It is clear that Rebecca's activities in this respect are illegal because she is not registered nor does she possess a health certificate, but the specific factual circumstances are not clear at this point in time so it is not possible to say exactly with what, when, and who was guilty of an offence. I shall have to study the law texts later. For now, I follow the information that Rebecca has given me.

There is not enough space on the A0 size paper to enter all the cases of petty theft that Rebecca was prosecuted for (only about 10%). It is easier with the other offences: one conviction for aggravated theft, one for robbery, one for bodily harm, two drug offences. On a different sheet of paper Rebecca lists the crimes perpetrated against her: from the first year of her life to age eleven grievous bodily harm, in her first year possibly sexual abuse, from age nine to fourteen regular sexual abuse. We address the themes of "person of trust" and the sex trade in prisons, in legal parlance the "abuse of position of trust". In this connection Rebecca is obstinate: she does not see the sexual acts with the person of trust in prison as an offence which took place against her will. After I have read the text of the law to her, she – reluctantly – adds the "deals" made with the person of trust in prison that took place from age eighteen to twenty-four to the other sexual offences committed against her. On this sheet of paper detailing the crimes where Rebecca was the victim, the column headed Consequences/Sentence or Penalty stays blank.

In a further table we list the types of drugs, medication, and alcohol that Rebecca has consumed up to now together with details of the diagnosis and situation; the third column contains the dose and amount required. Once we have ascertained the amount, we can calculate the costs as well as the current market value; these vary according to societal and geographic location: in prison heroin costs around double as much as on the street. We do the calculations and compare income and expenditure.

# CONVERSATION WITH OLIVER WESSELS

I had asked the prison director Oliver Weßels if we might have a talk and on the third day of the project he visits us in the workroom. The director requests Rebecca to leave the room while we are talking.

Minutes of the meeting from memory: When Oliver Weßels took over as prison director in 2005, he first had to engage with the problems and issues of a women's prison. In the meantime he can put himself in the situation of the women inmates and look at the prison regime from their perspective. I tell him that in my view penal institutions for women are still unnecessarily far too secure. Weßels agrees; he shares the opinion of his predecessor and his colleagues that women in prison conform and less security would be quite adequate. However, the legal framework and the organisational structure of a women's prison is still hardly different at all to men's prisons, in spite of the fact that in 2008 the European Parliament demanded a gender mainstreaming strategy for prisons as a matter of urgent necessity. Administrative regulations should undergo gender impact assessment to take the specific situation of women into account. So far not much has been implemented; in Vechta, for example, prison personnel do not carry firearms and the wearing of uniform has been abolished.

Women in prison have frequently experienced a socialisation that is discriminating and humiliating, with the effect that the women tend to cope with their problems in a spirit of resignation: they turn to drugs and alcohol, develop physical disorders, and many exhibit symptoms of mental illness such as post-traumatic stress, attachment disorders, borderline personality disorder, depression, and feelings of failure. A further factor in the situation of women in prison that must be considered is the effect that it has on their families, particularly on their children. Oliver Weßels mentions that he has written an article specifically on this subject<sup>137</sup> in which he comments in detail on contemporary practices and points to alternatives. Quotation: "In recognition of the fact that women in prison in many cases were traumatised by and the victims of sexual abuse, maltreatment, and exploitation before being sentenced to prison as offenders, the European Parliament has formulated many demands that take account of these circumstances: accommodation, treatment, quantitative and qualitative work and education programmes, more open prisons, possibilities for mothers to keep their children with them in prison, and training of prison personnel with regard to the special needs of female prisoners."

The conditions of women's lives in prison and their personal appearance are ignored by the legal regulations and the administrative provisions: "Like some other groups—for example, aliens or physically handicapped people—women are a small group within the prison population compared to the majority who are men; a small group that has special needs and faces particular challenges but on account of its size it does not stand out and consequently carries no weight."

As in Rebecca's case, the generally very short sentences of the women mean that an individual plan for an effective prison term is never developed

for them, which is why their treatment and disciplinary measures are simply oriented on the principles applied to male prisoners.

As a whole, women appear less prone to violent behaviour than men: 47.5% of the women prisoners are serving a sentence for theft, embezzlement, or fraud. The proportion of women sentenced for offences under the German law on controlled drugs, 18.2%, is relatively high compared to men, which is 14.8%. We have to add in Rebecca's offences that are indirectly associated with her addiction and the procurement of drugs. In women's prisons more than 50% of the inmates are addicted to opiates, and in the prison population as a whole there are more women and men drug users than are in therapy in specialised centres.

Weßels regrets that the "special rules for women's prisons" only apply to giving birth, period of stay, and bringing up children in their first years of life. The situation could be considerably improved if these rules were changed to cater to the needs of parents. In practice this would mean more easing of detention conditions, modified provisions for release on probation or parole, for receiving visitors, as well as day release for mothers to look after their children and run their households.

Weßels strongly advocates open prison for women who do not pose a risk to the public. Many women sentenced to prison for fraud, for example, only briefly lost their self-control and ordered more goods via the Internet than they could pay for. Should one really tear a family apart because of this? In cases brought against women it should be considered at an early point how a prison sentence can be avoided, and court assistance should be informed at an early stage to give practical aid to women with under-age children.

137 Oliver Weßels: Besondere Vorschriften für den Frauenstrafvollzug. In: *Strafvollzugsgesetz: StVollzG. Kommentar*, eds. Johannes Feest and Wolfgang Lesting, Cologne, 2012. On the basis of current Federal German penal legislation this Commentary explains the legal situation obtaining in the different Federal States and describes the particularities resulting from the law enforcement decrees issued thus far in individual Federal States. The Commentary is particularly oriented to the needs of practice, and it includes the findings of other disciplines such as sociology, psychology, and theology. The authors also take account of the increasing Europeanisation of criminal law through the increased integration of the European Convention on Human Rights, European prison rules, and so on. Source: text by the publisher C.H. Beck Verlag, Munich.

OSNABRÜCK, MAY 2013

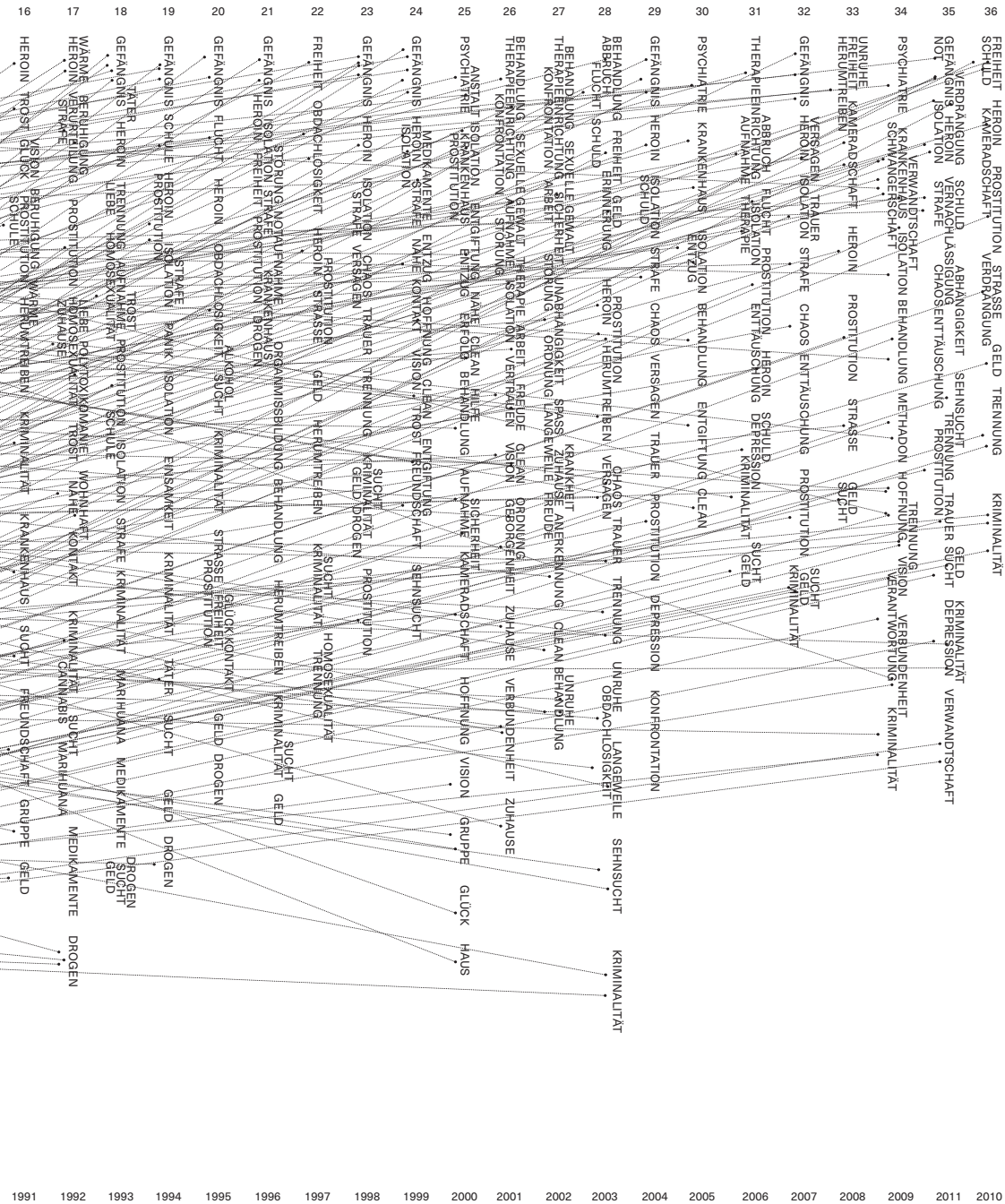
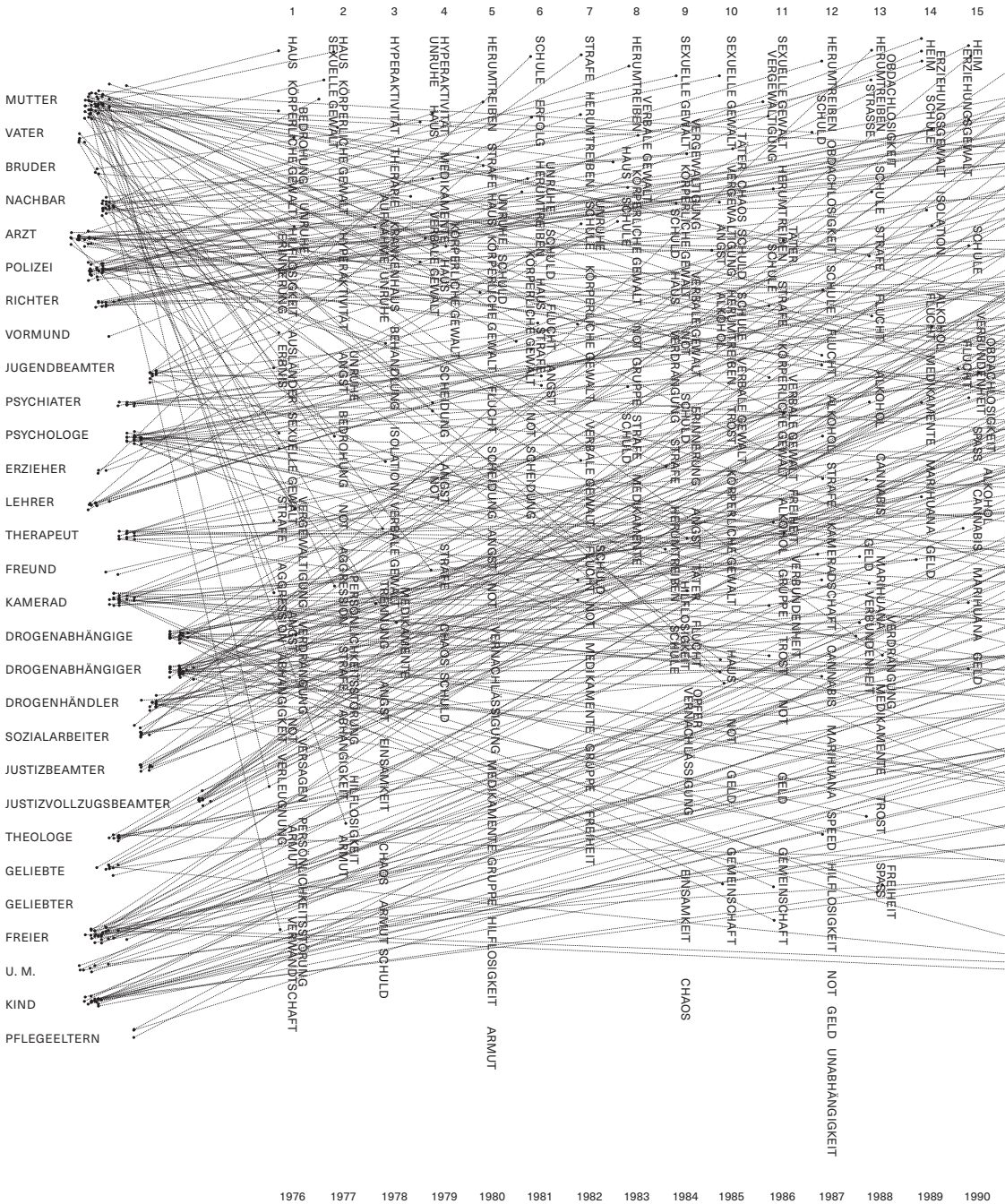
## REBECCA MERTENS

After Rebecca's release we meet up in Osnabrück to go through the questions that are still open. I show her the current state of the tables concerning the offences and their consequences, and she checks the accuracy of the information.

Rebecca is still in the methadone programme, but is gradually reducing the dose. To my routine enquiry about Ben she gives her routine answer:

Yes, I have to make a decision sometime soon.





The attachment figures in Rebecca Mertens' life are associated with particular events and dates and/or her age

## ACCOMPLICES' MEETING III [ART]

ART THEORY /  
ART HISTORY /  
PHILOSOPHY

### Participants

Elke Bippus

Professor of Art Theory and Art History, ZHdK  
University of the Arts, Zurich, Switzerland, and  
Hamburg, Germany

Nina Glockner

artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna,  
Austria

Alexandra Landré

art historian and curator, Amsterdam,  
Netherlands

Ulrike Möntmann

artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna,  
Austria

Shird-Dieter Schindler M.D.

psychiatrist, Director, Sociomedical Center  
Baumgartner Höhe, Center for Addiction and  
Substance Abuse, Vienna, Austria

Ruth Sonderegger

Professor of Philosophy and Aesthetic Theory,  
Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria

Felix Stalder

culture and media studies, Professor of Digital  
Culture at ZHdK University of the Arts, Zurich,  
Switzerland, and Vienna, Austria

Transcription and Text  
Nina Glockner

The third Accomplices' Meeting featuring the fields of art theory, art history, and philosophy was a semi-public event accompanying the exhibition *Out of the Box: 10 Questions Addressed to Art Research*<sup>138</sup> at the Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna. The project THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE (TBDWBAJ) was one of ten art research projects presented in the exhibition. Ulrike Möntmann's new sound installation *European Outcast Choir* (EOC) was also shown. The first part of the discussion focused on Ulrike Möntmann's art practice in relation to art therapy, and the second was on issues relating to the presentation and representation of art research in general and TBDWBAJ in particular with reference to the *Out of the Box* exhibition.



## European Outcast Choir

*The audio archive contains the biographies of 18 TBDWBAJ project participants that are spoken by the participants themselves in their native languages and dialects. The installation of the archive is variable.*

*The EOC installation at the Out of the Box exhibition consisted of a circle of hanging loudspeakers which visitors could enter. In the middle of the circle fragments of all the biographies were audible resembling a choir performance. On approaching one particular loudspeaker, the visitor heard the complete biography of one of the participants. The translations of the biographies—from the Croatian, Dutch, Frisian, and Swiss German—were projected in sync with the spoken text as subtitles on the wall outside the circle.*  
(Ulrike Möntmann, project description)

Elke Bippus described the effect of EOC as “something familiar, possibly also aesthetically familiar. It is not the case that the fates [of the participants] literally scream at us; it is not aesthetically staged to take us unawares, but what I hear is something that is familiar to me. And thus I am able to listen.” Alexandra Landré experienced the choir as “a familiar soundscape”, which conveys an exceptional situation that has become commonplace. The installation does not use elements that shock, but makes a forceful demand for the empathy of the visitors. Despite the factual and detached diction of the participants, Elke Bippus said that especially when listening to the individual voices she discerned “a different kind of brokenness, another kind of life.”

Ulrike Möntmann and Nina Glockner then described the methods used in compiling the biographies and making the recordings. The biographies are always written in the first person and use the present tense. The texts that result are then recorded in the prison with the participants speaking their own text. During this process there is no debate about content; one could describe the procedure as “language training without emotional outbursts”, said Glockner, whereby the sentences are treated as material. The sober tone of the participants’ delivery, devoid of dramatic inflection, said Möntmann, corresponds to the way the women see themselves with regard to the events in their lives. In EOC, said Landré, the voices convey a paradox; the contents of the memories and “the distance to the memories.”

Shird Schindler said that precisely this paradox is characteristic and normal for patients with addictions, and “that this dissociation, separation from oneself comes about when one has experienced things that are almost unimaginable. There is something there, but if I always maintain a connection to it then I shall probably go to pieces. That’s the reason why I have to build this protective barrier as an important measure; not because I am sick, but because it is essential for my survival.”

Schindler described the effect of drugs in this context as “volume control”, which can reduce the memories of traumatic events—the oppressive “background music”—to the extent that one believes they have gone for good. “Certain memories are associated with certain carrier substances and that is also why the drugs are important because it is these cycles that they influence.” From the point of view of therapy it is important to recognise this

“background music”, particularly when the aim is to overwrite it in a positive way. Remembering, said Schindler, is in general a very active process in which existing memories are continually overwritten or rewritten. Thus during therapy, in addition to providing a psychotherapeutic setting that offers security, medication is often prescribed to suppress negative physical symptoms, such as restlessness, palpitations, and so on, that are linked to the original experiences in order that the memories can be stored with less negative connotations. “As long as I keep on having the same physical reaction, I cannot change the memories. If I can succeed in associating positive emotions with them then I can turn the memories into something positive. In this way it is possible to achieve rewriting instead of a fixation through re-enacting the trauma.”

Elke Bippus remarked that a similar effect is often attributed to art: “Aestheticisation enables you to approach a thing. Otherwise, you would protect yourself against it. One can approach horror, one can approach war stories or anything that one would normally suppress thinking about via a certain aesthetic transformation.”

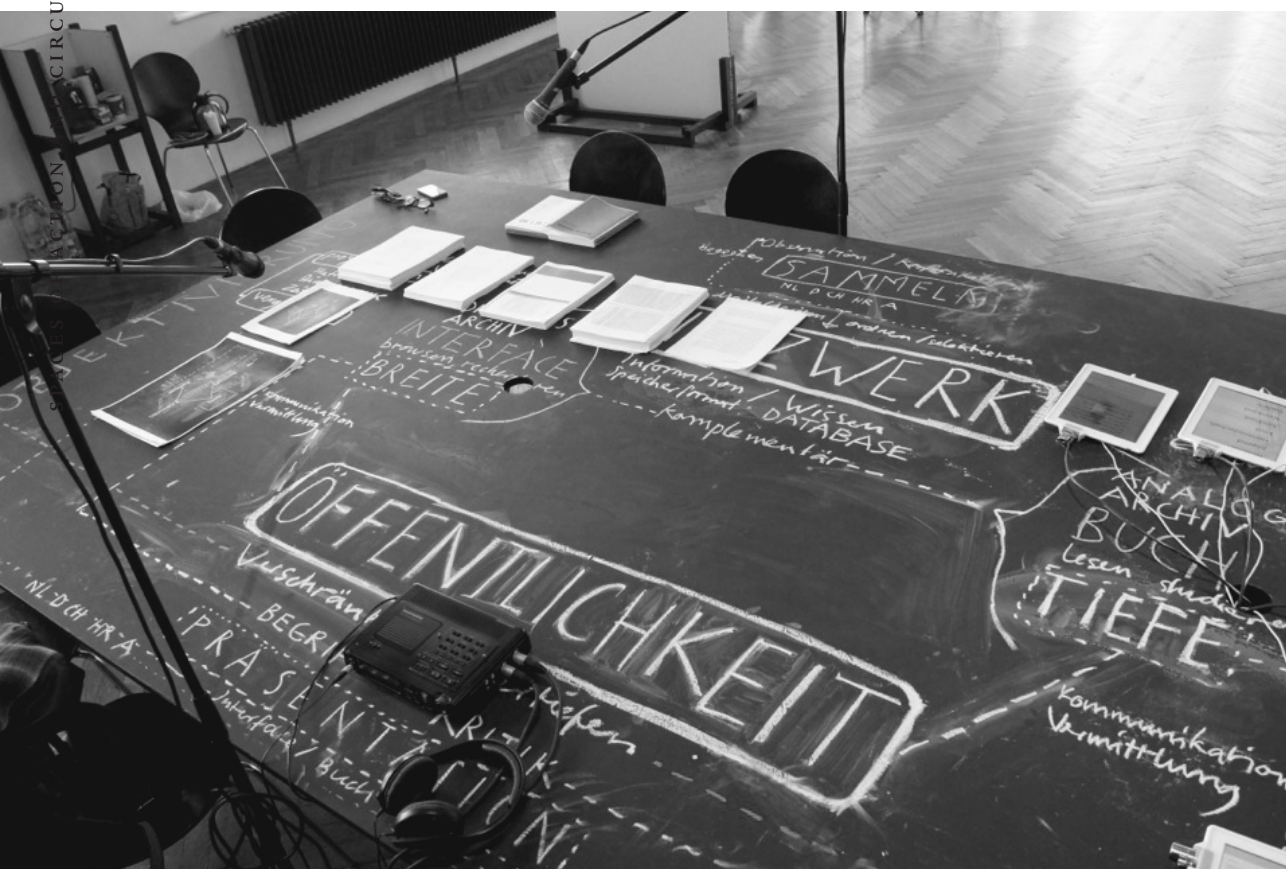
Schindler said that primarily what is at stake is to charge the phase of remembering with an additional—but not necessarily aesthetic—function to generate distance. Compared to other forms of therapy, art therapy reinforces this distance: here it is not the therapist who becomes the “figure for projections”, but the results of the art therapy emerge during the activity as well as in the following (joint) reflection session as “projection screen”, as an intermediate in the relationship between therapist and patient.

The discussion then addressed the question as to what extent Möntmann’s artistic practice can be situated on the periphery of art therapy. Ulrike Möntmann said that she would never claim that her work is art therapy. For unlike art therapy where the material created remains with the therapist and patient, she takes the information that is generated and carries it out into the world: “I augment normality by including these women’s paths of life in it, because I think it is very important to render visible the exclusion that has taken place. And the vehicle for this is to stand up and raise one’s voice. It is palpable how awareness arises in the course of collaboration with the inmates; one can also detect it physically in the way that the women start to square their shoulders.”

Although the project is not categorised as art therapy, said Elke Bippus, this does not preclude that it has therapeutic effects. Through the fact that the material which is created is then separated again from the relationship between the women and the material, “it can become significant in a different context and utilised for something else. Actually, one has a form in which something is articulated or materialised that one can always return to and interrogate.”

In Schindler’s view the project goes several steps further than art therapy and it includes therapeutic elements, particularly because it addresses the lack of self-esteem problematic of the addicts, which is an integral part of nearly every therapeutic approach. “The women’s statements are taken out into the world and are a part of life. I have difficulty in referring to this as “normality”. However, illness is also a part of normality, just as death is a part of life.” Schindler said that the status of an artist as initiator of the collaboration was for him a big difference as opposed to the therapeutic point of departure.





Möntmann cited the difference in objectives: whereas therapy is concerned with bringing about a change or improvement, often with the goal of a life free from drug-taking, her project aims at expanding awareness, including self-awareness. The documented texts of the biographies and the matrix are appreciated by the participants as a right to exist.

Thus for Schindler the project exerts an influence on existential problems, which play a significant role in general in a therapeutic context: “Some of the addicts worry about whether they exist at all. These are prenatal problems that are connected with abortion attempts or dramatic events prior to birth. In such cases the patient affected exhibits a certain insecurity: Do I really exist? Because before I was even born there existed a hostile energy that was directed against me. Then comes the next stage, with birth: “I’m here, I am on Earth. There may be problems there, too—a difficult birth, a caesarean, and so on—a critical psychological point may also be located there. And then the question arises: Am I valuable the way that I am? The theme of being-in-the-world. And I think that the entire work of TBDWBAJ has a great deal to do with this question being answered in the affirmative.”

### The Matrix Method

*Each matrix is a formal description of a life. Basic concepts and terms are printed on separate sheets of paper which are then cut out and assigned to the appropriate years in a participant’s life.*

(Ulrike Möntmann, project description)

Schindler described limiting possibilities as a “principal element of art therapy” and then spoke about the matrix method developed by Ulrike Möntmann for compiling the biographies, which he regards as explicitly containing this therapeutic element: “Nothing is available indefinitely, one has to make do with what is there, one can perhaps fight to get this or that in addition. And this is then configured and a certain form emerges, a certain structure.” From the point of view of therapy, this “limitation” is necessary: “If one always makes everything possible, one never arrives at these limits.”

While this limitation which is applied in the matrix method is regarded as an indispensable tool in therapy, in an art context, said Bippus, in some cases there is criticism of its standardised nature.

In this connection, Felix Stalder asked about the direct effects of this method on the participants: “How significant is the fact that the form is the same for everyone? That their lives can be depicted in the same way as other lives, that their lives are not unique but fit into this highly standardised format just like all the others. Is this something positive?”

Ulrike Möntmann described the effect as “reassuring”; Schindler considered it as “easing the situation”. Elke Bippus surmised that this effect connected to the aims of the project: “I think that the matrix enables the participants to bring themselves and what they have experienced into a kind of normality. The women are not forced to justify or condemn their own personal fate, or explain how they ought to work on it or have worked on it. Instead, they can do this via the matrix and describe it as part of a type of normality.

In this way a possibility is created of comprehending it.” Developed originally to avoid re-traumatising the inmates, this method facilitates finding new formulations of one’s own life. “The matrix confronts the participants with the disintegration of a standardised judgement that was made at an earlier point in time. Suddenly, these assessments have ceased to exist and you get new ideas.” (Möntmann)

Schindler viewed this as another instance of the effect of overwriting: “In a new context I overwrite the memory with a new combination of words that I have chosen. And that I have chosen the words is very important; that I have the control over the words I choose.” Felix Stalder saw the new formulations not only as overwriting using one’s own way of describing, but also as overwriting the internalised external labelling processes; that is, “what others have formulated for me”. In his opinion standardisations “provide freedom on one level and not on another. You lay down certain things, you standardise, in order to trigger other things.”

### Institutionalising Arts-based Research

Ruth Sonderegger drew attention to the museum context in which the Accomplices’ Meetings was taking place and raised the issue of the institutionalisation of art research: “One should really reconsider the question of whether art research ought to be in this administrative context and what the price of this is, whether one really wants to work in “art research”, to work in these institutions”. And what influence does the framing conditions of the PEEK (Programme for Arts-based Research) format or being integrated in the structure of the University of Applied Arts have on the project and research? Although influence exerted by the general conditions of an institution is not something that only affects the field of art research, it is nevertheless necessary to engage with this question, including with reference to the current example of the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) here in Vienna. Ostensibly in pursuit of synergistic effects, said Ulrike, a master’s program at the University of Applied Arts curated an exhibition project titled “Art Research”. The art research projects attached to the university were “installed” in this project. “What effect does this have on the projects concerned? Is the exhibition format you have described added value from the point of view of the projects’ research or are the consequences negative rather than positive?

Alexandra Landré was interested above all in how one has to deal with existing contexts—“power structures”—in order to facilitate functioning partnerships within institutions, for example, with curators. “Over the course of the research work a free space has to be created, a different form of creative coproduction or mutual exchanges”. For Landré the occupation of this space has significance within the structure of Möntmann’s work and she advocates converting the dilemma into “a positive definition of the required conditions”.

To organise exhibitions and utilise synergistic effects are not actually the problem, said Bippus. The problem is rather that exhibitions are for prestige purposes and are limited to a certain time period so that collaboration does not have a chance to develop. In her view, the decisive question is whether accepting the institutional framework (including with regard to funding)



European Outcast Choir, Museum of Applied Arts Vienna. Photographs of EOC: Luuk Kramer



compels one to take an exclusively pragmatic and strategic course of action and whether anything at all can be developed within this given framework.

Felix Stalder added that changing institutional structures—not only in art research—result in everyone having to do far too much in parallel in order to function, and that this gives rise to “narrow, efficiency-oriented thinking”.

A consequence of this, said Sonderegger, is the growing importance of one’s personal “time management”, whereby she attempts to pay as much attention as possible to content. Looking back at the past Accomplices’ Meetings, which took place outside institutions, Sonderegger remarked on their engagement with themes that were special, particularly compared to “day-to-day research work”. “If one takes Foucault’s *An Aesthetics of Existence*<sup>139</sup> seriously, then the following questions arise: Which offers will I accept? Or if not, why not? Day after day.” Further, Sonderegger emphasised that particularly the (temporary) appropriation of spaces is essential for the TBDWBAJ project, and strongly recommended expanding the studies and diagrams of spaces: “In addition to the spaces in prison and on the streets, there are the PEEK spaces and there are the institutions for art research; I believe that one should think about these spaces just as carefully as about the others.”

For Bippus it is also about giving considerable thought to “the space of art, and also the space of scholarship”. The collaboration between Bippus as a visitor to the project and Möntmann as project leader is defined by the PEEK guidelines: “Something must be communicable after these three years. Then one could work on it, but one is already in this loop. And that’s what I mean by being involved: we are part of this structure. One has to remind oneself of this all the time and then one is able to decide: When does one do something out of pragmatism when does one do something strategically, and where must there be free spaces?”

#### Art Research and the Exhibition

The participants then broached the subject again of the exhibition *Out of the Box: 10 Questions Addressed to Art Research*. Alexandra Landré saw in it an “overwriting” of the works due to specific structures of the displays and the utilisation of prominent visual elements, such as the strategic decision to place only texts upon the walls: “In my understanding an exhibition should *facilitate* the works on show, should enable them to occupy the space. But here it’s different; the spatial design dominates the works.”

Felix Stalder saw here a direct connection with the institutional structure of Arts-based Research at the Academy, where in his opinion the institution intervenes more and earlier in the work and preparatory process than is the case with other exhibition situations. Bippus saw this intervention above all at the level of communication: “Unlike other exhibitions, here a communication strategy is used that brands the works as research and thus pigeonholes them as belonging to the area of art research.”

Sonderegger asked whether art research in general wants to be exhibited. Whereas Möntmann said she was sceptical about exhibitions of art research, Bippus was of the opinion that decision for or against such a presentation should depend on what had resulted from specific processes and questions.

Her interest was not in “illustrations of research”, but in the linkages between various areas and qualities.

Felix Stalder returned to the subject of the powerful influence of the institutions that appropriate things which were actually emancipatory once upon a time, such as the shift from the completed artwork to the process: “Is research a method or an intermediate activity, which lies somewhere in between the beginning with its questions and the end with its output, and is thus invisible for the public? Should the research be exhibited, which I find odd, or should an artwork be exhibited that presents itself as such; an artwork, however, that has attained its specific form and orientation through the process of research and without which it would not have this particular form and orientation?”

Whereas Bippus regarded the form of the exhibition as possibly “a further step” within the art research process, Landré saw in the format of the exhibition a potential “method”, an “experimental setup”, which is not about “illustration or materialisation of one’s own ideas”, but about developing these ideas by engaging with the public.

Ruth Sonderegger asked whether it was necessary for Möntmann’s work to be presented in an art museum context: “In all of these processes you appear in various semi-public contexts, you enter closed spaces—and this is a complex fusion. In connection with your particular work—you work in prisons, you take your work into the public realm—I ask myself whether there is any need to act in a representative capacity?” “So far, your work focused on rejecting the majority of art spaces and developing new questions and modes of work in collaboration with women prisoners. That’s how I always imagined it: you want to develop something with these women. And this benefits the women above all: you also get something out of it and you want by all means to conduct research on these institutions. From this work the object of the dolls resulted, not because you think the dolls are terrific. What’s special about them is a result of you engaging with the women in prison. And they are the main issue. Perhaps it is also about a community of psychiatrists and prison workers. When you are working on a project I doubt whether you are thinking about museum visitors. I think that as soon as one starts thinking about plans for exhibiting in art-venues, one has to think about other people, who should take something away from the presentation. I don’t have a solution, but I find your project an extremely intelligent, responsible construction, a cross between social work and research using creative artistic tools, but not as something that ends with an exhibition.”

As an example of a very successful presentation Ruth Sonderegger mentioned the published conversation between Elke Bippus and Ulrike Möntmann,<sup>140</sup> which contains research findings in the form of photographs, diagrams, and encounters. Although Sonderegger still finds it really interesting to introduce the project to a wider public, she said that art venues are just one option and one could consider moving into other public places, for example, the town hall, the Museum of the Medical University of Vienna, or the streets.

With respect to appropriate formats of presentation and the claim to validity of the research results, Bippus perceived a division of the project into two phases: the completed phase of project implementation and the evaluation phase in collaboration with scholars, scientists, artists, and so on.



Bippus also mentioned that funding by PEEK has a momentum of its own, which by stipulating a time frame and on account of certain organisational structures indirectly demands a final presentation of the years of research work.

Ulrike Möntmann only partially agreed with this view because she said the methods and goals of the project had been defined before it received funding from PEEK, and the research work follows the logic of the project. The funding from PEEK does not mean any change of policy, it represents a faster and more stable continuation of the project in which meetings, experiments, and an increase in cooperative work is easier to achieve. The book, which was decided on before PEEK confirmed its financial support, is still the main form for presenting the project and will function as the basis of the planned exhibition: "The book is the freest space for this work. And this can be *unfolded*. In that order."

Landré also saw an increase in the project's productivity facilitated by the PEEK funds: "More reflection, more research is taking place that generates a specific form of material". At the same time she regarded it as a matter of importance to continue to reflect on the necessity of exhibiting the project's material.

However, in the "unfolding" of the material, said Nina Glockner, the parameters of the form of the exhibition come into play, "for example, the EOC installation is a translation of the Web archive. The voices, the biographies are all there and the intervention is minimal, yet in spite of this the installation communicates other aspects of the work, for example, the significance of the collective. In all areas of the book aspects of such translation processes will be of relevance."

Stalder also mentioned the conditions that a spatial presentation, an exhibition entails: "When you display the book, that is the presentation. When the presentation is audiovisual or in the form of texts then the specificity of the space also comes into play and it becomes a presentation that is an installation. You transfer the book, with its heterogeneous material form, to a space. Thus the material which exists in the book, in the text, in diagrams, in whatever form, passes over into a different materiality, you produce a new state of aggregation in the space in order to render all aspects accessible." With regard to the specific meaning of space, Möntmann declared her interest in "occupying space, making use of space". This applies to all aspects of her work.

Sonderegger remained sceptical and questioned once again the importance of the planned exhibition: "Why not just do a book, provide open access to your super Web archive, talk to all sorts of people in the meantime; why do you need to add the art context? There is a lot to be said for this, for lots of works and lots of people. I don't see that in your case an exhibition is absolutely necessary. Which media and audiences do you expect the most from, and what decisions does this entail?"

Möntmann also sees the publication of the project's findings as mainly in the book and the Web archive, but regards their spatial presentation in an exhibition as expanding the possibility of communicating them. In contrast to the "hierarchical", linear structure of a book, said Möntmann, "completely different choices are feasible. One can take the order apart and arrange it in another way, because unfolding within a space is less hierarchical, the line of sight is not predetermined."

Felix Stalder expanded on this idea: "To unfold the book, if I understand this correctly, does not mean to make all of the material three-dimensional,

but to make the material that is in the medium of a book accessible in a different way. There are various ways of doing this; some things will be highlighted and others will inevitably remain closed. That is why you don't want a system; instead, you introduce a range of conflicting orders." Stalder emphasised that the friction resulting from the juxtapositioning of material hinted at how much there actually is, but does not reveal it in its entirety. The material can only be grasped "within a system of organisation but never by itself. The material does not exist as material, only within a specific order, which could also be another."

In this context, said Stalder, he was interested in how artistic work relates to research processes: "For me research means generating material according to a set of methods. Then the question arises as to make the material accessible and this is what art research can do because it has a large repertoire of formats at its disposal."

#### Actionism and Interventionism in TBDWBAJ

In addition to the desire to enquire, generate material, and an artistic interest in "different forms of ordering and presentation", Ruth Sonderegger identified in Möntmann's work at least a further important level; namely, "an actionist and interventionist" level.

With regard to the level of political and public relations work, Möntmann seeks to "protest against the prison system, and—sometimes literally—to change the living conditions of the incarcerated women. And this does not belong to the sphere of autonomous art. If one seeks to intervene, this means one has a purpose or a goal. This is what I find so intriguing about this project, that there are autonomous parts as well as obviously interventionist ones. Thus it is not only a question of what kind of different organisation systems I can have, but what effect I can have." In Sonderegger's view the most important potential effect of the project is to shift, crisscross, and mix publics, for example, by bringing "closed spaces where little information circulates and scant exchange takes place" out into the public realm: "I see many paths for your work to enter the public sphere and these lead only partly to art spaces."

As Elke Bippus regards her own sphere of activity as located within the arts and sciences, for her the question is where the spaces for actionism and interventions are located there. In her own activities, for example, she could include Ulrike's work in her lectures and in this way introduce it into the debate. Bippus asked Sonderegger for her opinion of whether the political momentum of the project would be lost if one operates "very academically" within the arts and sciences in order "to reach a different audience. That is why I wanted to talk about being involved, the political aspect of what we do within the structure of the project". That "certain themes as well as methods get introduced into the realms of the arts and sciences and that certain knowledge is produced", Bippus said that for her this approach possesses a political momentum.

The arts and sciences, said Sonderegger, are "large, intractable apparatuses" within which it is not easy for her to operate. In her opinion, "it only gets political when there is no longer any space for consensus. I agree with Rancière that 'dissensus' is micropolitics; that certainly means something to me.

These micropolitics may be discernible in the exhibition, but it will be a different form of insubordination than when I go through all possible channels and fight, for example, that the women in prison are provided with better furniture, like you have done, Ulrike, and continue to do. Politics are found where there is dissension or where it is still possible to produce dissension without its being integrated immediately.”

138 *Out of the Box: 10 Fragen an künstlerische Forschung*, exhibition mounted by the University of Applied Arts, Vienna, 28 November 2013–5 January 2014, Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna. All projects presented in the exhibition were supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Programme for Arts-based Research (PEEK), and are hosted by the University of Applied Arts.

139 Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture: Interviews and Other Writings 1977–1984*, ed. L. D. Kritzman. New York and London: Routledge, pp. 47–53.

140 *Ästhetik der Existenz*, T:G\10 series, ith, Edition Voldemeer, AMBRA, Zurich, 2013.

OSNABRÜCK, JUNE 2014

## REBECCA MERTENS

For the first time I get a message from Rebecca via WhatsApp.

I'm feeling really good – when can we meet?

We catch up with each other. She has a new boyfriend; his name is Stefan and he's “fantastic and really nice. NO DRUGS!!!! He has nothing whatever to do with drugs. He used to be an alkie but not any more, not for ages now. He's the same age as me and on permanent sick leave; he used to suffer from depression.” She'll tell me all about it but now she has to go to the farm to buy eggs to bake brownies for Stefan. Also, the dog needs a walk.

Until we meet again some months later in Osnabrück, we communicate regularly about everyday stuff, including her baking recipes. She even has her own apartment and will furnish it very soon. At the moment she is living with Stefan who owns a house on the outskirts of Osnabrück. Well, actually, it belongs to his mother who he looks after and who lives on the first floor.

Stefan, and now Rebecca, too, sells small pieces of furniture and second-hand goods at flea markets. She really likes patching up the objects, travelling around northern Germany in a van, and selling their stock.

I should come and visit her and Stefan. We arrange a date and they come and pick me up. Rebecca comes with me in my car; she has to tell me something:

Stefan doesn't know about my past life.

Or rather, he mustn't know; rather, he doesn't want to know. He can't stand junkies; he is probably afraid of them. I ask her how this will work if we can't talk about her life? She says I should just be careful what I say when he is around.

He doesn't understand what it's all about. He doesn't know about me being on the game.

We have a coffee together in the kitchen and Rebecca presents her latest

bakery sensation – Frankfurter Kranz, an elaborate speciality made of sponge cake, jam, butter cream, coated nuts, and cocktail cherries. It is rather bizarre for me not to talk openly with Rebecca outside of prison. Nevertheless, we do talk about the projects but without mentioning the institutions. Rebecca even shows Stefan her clothing objects in various catalogues and books. He seems to be able to ignore the context of prison.

I go for a walk with Rebecca and Stefan's dog in a nearby wood. She seems to know the area very well, says hello to neighbours and passers-by, and tells me about which regular walks she takes here. She is very glad that she has succeeded in reducing the methadone to a minimum; soon she will be able to take a week's supply home with her. The daily visits to the dispensary, that is, the doctor's surgery, are a pain.

I ask her how old Ben is now.

Six

she says. He is still living with the same foster family, and he seems to be doing well. It seems to me that the foster parents would probably like to adopt him. Yes, she says, she thinks that is very likely. Wouldn't she like to give him up for adoption, I ask, being fully aware that this is something she really doesn't want to talk about.

I can't think about it. As soon as I try, there is a block; my brain or something just seizes up. I simply can't think about this in relation to Ben.

Would I go with her tomorrow to the hospital? She has to get the results of some tests, it won't take long.

The results are all within the normal range. We drive into town as she has to visit her probation officer briefly. The office is across from the Schlosspark. Rebecca recognises in the distance some pals from former times who are sitting on the park benches.

Come on, I want to introduce you.

We sit down next to them and Rebecca talks her head off about the research and projects we have done together, about the Baby Dolls and the biographies. The information doesn't mean much to the three men but they compliment Rebecca on her radiant appearance; they're not getting along so well.

Later, we go to a restaurant in the city and the hectic atmosphere of the last day and a half calms down. Gradually, we resume our frank and familiar mode of communicating. She is quite used to me badgering her with questions about drugs, her views, and the reality of her everyday life. I also ask her how she imagines having a relationship where one of the partners has to deny their former life. She doesn't know. There have been some rows connected with this; only recently, for example, they were in town together and they met one of her old friends.

He got really pissed about it. He hates junkies! He thinks it's unacceptable that they are my friends.

When Rebecca is on her own and meets old acquaintances, they sometimes go to her still empty flat to have a drink,

Nothing excessive, just normal.

In the afternoon we pay a visit to Inge and Rolf<sup>141</sup> in the same house where we stayed for a weekend during the time we were working at Loxstedt. Rebecca misses the dogs who used to be there, but who in the meantime have died.

We add some missing information to the lists about stays in prison, relapses, and therapy approaches in recent years. I ask Rebecca if she would like to drop in and visit her mother. Rebecca had told me a while ago that her mother found our first visit rather alarming. I don't recall exactly what happened, but perhaps the initial Loxstedt-euphoria about Rebecca's successful detox had triggered reproachful questions with implicit accusations when I actually met her mother. I would really like to let her know that it was not my intention to pressurise her or hold her accountable.

Rebecca's mother is pleased to see us, and again the kitchen table is set and the coffee is ready. Nothing appears to have changed in the apartment in the last fourteen years. Her mother is happy with my explanation and readily accepts my apology. The three of us talk about Rebecca's time in various child psychiatry clinics. I ask her about the institutions and she writes down the names of the clinics; we then reconstruct the dates.

Rebecca's mother repeats the exact words of a psychiatrist that treated her back then in the Wichernstift:<sup>142</sup>

Your daughter will probably become a drug addict.

However, she still doesn't recall any details or an explanation of this prognosis.

I suggest that we apply to see Rebecca's medical records of the institutions that treated her as a child. Neither Rebecca nor her mother believes that this will be possible now, more than thirty years later. But both think it would be a good thing to do something about it, or rather that I do something about it. We agree that I will try and find out how we can get access to the records, and that Rebecca will authorise me again to do so.

<sup>141</sup> My brother Rolf then meets Rebecca for the first time "in the flesh". Since the beginning of my projects in prisons he has helped me by editing my project proposals, official letters, and all of the participants' biographies in German, and he also supports the implementation of the projects both with practical assistance and financially.

<sup>142</sup> In the late 1970s Rebecca was treated in the Wichernstift clinic for child and juvenile psychiatry. The institution was founded in 1974 by the church social welfare service of the Lutheran Church in Oldenburg and specialised very early in treating addiction and impairments and harm resulting from development disorders in children.

OSNABRÜCK, JUNE 2014

## REBECCA MERTENS

It very quickly turns out that there are more than enough precedents for our application to see medical records, even after thirty years. I tell Rebecca about what I have found out, and ask her how we should proceed, make suggestions, but for weeks now she is no longer so communicative.

She writes that she has a lot of stress with Stefan. That she doesn't understand how he can be so petty. After all, she is doing everything she can to please him.



# ACCOMPLICES' MEETING I [PSYCH]

## PSYCHIATRY / PSYCHOLOGY

### Participants

Gabriele Fischer

Ulrike Möntmann

Shird-Dieter Schindler

Professor at the University Clinic for Psychiatry  
and Psychotherapy, Vienna, Austria  
artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna,  
Austria  
psychiatrist, Director, Sociomedical Center  
Baumgartner Höhe, Center for Addiction and  
Substance Abuse, Vienna, Austria

Transcription and Text  
Nina Glockner

At the first Accomplices' Meeting in psychiatry and psychology, Ulrike Möntmann met with psychiatrists Shird-Dieter Schindler and Gabriele Fischer. To begin with Gabriele Fischer addressed the handling of addicted pregnant women and the social problems that arise in treating them. She criticized the fact that pregnant addicts—the largest group is alcohol-dependent but this is not registered by the system—are treated by general practitioners. Gabriele Fischer advocates that these women be treated by specialists, as is normal practice in the case of high-risk pregnancies. Further, she criticized the lack of “a holistic view of the problem of addiction” with reference to judging whether addicts are capable of bringing up children or not. Here, a lack of communication between the youth welfare service and psychiatry exists: the role of the youth welfare service is twofold and contradictory, for on the one hand it must provide help and act in the capacity of protector and person of trust, and on the other it is an agency with control obligations that makes far-reaching decisions. There needs to be far greater objectivity and professionalism also to avoid perpetuating the stigmatization of persons who since their childhood have been caught up in a cycle of institutionalized care.

## Austria's Policy on Drugs: Development and Status Quo

Austria's Policy on Drugs is organized on a federal basis. The Federal Ministry distributes the budget among the various Austrian states and these in turn pass funds to the institutions which are responsible for providing public health measures in connection with addiction and substance abuse. In Vienna, a radical change is currently taking place in the direction of substitution therapy and better coordination of available treatments. This is being coordinated by Sucht und Drogen Wien (SDW—addiction and drugs Vienna).

Shird Schindler pointed out that so far this institution has assessed the mental situation of a person as being the consequence of their social situation, whereas from a psychiatric viewpoint the opposite is the case: addiction is seen as the cause of social non-functioning. Gabriele Fischer said that a two-fold diagnosis in cases of addiction is only gradually being recognised. Further, recent studies have found that 60% of addictions are hereditary. Schindler added that addiction is a highly complex psychiatric disorder and society needs to recognise this fact.

Fischer described the administrative system of Austria's drugs and addiction policy as "an outrageous machine for burning money and at the same time a gigantic power apparatus" with antiquated structures. To prevent misallocation of funds her demand is for a centralized system. Especially with regard to pregnant addicts Fischer is of the opinion that a centralized cooperative model in which hospitals with the relevant departments, such as gynaecology, general medicine, and psychosocial medicine, work together would provide an opportunity to develop a model of treatment comprising an effective early warning system and with a focus on prevention.

Gabriele Fischer mentioned Portugal as an example of a successful model with linear structures instead of maintaining "many small fiefdoms". There the local system of healthcare has been abolished and replaced by linear cooperation between specialist facilities, general practitioners, day centers and night clinics, and so on and the quantity of drugs for own use that can be in someone's possession has been raised (e.g., up to 5 grams of heroin). The savings to the Ministry of the Interior and the legal system resulting from less prosecutions and repression, said Fischer, are all used to finance the treatment model.

This progressive drugs policy is one of the consequences of the fact that the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) has its headquarters in Lisbon. Fischer then cited by way of contrast the findings of a study on the costs of penalization and treatment published recently in Austria: "one year of opioid therapy costs 4000 Euros; one year in prison costs 36,000 Euros."

In view of the federalistic drugs policy in Austria, Ulrike Möntmann asked the two psychiatrists to what degree they were free to choose the type of treatment for a patient and also carry it out.

The psychiatrists replied that the Ministry does not intervene directly with regard to treatment because, unlike in Germany, treatment is subject to the Medical Practitioners and Medicines Acts, which stipulate that "we must give patients the newest therapies available and also the latest medicines." However, political regulation is still possible, for example, through decisions to close certain facilities or whether certain new medicines will be licensed. As a senior

university professor Gabriele Fischer is relatively independent, Schindler said, with the "hard-won freedom to do more or less what she wants".

Like Gabriele Fischer, Shird Schindler is not directly dependent on the SDW because his institution belongs to the hospital network. However, since reorganization there is now a cooperation agreement with the SDW "as a partnership of equals". The influence of politics, however, has become noticeable; sections have been closed down, treatment contracts awarded, and areas of responsibility changed. This now means that patients with an addiction cannot be treated for longer than 28 days; after that, if further treatment is necessary, they must be referred to a SDW treatment center. In spite of the considerable restrictions, Schindler thinks that there are positive aspects to the reorganization because due to cooperation with the SDW follow-up treatment or care after admission during a crisis situation is better guaranteed.

Ulrike Möntmann wanted to know whether the different affiliations and (un)freedoms lead to isolation within their field of expertise. To what extent can knowledge gained and information about successful therapies be disseminated under such constraints?

Gabriele Fischer refers to her situation vis à vis certain authorities as "self-imposed isolation" but she does not see any problem with disseminating the results of her work.

Gabriele Fischer had to leave the meeting early; discussion continued and focused on the history of the origins of various institutions in Vienna. Asked about how his training related to his current professional practice, Schindler replied, "That has more to do with religions, but not in the sense of systems of faith [...] Everyone wanted to help the people, everyone had different concepts and views as to where the problems lay, everyone accepted these patients and devoted a great deal of energy and effort to them. Those who began to build the institutions in Austria 30 or 35 years ago were certainly very charismatic people".

Schindler gave examples of Viennese institutions—the Anton Proksch Institute, in the meantime the largest addiction clinic in Europe; the Socio-medical Center Baumgartner Höhe, Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse; Grüner Kreis, Association for the Rehabilitation and Integration of People with Addictions—which were all founded at around the same time with scant funds but animated by the humanist ideal of offering help, but have developed in different directions due to differing ideological and therapeutic concepts. Further split-offs due to ideological grounds have led to the foundation of several small institutions, for example, the Zukunftsschmiede, psychoanalysis-oriented in-patient therapy in the area around Vienna.

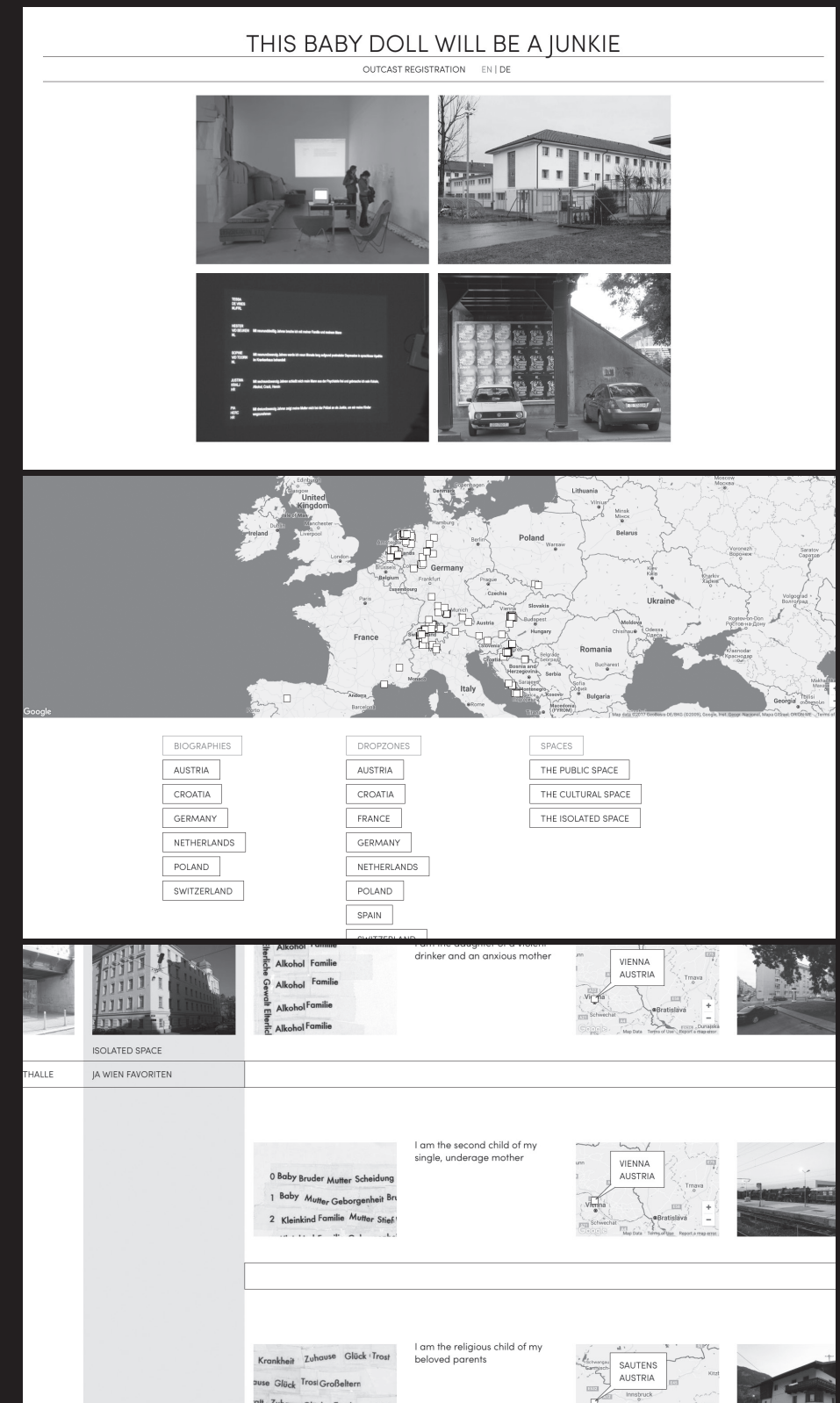
## Social Paradigm Shift: Switzerland

Via discussion of the different ideological views of how to deal with addictions, the conversation turned to the progressive drug policies of Switzerland, which is otherwise a rather conservative country. Schindler said that because of a very extreme situation, which Swiss politicians had ignored for a long time, a very slow but constant process of rethinking had taken place there in which addiction was ultimately understood as an illness by the general public. In spite of curtailing certain liberal measures, such as closing the public rooms

for drug fixers (“Fixerstüblis”), in Switzerland 80–90% of the population consider addiction as a psychiatric problem and not as “moral degradation” or “an amusement of own choice”. For the psychiatrist this manifestation of common sense in regard to addiction is a crucial objective and important parameter for drugs policies.

Austria, with the exception of Vienna, is still a long way behind Switzerland. Many changes to existing laws to implement different drug policies lack a political basis due to the public’s non-acceptance of addiction as an illness.

For Ulrike Möntmann drug policies in the Netherlands, which are often seen from outside as progressive, are rather based “on an incredibly pragmatic outlook on life”. Schindler said that measures in Vienna such as the “Karlsplatzsäuberung zur Volksberuhigung”—an installation of a police-monitored “protection zone” on Karlsplatz to reassure the general public where there used to be an open drug scene—are also examples of such a pragmatic approach. The problem of addiction is not solved by banishing addicts from certain public places, they are only relocated to other places. However, the citizens see this as a positive development because they are no longer accosted or inconvenienced in any way.





ACCOMPLICES' MEETING II  
[PSYCH]

PSYCHIATRY / PSYCHOLOGY

Immediately after the first Accomplices' Meeting in psychiatry and psychology, the second took place with psychiatrist Shird-Dieter Schindler and Corinna Obrist, a psychologist and psychotherapist who is Head of the women's section at the Vienna Favoriten Prison,<sup>143</sup> a special facility with a mandate to treat prisoners with addictions.

Participants

Nina Glockner

artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna, Austria

Ulrike Möntmann

artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna, Austria

Corinna Obrist

psychologist and psychotherapist, Head of the Women's Section, Vienna Favoriten Prison, Vienna, Austria

Shird-Dieter Schindler

psychiatrist, Director, Sociomedical Center Baumgartner Höhe, Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Vienna, Austria

Transcription and Text

Nina Glockner

In retrospect, Shird Schindler identified four phases in how addiction is dealt with: in the 1980s the focus was on concepts leading to a cure, and in the 1990s, with substitution treatments, attention shifted to treatment concepts. He sees the 2000s as characterised by the sobering realization that neither of the previous approaches had provided a real solution. The current situation in the 2010s he described as back-tracking: one has now arrived at a more realistic assessment and addiction is viewed as a chronic illness.

In Schindler's opinion, dealing with addiction as a chronic illness demands individualised treatment tailored to each phase of the illness: "I need an appropriate depth of intervention and choice of treatment for each phase of the chronic illness. To differentiate among these alternatives for treatment is the task we currently face." The psychiatrist said that an advantage is that there is now a larger spectrum of recognized forms of therapy.

Corinna Obrist shares this view and recommends that this diversity be accepted and at the same time one's expectations of treatment outcomes should be lowered, for these often reflect the expectations of middle class society.

In Corinna Obrist's view a gender-specific concept is an important aspect of this individualised treatment. However, currently the profile of the gender and queer thematic complexes is not anchored in the relevant institutions, such as universities and the institutions that train therapists. The assignment of gender roles also plays a role in the development of addiction and must therefore be taken into account in developing treatment concepts and models, particularly with respect to offers to quit.

#### Substitution as Alleviation of Suffering?

Understanding addiction as a chronic illness gives rise to complex social and subject-specific issues, including how to deal with substitution and the objectives of treatment and prevention.

Corinna Obrist raised the question of why, when addicts are given substitution or medication, is it necessary that these patients should want to bring about a change? Severely traumatised people should surely be accorded the right to amelioration of their pain through chemical substances under humane conditions without automatically presupposing a will to change. At the same time individualised offers to quit need to be formulated which are both high-threshold and low-threshold: "Can't I even just sedate myself so that I no longer feel the pain without having to want something or having to act as though I want something, and in spite of everything can't I live a dignified life?"

In this context Corinna Obrist is in favor of far-reaching de-criminalisation, whereas Shird Schindler advocates reducing accepted legalized narcotics instead of legalizing "hard" drugs. Here his main concern is prevention: "Early recognition and treatment of suffering so that use of addictive substances is not needed."

In spite of the diversity of forms taken by the syndrome of addiction, Shird Schindler's long-term studies reveal significant similarities among patients in the course of treatment. Particularly striking is the finding that "even after eight months of psychotherapy in our clinic the self-alienation of the patients on the existence scale does not change significantly, that is, it remains relatively constant at a low level, which for us was ultimately a trait marker: of all the factors this was the only one that did not change or hardly at all."

Self-alienation is an indicator of the extent of inner freedom: "How much freedom can I allow myself, how may I be? If I only give myself a minimum of freedom, then I soon get problems. Even in moments when I am tired, when I'm a bit apathetic, I exceed my own personal limits and I am dissatisfied with myself. The extent to which I give myself freedom is for me one of the main criteria of how strong the superego is. At this point I'll get a rap on the knuckles because I don't fulfill the expectations. For me this has a lot to do with addiction. What was surprising was that all other factors changed during the treatment—sometimes within the space of a couple of months—but the space of inner freedom was the only one that remained stationary and narrow."

The study showed that transcendence also tends to be at a constantly low level among the patients. However, Schindler sees in its expansion—a detour via relativisation of the self in confrontation with something larger—a possibility of enlarging inner freedom (e.g., religion or the twelve-step programs).

In this connection "control", as the "biggest myth in the treatment of addiction" (C. Obrist), plays an important role. Whereas patients would have an alternative to control by means of transcendence, for example, in practice addicts as well as therapists and supportive caregivers believe that the problem of addiction can be solved by continuous control (self-monitoring, external control such as urine analysis, inspections and so on).

In this regard, Corinna Obrist is convinced that it is necessary to think about new models: "This is, after all, a paradigm in addiction treatment—that the addicts must monitor themselves and must also believe that their addiction is controllable. But addiction is not controllable. All we do is to control the addicts. And this is done in prison anyway; we continually carry out inspections, like taking urine samples and analysing the inmates' hair. Sometimes it seems to me that the addicts and the rest of humankind all have the same idea of control. But control also has something to do with "pulling yourself together" and "mastering intentionally" and this completely contradicts the notion that addiction is an illness."

A relapse, for example, is a symptom of the illness which needs to be reflected on as such—it must not be covered up nor should it be penalised. But on the other hand control is necessary in order to provide an environment that is drug-free and as safe as possible; this applies both to treatment centers and to prisons.

Shird Schindler: "One is simply trying to provide a protected haven, but one must equally accept the fact that there will be relapses. Strangely enough, for a long time addiction treatment centers regarded relapses as highly problematic, although the relapse is a characteristic of the illness. People who don't suffer from the illness of addiction, don't have relapses. I have always found this rather paradoxical."

Both Corinna Obrist and Shird Schindler agreed that the fall of the Austrian abstinence paradigm was an important and positive change in the treatment of addicts; however, in Schindler’s opinion its implementation in practice is not yet optimal. There is not yet enough experience in dealing with relapses as symptoms but also as opportunities: “The anger and exasperation that there is when someone actually does have a relapse does not quite correspond with the new view.”

What remains is the disappointment of the person who has had a relapse, which has a very negative influence and keeps the downward spiral going, and this in turn triggers an abstinence violation syndrome.

143 “Vienna-Favoriten Prison has a mandate to treat prisoners who have committed an offence in connection with the consumption of drugs or other intoxicating substances and have been sentenced to imprisonment by a criminal court (§ 22 Austrian Penal Code). In addition, prisoners in other penal institutions can apply for a transfer to this prison to be treated for addiction (§ 68a Penal Procedure Code).” For further information visit the prison’s official website (in German): <https://www.justiz.gv.at/web2013/html/default/2c94848542ec49810144724ed61d5a38.de.html>



# ACCOMPLICES' MEETING IV [ART]

ART THEORY /  
ART HISTORY /  
PHILOSOPHY

The fourth Accomplices' Meeting featuring the fields of art theory, art history, and philosophy took as its starting point Ulrike Möntmann's concept for an art intervention titled *Parrhesia in the City* as a part of her Outcast Registration. The participants discussed Michel Foucault's development of the term parrhesia and its possible application to art whereby the current concept of the public was interrogated and various strategies of criticism were explored with regard to the decline of practises of criticism.

## Participants

Elke Bippus

Professor of Art Theory and Art History, ZHdK University of the Arts, Zurich, Switzerland, and Hamburg, Germany

Sabeth Buchmann

art historian and critic, Professor of Modern and Postmodern Art and Head of the Institute for Art Theory and Cultural Studies, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Austria

Nina Glockner

artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna, Austria

Ulrike Möntmann

artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna, Austria

Ruth Sonderegger

Professor of Philosophy and Aesthetic Theory, Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, Austria

## Transcription and Text

Nina Glockner

Intervention *Parrhesia in the City*:  
Counter-Advertising, Communication, and the Concept of “the Public”

After briefly reviewing various activities in connection with her current research project, Ulrike Möntmann talked about her planned intervention *Parrhesia in the City*. Referencing Michel Foucault's elaboration and analysis of parrhesia<sup>144</sup>, she plans—working together with specialists from communication design and advertising agencies—to put into practice the specific knowledge she has gained from her Outcast Registration in a large-scale poster campaign in public spaces as counter-advertising. Together with women drug addicts, Möntmann will develop the statements and motifs for the backlit posters in the City Lights lightboxes as a new section of the project. The *Parrhesia* intervention will always take place at the same time as a presentation of the planned book.

“Is this the right approach, to make counter-advertisements to regular advertisements?” asked Ruth Sonderegger, and in this context brought up the problems associated with the communication of complex knowledge. She finds it intriguing “to work on maximum publicity with the maximum professionalism”. However, this does contrast rather strangely with Möntmann's production of differentiated knowledge: “There needs to be options of communicating and presenting knowledge without losing complexity. [...] Complexity cannot simply be created and distributed via professional advertising. Expressing complex truths always requires more time than is available when pursuing professional strategies of profit maximisation, and always requires more space than one has at one's disposal.”

Elke Bippus also voiced scepticism about this intervention as a medium of conveying lasting knowledge: “It is possible to trigger certain emotions and ensure that something is noticed. But what happens then? How does it go beyond the affects, so that the ramifications of what you have done are conveyed?”

For Möntmann, putting this concept into practice and its outcome remain very open; however, her basic question in this context concerns specifically the concept of parrhesia in reference to her artistic practice: “Does such a project including all its stages, which the women—me included—went through, fit into the category of parrhesia? Could this be a method in accord with today's democracy to speak the truth?”

In parrhesia, speaking the truth means that the speakers take responsibility themselves with all its consequences, said Sonderegger, which is the most vital aspect and therefore stands in total contradiction to what an advertising agency in general does: “In your long-term practice with all its problems and difficulties—especially and particularly those connected with communication—I see the life of a parrhesiastes, to which you are committed. You keep going. The question regarding parrhesia is exciting, although for me the question concerning the advertising agency has already been answered: they do not create what you want. The difference to your practice of truth, your life as a parrhesiastes, and what it says on the posters, this difference has to be visible somewhere.”

For Ulrike Möntmann what is intriguing is to interrogate what is possible and impossible within the genre. She sees that it is risky, daring, to launch an offensive and bring this marginal group into the centre of the city in order to reach the general public. After Möntmann's institutional work in prisons,

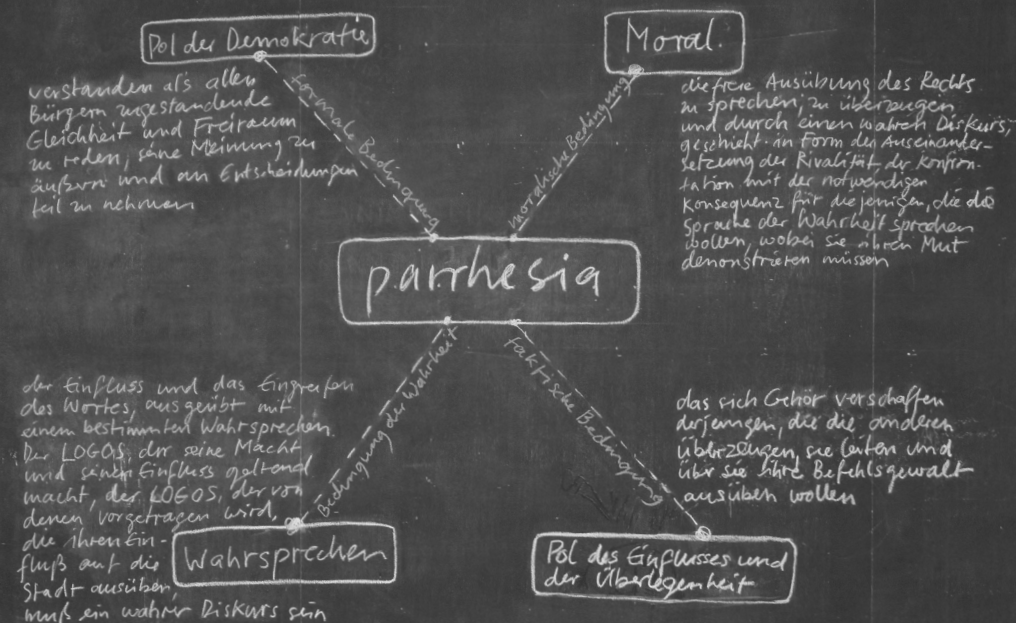
*Parrhesia in the City* shifts the focus to communicating art research, albeit this has been present in other aspects of Möntmann's work (for example, abandoning the Baby Dolls with their biographies in public places or the Expert Meetings). But does this intervention provide sufficient space to encompass the complexity of the project? Illuminated showcases or City Lights posters as sites of exhibition, according to Möntmann, can only present partial aspects of the project, although they do have the potential to initiate a movement that questions the normality that is presented by the media. This movement should then be linked up to the project in its entirety.

To Sabeth Buchmann it makes sense, both in terms of structure and context, to take this knowledge back to its origin—the street as a public space. At the same time, though, she questions to what extent in the field of advertising, as a “form of social consensus production it is still possible to visualise differences. Whereas in the 1980s and 1990s, during the Act Up movement billboards were used to draw attention to issues that had no political representation and to initiate forms of participation and the formation of collectives; that is, “to get people to take to the streets, literally”, the question arises whether this strategy could still have any effect today given the contemporary notion of public and publicity. In this connection it is necessary to analyse current understanding of these terms: the public sphere exists these days merely peripherally in the “consumer zones of inner cities”, and functions to a significant extent via a “media network” (Internet, social media, etc.).

Elke Bippus had no doubt that it would be possible to create an impact using the affective power that advertising utilises, but what needs to happen then “so that people are not left alone after being jolted, but are used to create publicity? The public sphere is where dissension exists, but if there is dissension then it needs to be discussed.” It is important not to lose sight of the roles of the actors in the project, said Sabeth Buchmann, for if an important purpose of the intervention is to bring about a change in a specific image or perception, this is precisely where there is a conflict: “Where does the public debate take place, when these pictures unleash their provocation?”

Ruth Sonderegger questioned in general the efficacy of media representations (illuminated showcases) of the actors given the overkill of images in the public sphere, regardless of how professional the presentation is: “A beggar, a homeless person sitting in front of St. Stephen's Cathedral has far more weight than any poster.”

She mentioned as an example Axel Stockburger's intervention *Quantitative Easing (for the street)* (2014) in Vienna's inner city. At the Kunstplatz (Graben) near St. Stephen's Cathedral Stockburger installed a golden cylinder that spat out a 1 euro coin at regular intervals, for which almost the entire budget of the project funded by KÖR (Public Art Vienna) was used. During the opening and afterwards a diverse audience gathered which consisted partly of people who were definitely not welcome at this city venue: homeless people and drug addicts. The temporary installation succeeded in effecting a shift in the composition of a specific social group in a specific public place. “The point is you can write whatever you want, you can hang up posters depicting poverty. But the people who are actually wretched and poor, they are not supposed to be there at all.”



The Parrhesiastic Rectangle, after Michel Foucault, chalk on blackboard, 250 x 180 cm, Ulrike Möntmann, 2014.

See: Michel Foucault, The Meaning and Evolution of the Word Parrhesia, in: *Discourse and Truth: The Problematicization of Parrhesia*, edited by Joseph Pearson, 1983

## Foucault's Parrhesia

To reinforce the starting point of her intervention concept Ulrike Möntmann asked to what extent art can have parrhesiastic traits, thus turning the discussion again to Foucault's parrhesia. Ruth Sonderegger summarised the three forms of parrhesia according to Foucault.

### Parrhesia and Democracy/Politics

This form emerged with the development of democracy in Ancient Greece. Foucault describes it in the form of a square (see also Mind Map by Möntmann) and highlights the problems of democracy. "He does not embrace all forms of democracy but says that democracy, which accords everyone the same rights, is always on the threshold of watering down everything, and for me he thus discusses all the problems of populism". Unlike Rancière's definition of democracy as a radically democratic system whereby the people always speak from a subordinate position, democracy according to Foucault implies both populism and the possibility of speaking truth.

### Ethics and Parrhesia, the Parrhesia of Personal Relations

Ethical parrhesia exists within small circles of friends, and in relationships between two people; it becomes increasing the model for political consultation.

### The Cynics and Parrhesia

The parrhesia of the Cynics was not manifested by what they said but by what they did, their way of life, publicly affirming certain things, also in a radical way (e.g., Diogenes who masturbated in the marketplace). The Cynics favoured spectacular actions in front of a large crowd as well as the politicisation of physical exercises. Interestingly, the Cynics also included women and slaves among their number.

In Foucault's discussion of the history and meaning of parrhesia it becomes clear that he favours Cynical parrhesia. In it he sees a possibility of opening it up into "an alternative model to democratic parrhesia that is not so strongly standardised." Sonderegger added that Foucault apparently intended to re-write the history of European thought systems in the light of Cynicism. In his view, Cynicism can be detected in various periods; "In medieval heretical movements, in the run-up to the French Revolution, and after it in the nineteenth century where it was partially absorbed by avant-garde art—also as a reaction to the failure of the French Revolution, the baton was passed to art."

With Cynicism Foucault continued his aesthetics of existence, as "an attempt to politicise aesthetics of existence and to go beyond the aesthetics of (private) friendships. To explore to what extent it is economic factors that restrict us, and how far it is conventions. The issue is to find out collectively what makes the good life, a life in freedom impossible. Asceticism was practised, and a life of poverty, entirely voluntarily. What I find fascinating about this life of trying things out is that there is constant vigilance to remain flexible. How does one do this? Including in debates with others? How does one remain in a state of trying out instead of elevating asceticism to a new dogma?"



### The Decline of Practical Criticism

Buchmann underlined the political importance of Sonderegger's work on parrhesia in view of the declining number of critical positions in art, science, and the humanities under conditions characterised by "collaboration imperatives and network imperatives".

Although criticism as a theme is ubiquitous, said Sonderegger, as a practice it is disappearing. Buchmann added: "It is the meta-criticism of criticism which pretends to be mega-critical and in the process of clearing away the critical tradition, while at the same time it completely restricts practical criticism's room for manoeuvre." She attributed the possible influence of object-oriented discourses to the lack of artistic responsibility, "that the form, so to speak, which was a legitimate approach to criticise authorship in the sense of critiquing humanism, in the guise of object-oriented discourses around Latour and others has led to the circumstance that responsibility on an artistic level, in its involvement with political areas that had always been taken into consideration, can now be pushed aside. Thus, artists are now in the position that when they take sides, take up a political position, they make themselves suspect. Or suspiciously ideological."

In this connection the increasing evaluation culture and the growing demand for (interdisciplinary) networking in artistic and scholarly practice were discussed as contributory causes for the decline in taking up a critical position. The continual evaluation mode, in which one acts both as evaluator and evaluated, exacerbates frictions, thinking in terms of competitors, and encourages wary and cautious behaviour so that one hardly ever says what one thinks.

Elke Bippus said she has noticed that "in art, criticism has now become a subject and a theme. One does not operate critically and reflect on one's position within a given field; instead, one criticises and often uses the modes of irony and parody. Thus criticism is treated as a subject that one speaks and thinks about and less as something that one practises."

Buchmann views this as a potential strategy of self-legitimation that is often accompanied by the "unpleasant" urge to deal out criticism from a lofty, elevated position. Sonderegger said that in this respect she agrees with Peggy Piesche who said that often the goal of this strategy is the formation of a "critics' elite". And behind the problematic of "problem zones art" that lacks any longer term engagement, Buchmann detects a far-reaching "logic of commercialisation". Artists take on roles that are "part of problem-solving strategies. That is also a perfect legitimation." Even if they are far removed from denigrating critical practice, there is much potential for them "in redefining the concept of criticism differently. But also—and I find this very important—to exhibit what is a risk for oneself at the same time."

### Strategies of Criticism

From the concept of criticism in the arts and humanities discussion turned to Sonderegger's text "Vom Wahrnehmen der Gleichheit" (Making equality a reality) and the significance of various strategies in philosophy and activism, especially the position of Jacques Rancière.

"If disagreement can be turned into a dispute and thus rendered political, all sides in the altercation change. At one with the demanded conditions or objects, those demanding equality are also allocated a place in the sensual realm of what can be argued over or discussed, and the representatives of the hitherto valid 'distribution of the sensible', who were oblivious to the unequal treatment of the other side must learn to see their habitual forms of perception as those of fundamentally unequal treatment."<sup>145</sup>

With this quotation Elke Bippus related the concern of Möntmann's project to Rancière's demand for a "re-distribution of the sensible", which Sonderegger then explained briefly: Rancière assumes that "in every society there exists a consensus about a basic distribution. What is an action, what counts as an action, what does one see, and what does one not see. This concerns perception, what is conceivable, and what can be manifested as an action. We can't think certain things, certain things we don't see, certain actions are not actions for us. Rancière thinks that there is always a distribution of what is inside and what outside. There is consensus about this. And this consensus, one could call it a norm, only takes place during speaking or in what has been said. Movements and perceptions are also normative. He refers to the given consensus as 'the distribution of the sensible'. Thus for Rancière it is about politics being there where the consensus is made an issue or is contentious."

Based on Sonderegger's text Bippus directed the discussion towards a possible comparison between Rancière's position, not wanting to speak for others but letting them write for themselves and thus making them "visible as writers", as well as Chakravorty Spivak's, who seeks to create a certain field and certain conditions as a political act so that others "will become, writing. That it will be possible that they practise, produce, and speak themselves." With this comparison the discussion led to interrogation of the characteristics of effective criticism, whereby to begin with Sonderegger outlined the following classification of strategies regarding the problematic:

The first strategy, Sonderegger said, is analysing and documenting as proposed by the French sociologist and social philosopher Pierre Bourdieu, who identifies the origins of certain social evils, that is, the reasons why persons affected cannot always act themselves. This is an important strategy; however, it carries the danger of becoming "new intellectual sociological capital".

The second one is philosopher Jacques Rancière's strategy of publication: He seeks out the sparse emancipatory moments, for example, when people who one thinks can't write actually can. He celebrates these few moments which he then publishes and ascribes great importance to.

The third strategy Sonderegger described is that of the philosopher and literary scholar Chakravorty Spivak: "on the one hand she attempts to raise acts that are actually imperceptible to us to our perception using case studies. However, the consequence is, according to Spivak, that she has to change the contexts in such a way that the subalterns are no longer subalterns. In this respect she has an activist and practical component. And this means, of course, that she leaves the intellectual field."

Buchmann then gave her opinion that the unity of theory and practice is not a decisive criterion for effective criticism, and advanced the following as

an argument: “What goes so far in a theoretical discourse that politics can be conceivable?” She also said that both Rancière and Spivak described the political field within their own disciplines.

Sonderegger said that besides a certain “heroism of exceptional cases”, in Rancière’s early work as an editor and his work in archives (e.g., *Proletarian Nights*) she definitely sees “a practice”, an activism. However, compared to the radicalism of his early activist critique and production of knowledge, in her opinion his work of the last ten to fifteen years is less “audacious and explicit”. She would welcome it if he would apply the radical practice of his critique to his activities within the sphere of art.

Buchmann countered by citing an example of Rancière’s current practice: his radical critique of curator Nicolas Bourriaud and the “self-appointed left-wing culture scene” in France. For Buchman this is surely “criticism of institutions in the very best sense. Moreover, Rancière does not heroise individual “highly productive artist figures”, but is one of the few well-known philosophers to engage seriously with contemporary art and what is going on in it, who has extensive knowledge of the field of art, and who develops criteria that facilitate and enable criticism.

Sonderegger said that she respects Rancière’s participation in the field of art and that he is a serious art critic, but he neglects to engage with the question of how he could reflect on or change art criticism so that it would be possible to get beyond the field-immanent “experts’ discourse”.

But Rancière, said Buchmann, gets involved “with other greater conflicts” unlike many other practitioners from the field of theory and activism. These tended to “pump critique into institutions that is expected and demanded of the art world but which is frequently totally ignorant about artistic practice. This activism triggers fantasies of doability that disregard entirely the reality within the arts yet suggests that artistic practices are political when they are combined with forms of activism. This is naturally welcomed by the art institutions which have an interest in live actions. I rarely see any kind of criticism in this or only criticism of a subservient type that can be used “for free” because ultimately, it does not affect the institution itself at all; rather, it gives it the nimbus of being critical.”

Although Sonderegger agrees with Rancière’s criticism of Bourriaud and appreciates his commitment to the sphere of art, she suspects Rancière of harbouring the “philosopher’s wish” of “contributing to crafting a concept of aesthetic experience or the artwork” that is as general as possible. In her view, Rancière confines himself to art shown in exhibitions and does not engage with phenomena such as micropolitics or other aesthetic practices where the question of whether something is art or not is secondary, and which problematise the shifts away from traditional art venues within the framework of the criticism of institutions.

Buchmann cited an example of the immanent negation of differentiating between art and non-art in the arts: at the Documenta 2012, curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev ignored the institution’s real power over definitions and thus prevented any questioning of the institution itself. By contrast, Rancière succeeds in “establishing criteria for politicisation of what can be said and what is visible within this framework”.

Bippus then enquired how Rancière deals with complexity. Although he “sets up a concept of art, that is, he develops certain criteria and descriptions of art”, it is nonetheless questionable to what extent he engages with the effects of his philosophy; “with his very general conception of aesthetic experience he also produces a normative concept of art and divides it into what is called art and what is called actionism.”

Buchmann sees self-reflection as given in Rancière’s differentiation between the “public and private platforms”, when he distinguishes between “within which framework something is depicted or represented and is tied to the form of the work”.

In Sonderegger’s opinion this self-reflection is not sufficient, not concrete enough: “This kind of self-interrogation or even self-deconstruction, and thus the interrogation of his own situation, takes place extensively in his early work in connection with standards of scholarship.” As an anti-pedagogue in the context of knowledge and education she said that Rancière achieved a considerable impact with the tools available to him, which could be applied to the art context.

As a Rancièresque perspective on art education Sonderegger paraphrased Linda Nochlin’s answer to the question What is great art for feminists?: “Great art means to produce contexts—as an artist, as a teacher—in which people have the courage to review their practices critically, and become great artists. To ensure that people who possess a certain courage, a certain reflexivity, can become great artists—this is feminist teacher activism.”<sup>146</sup>

Buchmann was in agreement with this and saw a real possibility of connecting Nochlin’s statement with Rancière’s position, “even if he doesn’t do this himself”

#### Art as the Production of Dissension

“A problematisation is always a kind of creation; but a creation in the sense that, given a certain situation, you cannot infer that this kind of problematisation will follow. Given a certain problematization, you can only understand why this kind of answer appears as a reply to some concrete and specific aspect of the world. There is the relation of thought and reality in the process of problematisation. And that is the reason why I think that it is possible to give an answer—the original, specific, and singular answer of thought—to a certain situation. And it is this kind of specific relation between truth and reality which I tried to analyze in the various problematizations of parrhesia.”<sup>147</sup>

Ulrike Möntmann gave this quotation of Michel Foucault’s at the end of the discussion illustrating the connection with her own work and art in general: what are the conditions for acting or problematising? “Basically, you create a problem in art that did not exist there before, and you work your way into the problem and then you work your way out again.”

Buchmann pointed out that this description is not specific to art, but can also apply to problems in the humanities and science. Ruth Sonderegger said that Möntmann’s statement is “a brilliant formulation of what Rancière means by making dissension visible. Where nobody sees a problem, where only consensus prevails, to say: Hey, that is a problem. And then to work toward others also recognising the problem, which is incredibly difficult in most cases. I think that there is something like the social production of dissension.

That is why it is not surprising that one can work on it, one can work on it artistically; that the problematisation of the production of dissension can be done in an artistic way—as well as in the production of knowledge, perhaps also in political activism—in very different forms. This dissension is there, yet it is mostly not seen or heard. To make it public would be to process dissension so that it becomes a stumbling block.”

For Sabeth Buchmann, processing dissension is a possible criterion for when “it is about art that seeks to be effective politically or to intervene in a political field”, but it is not a valid characteristic of artistic practices per se: “It is unfortunately a characteristic of political art today that is tasked with providing problem solving strategies. And as the art critic Patrizia Grzonka from Vienna expresses it that artists are sent to the world’s crisis hotspots like “universal soldiers”: short-term projects, no structures, no problems, just get everyone round the table. This can be a gesture of good will, but it can also be a harmonisation strategy, which rather tends towards homogenising and pacifying the concept of art. The production of dissension as discussed must operate in a completely different way. Tendentially, this is not so. However, I do believe that there are many practices in which one can find points of connection. And especially where “political” is used as a label: as the artist Stefanie Seibold has said, “*One must see feminism not as a label, but as an open, polemical field.* Nothing will be gained by merely invoking the concept.”

144 “... parrhesia is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain type of relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. More precisely, parrhesia is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In parrhesia, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy.” Michel Foucault, The Meaning and Evolution of the Word Parrhesia. In: *Discourse and Truth: the Problematicization of Parrhesia*, edited by Joseph Pearson. Digital Archive: Foucault.info, 1999; online: <http://foucault.info/doc/documents/parrhesia/foucault-dt1-wordparrhesia-en-html>

145 Ruth Sonderegger: Vom Wahrmachen der Gleichheit, *Phänomenologie* no. 38, 2012, Vienna.

146 Linda Nochlin, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* *ARTnews*, January 1971.

147 Michel Foucault, Concluding Remarks to the Seminar. In: *Discourse and Truth: The Problematicization of Parrhesia*, edited by Joseph Pearson. Digital Archive: Foucault.info, 1999; online: <http://foucault.info/doc/documents/parrhesia/foucault-dt6-conclusion-en-html>

OSNABRÜCK, 1 JANUARY 2015

## REBECCA MERTENS

On New Year’s Eve I wish Rebecca Happy Birthday; she is 39. She replies a couple of hours later, thanks me, and complains about Stefan. It’s her birthday, after all, and this is her day. She does not answer my question about what’s going on.

The only thing about me that interests Stefan is sex, that’s all I’m good for, to have sex with him when he feels like it.

I don’t seem to be able to reach her, to comfort her. There is a bitterness in everything she says that I have not heard before. My attempts to remind her of all the other things that are important to her she reacts to with silence.



ACCOMPLICES' MEETING III  
[PSYCH]

PSYCHIATRY / PSYCHOLOGY

At the third Accomplices' Meeting in psychiatry and psychology the experts were again psychologist and psychotherapist Corinna Obrist, who works in the women's section at the Vienna Favoriten Prison, and psychiatrist Shird-Dieter Schindler.

Participants

Nina Glockner

artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna, Austria

Ulrike Möntmann

artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna, Austria

Corinna Obrist

psychologist and psychotherapist, Head of the Women's Section, Vienna Favoriten Prison, Vienna, Austria

Shird-Dieter Schindler

psychiatrist, Director, Sociomedical Center Baumgartner Höhe, Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Vienna, Austria

Transcription and Text

Nina Glockner

## Women and Men in Prison: A Comparison

At the start of the meeting Corinna Obrist looked back at her many years of experience in the women's section of the prison and concluded that many of her goals had been achieved. She regards it as a matter of prime importance to convey to young colleagues at the prison how important commitment and solidarity among women is in a male-dominated society. In spite of the conditions of imprisonment and the implicitly powerful position of the therapists, in this way it has been possible to develop a community marked by solidarity and mutual understanding which, among other things, can help to reduce and guard against frustration: "The women who work with women are very committed to what they are doing and they are very interested in understanding gender-specific phenomena. And injustice is also an issue for them. It makes the work easier when one sees oneself as going beyond the conformist machinery of psychotherapy, as engaging with something far more important, namely, injustice. It is also about complicity with the inmates and the knowledge that common ground, implicitly, exists for in the final analysis we are all women."

Despite certain adverse conditions, like the consequences of reorganization, the women's section remains autonomous and by comparison there is far more work in therapy being done than in the men's section. Corinna Obrist explained this with men's tendency to fraternise faster than women, to establish subcultures, and in this way to work against the therapeutic structures of living in groups. By contrast women are often "more fragile" and thus more open to a therapeutic approach.

As a thought experiment Ulrike Möntmann asked the experts what they thought the situation would be like if there were far more women prisoners than men.

Corinna Obrist said that prisons are characterised by a culture of dominance and dictates of the majority. Moreover, the judiciary is male-dominated, as can also be seen in the prison guards. If men were the minority group in prison, they might be a little more cautious and circumspect in their behavior, but by and large the influence of our male-dominated societies would remain; that even when they are in the minority they still take more liberties. In their community the women might express themselves a bit more. However, the dominant culture is still one determined and supported by men and within it women are, so to speak, followers and facilitators, sometimes rebels and sustainers."

## Europe's Shortage of Psychiatrists

That there is a shortage of qualified psychiatrists in Europe was mentioned in connection with the implementation of Austria's new law regulating the working times of medical practitioners. The situation in prisons is particularly bad; Corinna Obrist said that in Vienna's Prison Favoriten there is only one psychiatrist who looks at critical cases once a month: "this has the consequence that many inmates are immediately turned away because the prison personnel does not feel confident in dealing with them and reacts with apprehension, unease, and avoidance strategies."

Possible reasons for this shortage of psychiatrists are the very long period of training and education, on average around 15 years, and salaries that are lower than other doctors' yet work with patients "who are not the most straightforward ones". Moreover, the role of a psychiatrist in a prison, said Obrist, is associated with risks, and their prognoses of the potential risk an offender poses could likely have grave consequences.

This was confirmed by Shird Schindler: "In the past there were studies that came to the conclusion that psychiatrists were no better than ordinary citizens at predicting a patient's development. In the meantime the instruments have been improved and overhauled so that at least statistically the predictions are better than a layperson's."

## Conflicting Social Values: Functionality as the Goal of Therapy?

The impact of neoliberalism on the disciplines of psychology and psychiatry in this context is also considerable: education and training, practice and goals of therapy are all affected by budget cuts and conflicting social values: "There is this neoliberal concept of humans that they should pull themselves together, just get on with their work and shut up. Thus groups of professionals in the 'soft' sciences like psychiatrists and psychologists degenerate into a means of conformism. That is the gist of what is taught in education and training", said Corinna Obrist. The analysis of social interrelations and trends—"that something is established whereby there are winners and losers, the why and the wherefore"—that is not part of the curriculum.

Corinna Obrist identifies an extremely high readiness in general to conform and to exploit, and sees this at work also in the psychologists in her prison: "Women train other women in order that they fit in well into the dominant culture. When is someone healthy, how much does it take for a cure, an alleviation, an improvement to be recognisable?"

Ulrike Möntmann questioned the socially accepted criteria of a successful therapy and suspects that a relative improvement in the state of a patient is insufficient, and instead a person's functionality is the standard criterion. In view of the immense budget cuts in the area of addiction treatment in Ulrike Möntmann's view there is a clear connection between the problematic of drugs "which represents one of society's marginal groups" and a systematic attempt "to render marginal groups invisible in the inner cities".

Schindler confirmed that the austerity measures introduced because of the financial crisis particularly targeted those sections of society without a lobby; that is, the marginal groups. The changed conditions make it far more difficult for high-quality work and maintaining a functioning program becomes more and more dependent on the initiative and commitment of the colleagues: "Many valuable initiatives are now being blocked; the situation is getting very tight. That it is quality work, which is very time consuming, that actually brings people a good step forward is apparently very difficult to get across."

# ACCOMPLICES' MEETING V [ART]

ART THEORY /  
ART HISTORY /  
PHILOSOPHY

Participants  
Elke Bippus

Sabeth Buchmann

Nina Glockner

Ulrike Möntmann

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artist, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Vienna,  
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Transcription and Text  
Nina Glockner

The theme of this Accomplices' Meeting was the interdisciplinary approach that Ulrike Möntmann uses in her work. Discussion also focused on the planned publication and the methodological decisions involved.

To begin with, Elke Bippus stressed the necessity of building a discourse community with actors from art research and art theory in which a different division of labour prevails than that which has hitherto existed between the two fields.

Ulrike Möntmann said that she regards the forthcoming publication as fulfilling this criterion for a book is one of the formats in which her Outcast Registration can be published: like in a relay race it will take up all the various disciplines and fields which she has made her accomplices and pass back into them as material.

Here Elke Bippus saw a possible strategy as juxtaposing the contributions of experts from the various fields instead of interpreting them; "so that everything which hitherto has proceeded concurrently comes together. Research findings from others which, naturally, bear upon the issues, articles that do not interpret the project's material but represent findings from their own fields: drug consumption, prostitution, sexual abuse." This approach is unusual but it works because it highlights the relay race method employed and the interdisciplinary nature of the work.



As an example Nina Glockner cited the book *Klandestine Welten. Mit Goffman auf dem Drogenstrich* by the educationstudies researcher Antje Langer. Langer lets the actors, drug-prostitutes, speak for themselves; she “does not just interpret and analyse, for the most part she merely *edits*.”

Such an approach, said Sabeth Buchmann, is quite legitimate from a theoretical perspective, “consistent with a participatory approach in which it is about establishing narrators on positions of equal footing—not only to talk about those affected, but to allow them to speak for themselves, to acknowledge them as actors and allow them to act, who then express themselves as independent subjects in a manner that not only enables their integration into various discursive avenues, but in which perhaps something might occasionally throw a spanner in the works.”

As a methodological option Sabeth Buchmann described developing a “topological model, of mapping” with links: “this does not have to be a linear argument that successively builds up. You could also arrange it simultaneously, as a networked system of references.”

#### The Collective Conversation as Practice

In this context Ulrike Möntmann asked the other participants for suggestions as to the form in which the material from the Accomplices’ Meetings could, should, and ought to be included in the book: “I would hesitate to interpret and summarise what you have said. I can’t say that I am prepared to act as freely in this context as I would in art.”

For Buchman the answer lies in “Copyleft! [a play on the word copyright —people are granted the right to distribute copies and modified versions of a work freely under the condition that this will also apply to all derivative works] Use what is useful for you! I do not have to be referenced personally in citations from discussions if it is a question of advancing knowledge. Naturally, in the case of *Parrhesia* or art research and art as research Ruth Sonderegger should be named, and Elke Bippus as prompter, and so on. But apart from that, I would say treat everything as raw material. And then somewhere or other it says that your text is based on certain discussions, that collective discussions are an integral part of your practice. I do that quite a lot. The theme of the rehearsal [*Probe*] which I am working on at the moment is connected with this in the sense that it is actually a collective discourse, and then I refer to the fact that I communicate with various people on the subject. Further, when people use a specific term or refer to specific theories, one should flag this as a citation; this is standard scholarship.”

Elke Bippus agreed but also added that in her opinion quotations can easily be slightly “distorted”: “When is it ever possible to remain essentially verbatim and leave something in its original context? Isn’t there always a transformation, a further shaping?”

To integrate the material into the context of Möntmann’s questions seems more meaningful than publishing transcripts of the discussions, said Buchmann: “The way we speak, the material has already been modified. We know each other so well that there is an element of exclusion. And this is something that we are not always aware of. However, the moment you are in

the process of writing, you are in a process of conveying contents. You will always want to explain to the reader why a particular term or explanation was used and by whom. In a discussion you don’t do that.”

#### Narration or Information, Closeness or Distance?

The new diagrams that are based on the data of TBDWBAJ project participant Rebecca Mertens were used to explain various possibilities of communicating knowledge and experience.

Rebecca Mertens, the salient features of whose life were entered as statistics in a diagram, is at the same time an individual whose personal life can be recounted “close-up” as it were. Elke Bippus queried the meaning of narration as a form of depiction in the forthcoming publication: “I think that also plays a role in how I relate to the presentation of statistics. What happens when I only have the diagram?”

For Buchmann a diagram combined with a story is itself narration: “It is not only a life broken down into data, it is also an account of a process. One starts to make connections between individual items, thus they don’t remain purely abstract data.”

Ulrike Möntmann was then asked whether she will make the publication a “purely objectifying account”—a representation method used by science—or whether there will be room for “a narrative, subjectivity, concern and commitment” (Bippus). This calls for deciding between a “relativising, subjective position”, the narration, which can be “a form of relativisation” (Buchmann), and a largely objectifying, academic form.

Möntmann sees narration as a form necessary for her practice: “I think that I really have to tell this story about how I penetrated further and further into the inside of the prisons. I know very well that purely objectifying academic work is not my sole interest nor will it be. I am not an academic. I need the personal dimension in order to find out what we might mean to each other. What interests a person, what can we learn from each other, what can we tell each other?” Nevertheless, there are parts of the project, for example, the Web archive, which because of their objectivity do not need narration. All of the publishing formats stand side by side and establish relations with differing emphases, and “in this way ensure that I convey an impression, certain perspectives.

#### Productive Contradictions: Highlighting Contradictions and Putting Up with Them

The encounters between varying perspectives that Möntmann aims at with her interdisciplinary method of working frequently reveals highly divergent ideological contradictions. Nina Glockner gave the example of the psychology and psychiatry Accomplices’ Meeting where, in spite of the relative closeness of these disciplines, a dilemma became apparent: “The psychologist repeatedly emphasised social and gender-specific aspects, and the psychiatrist reduced the problematic in part to medical aspects and thus neither engaged with the basis of Ulrike’s work or the work of the psychologist in prison. For me this results in a serious dilemma: on the one hand it helps on a social level that

drug addiction is now defined as an illness, but on the other hand I see the danger that this could lead to a new stigmatisation of drug addicts.”

Buchmann saw this as “an extremely productive contradiction” and she regards describing it as a socially relevant challenge: “What can one demand on a social level? This thinking in terms of both this as well as that, or either—or, the ambivalence, the ambiguity: it is precisely this contradiction that runs through all my reflections and practices. Time and again there is no resolution in either direction; time and again one probes new forms of relations. What is good where, how good is it, strategically, socially, academically, medically, juridically. And this must be redefined over and over again.” Buchmann identified this as a potential area of activity for art or art research: “Perhaps art might sustain the ability to endure such contradictions.”

In this context Bippus cited the view of Austrian sociologist and social studies of science researcher Karin Knorr Cetina that contradictions within lines of argumentation are inevitable. In Buchmann’s opinion, this position is “a great politico-ethical achievement. It does not mean that one does not take up a position when confronted by contradictions, but that one takes up a position *within* the contradictions or *toward* a contradiction; but always with the proviso that the contradiction must not be ignored. And there are no simple solutions.”

Möntmann sees drawing attention to contradictions as an end in itself in her work: “I don’t want to put forward any suggestions for solutions, I want to make visible what remains invisible on purpose—for whatever reasons.”

Nina Glockner said she also experiences this contradiction directly when the project is carried out in prisons; one cannot deny one’s own prejudices, but becoming conscious of their existence is the first step to approaching the participants: “an encounter does not create a solution but it forces a confrontation. When we live side by side, we have to be able to withstand this contradiction.”

In this connection Möntmann mentioned another contradiction that she always only refers to “in brackets”: “The projects can only be done inside prisons, it would not be possible to do them on this level outside because the women inside don’t wander off, they don’t oversleep, and they come and go at specific times. This is all a product of a system to which I am opposed, that I also describe as an inhumane place. But project work functions best there.”

RURAL DISTRICT OF HANOVER, 5 JANUARY, 2017

## WERONIKA MAZUR

Weronika wishes me,  
with lots of love!  
a Happy New Year in 2017.

After I had not heard from her for years and my emails and letters came back marked undeliverable – I did not know where she was living or if she had even survived her heart attack – I apply to the Hanover Residents’ Registration Office for her address. I receive the information that she and Marvin live near Hanover. I write to her and ask her to contact me; I would like very much to visit them.

For a few weeks I had health problems but I am better now  
she writes.

I am doing quite well; Marvin is now sixteen, and is growing up a fine young man. I would also like to see you again, but at the moment a visit is not possible because of my partner ... I am taking driving lessons and hope to be mobile in the spring and to move house.

# APPENDIX

## GERMANY

p.127 Rebecca Mertens [1976] | Language: German / Deutsch

Als Säugling, bzw. als Kleinkind, werde ich vielleicht sexuell missbraucht

Mit 3 Jahren komme ich das erste Mal in therapeutische Behandlung

Mit 6 Jahren bringt mich die Polizei das erste Mal nach Hause

Mit 9 Jahren fängt mein sexueller Missbrauch an

Mit 10 Jahren fange ich an zu trinken

Mit 12 Jahren schwänze ich regelmäßig die Schule und bleibe nächtelang von Zuhause weg

Mit 14 Jahren muss ich ins Heim

Mit 16 Jahren spritze ich Heroin

Mit 18 Jahren werde ich inhaftiert

Mit 24 Jahren mache ich eine Therapie

Mit 25 Jahren breche ich die Therapie ab und werde rückfällig

p.142 Karin Pausch [1958–2002] | Language: German / Deutsch

Mit 6 Jahren habe ich Angst vor meinen süchtigen Eltern

Mit 12 Jahren stirbt mein Vater

Mit 13 Jahren nehme ich Medikamente und Cannabis meiner Mutter

Mit 16 Jahren stirbt mein Bruder

Mit 17 Jahren spritze ich Heroin

Mit 18 Jahren stirbt meine Mutter an einer Überdosis

Mit 19 Jahren lebe ich obdachlos in Frankreich

Mit 25 Jahren werde ich zum ersten Mal inhaftiert

Mit 30 Jahren infiziere ich mich im Gefängnis mit HIV

Mit 31 Jahren flüchte ich vor neuer Inhaftierung in die Niederlande

Mit 32 Jahren verliebe ich mich in einen Drogenabhängigen und lebe mit ihm illegal in Rotterdam

Mit 40 Jahren kehre ich zur Polamidon-Behandlung zurück nach Deutschland, und beginne zu trinken

Mit 41 Jahren werde ich in eine psychiatrische Klinik eingewiesen

Mit 41 Jahren wird mein Geliebter erschossen

Mit 42 Jahren werde ich mit fortgeschrittener Leberzirrhose im Asyl für Junkies in Unna aufgenommen

Mit 44 Jahren sterbe ich in Begleitung meiner Betreuer

## NETHERLANDS

p.160 Louise van der Laan [1955] | Language: Dutch / Nederlands

Ik word benauwd geboren en ben een depressief kind



Op mijn 10e word ik behandeld met tranquillizers

Op mijn 12e gebruik ik samen met mijn zus hasjiesj, paddos en LSD

Op mijn 15e heb ik anorexia en snijd ik mezelf

Op mijn 16e beginnen mijn zus en ik heroïne te spuiten

Op mijn 18e ben ik voor het eerst psychotisch

Op mijn 19e trouw ik met een arts en leef als burgervrouw en junk

Op mijn 19e word ik voor het eerst onder dwang in een psychiatrische inrichting behandeld voor psychose, depressieve stoornis, verslaving en histerie

Op mijn 27e sterft mijn zus aan een overdosis heroïne

Op mijn 27e begin ik excessief alcohol te drinken

Op mijn 28e neem ik de heroïnebaby van mijn zus aan als mijn geliefd kind

Op mijn 28e volg ik een opleiding tot pedagoog en werk gedrogeerd met kinderen

Op mijn 29e ben ik zwanger en stop het heroïnegebruik

Op mijn 29e word ik negen maanden lang in het ziekenhuis behandeld voor een postnatale depressie in sprakeloze apathie

Op mijn 34e gebruik ik cocaïne en speed en zwerv verveeld en angstig op straat

Op mijn 36e sterft mijn man

Op mijn 40e word ik mishandeld en verkracht door een junk die me probeert te dwingen tot prostitutie

Op mijn 42e wordt mijn vriend voor het eerst veroordeeld en gedetineerd wegens mishandeling van mij

Op mijn 46e dwingt mijn vriend me tot seks met andere mannen

Op mijn 47e geniet ik het rondzwerven op straat en het drugsgebruik samen met mijn vriend

Op mijn 50e sterft mijn alcoholverslaafde vader

Op mijn 50e ben ik voor de tweede keer in mijn leven clean, en levensmoe

.....

p.161        Hester van de Beuken [1958] | Language: Dutch / Nederlands

Ik ben de zondebok van mijn moeder en een onhandelbaar, depressief kind

Op mijn 6e willen mijn tante en oom me adopteren

Op mijn 7e ben ik nog niet zindelijk

Op mijn 7e word ik door de handelende arts in een ziekenhuis verkracht en geslagen

Op mijn 13e loop ik voor het eerst weg van huis

Op mijn 15e begin ik alcohol te drinken

Op mijn 16e eindigt mijn relatie en probeer ik mezelf dood te schieten

Op mijn 22e loop ik doelloos op straat en ga naar huis om te drinken

Op mijn 29e trouw ik mijn geliefde

Op mijn 37e zwerv ik op straat, afgezonderd in mezelf

Op mijn 38e wil ik verdrinken in zee

Op mijn 39e breek ik met mijn familie en mijn man

Op mijn 39e ontken ik mijn verslaving, verzet me tegen behandeling en ontvlucht opsluiting in angst-psychotische toestand

Op mijn 40e zwerv ik depressief, verwaarloosd, woedend en beschaamd op straat en drink me bewusteloos

Op mijn 41e word ik een jaar lang in slaap gehouden

Op mijn 44e houd ik voor het eerst een psychiatrische behandeling uit, word weggestuurd en ga zwerven en drinken

Op mijn 47e leef ik onder de hoede van de verslavingszorg, kan mezelf voor het eerst voelen en bind me aan een man

Op mijn 47e word ik opgenomen in de psychiatrie voor de behandeling van depressie en verstijf bewegingsloos in angst.

Op mijn 47e word ik verlaten door mijn geliefde

Op mijn 48e leef ik zonder verweer en in somberheid

Op mijn 48e sterft mijn demente vader, mijn bondgenoot

.....

p.163        Tessa de Vries [1954] | Language: Frisian / Frysk

As earste bern soargje ik foar ús teloarstelde mem

Op myn 15e gean ik op stap en wurd manysk fereale op manlju

Op myn 16e begjin ik hasjys te brûken en ûntwyn ik my oan de terreur fan ús mem

Op myn 17e rin ik fuort

Op myn 18e wurd ik yn dronkenens ferkrêfte troch in man

Op myn 19e kin ik gjin bern mear krije

Op myn 20e eksperimintearje ik mei heroine, kokaine en spiritualiteit

Op myn 21e brûk ik poddestuollen, LSD, hasjys en tranquillizers, en genietsje myn hallusinaasjes

Op myn 25e ferbrek ik mei geweld de bân mei myn man en de bûtenwrâld

Op myn 26e is myn suske ferslave oan heroine

Op myn 27e bin ik clean en allinne

Op myn 30e fyn ik treast by nederwiet en slút my moannen oanien opyn in kast

Op myn 32e bin ik ferslave en psygoatysk sûnder behanneling

Op myn 39e kick ik ôf, bou in skip en tar op it tinken oan de leafde

Op myn 40e wurkje ik as helperliener yn 'e ferslavingssoarch

Op myn 43e ferval ik wer ta it brûken fan nederwiet as myn leafste

Op myn 51e bin ik twangmjittich fereale en psygoatysk

Op myn 51e fal ik ús mem oan

Op myn 51e bin ik sober

.....

p.164        Renske Westra [1972] | Language: Frisian / Frysk

Ik wurd te ier berne en oerlibje myn handikap

Op myn 2e wurd ik út it sikehûs nei hûs helle

As jong bern wurd ik troch myn âlden behannele as misfatsoen en op skoalle straft foar de efterstân yn myn ûntwikkeling

Op myn 8e begjin ik de alkohol te drinken fan myn heit dy't ferslave is

Op myn 17e wurd ik fereale op myn man dy't gokferslave is

Op myn 18e drink ik eksessyf alkohol

Op myn 18e begjin ik systematysk mannen te fersieren en mei nei hûs te nimmen

Op myn 20e wurd ik opnommen yn it sikehûs foar behanneling fan myn ôfwiking

Op myn 22e wurd ik tramtearre troch myn beskonken man

Op myn 23e haw ik pine en wurd ik ûnderfuorre opnommen yn it sikehûs

Op myn 25e wurd ik troch myn man behannele as in minderweardich bern en lit ik mysels ferrinnewearje

Op myn 26e beslút ik mysels te fernielen

Op myn 27e bin ik depressyf

Op myn 28e heucht it my net mear miskien yn dronkenens ferkrêfte te wezen

Op myn 28e wurd ik troch myn man en myn âlden it hûs útjage

Op myn 28e wurdt de drugsferslaving fan myn nicht stil hâlden yn 'e famylje

Op myn 28e flechtsje ik Fryslân út, kick ôf en libje ûnder beskerming fan 'e ferslavingsssoarch

Op myn 30e wurd ik mei in skok en depressyf opnommen yn 'e psychiatry

SWITZERLAND

p.185        Kristine Stam [1959] | Language: Swiss dialect Solothurnerdeutsch

I bes folgsame Chind vo minerä religionsbesässene Muetter

Mit 8 Jahr wirdi sexuell beläschtigt dur min Vater

Wo ni 9 Jahr alt bi, versuecht min Vater mi z'vergwaltige

Mit 10 Jahr verwundi mi mit Absicht um min Vater z'rpressä

Mit 15 Jahr wird i vergwaltiget dur en frömde Ma, verwirrt vo de Polizei ufgriffe und vo minerä Muetter beschuldigt

Mit 15 Jahr beruhig' mi mit Schlofmittel

Mit 16 Jahr flieh ig us mim Elterehuus, läbe mit mim Fründ und wurde schwanger

Mit 17 Jahr muss i de Vater vo mim Sohn hürote um ned us de Chile vo miner Muetter verschtosse z`wärde

Wo ni 18 Jahr bi, fangt min Ma a mi z`misshandle

Mit 18 Jahr sprützi i Schuger und läbe drogeabhänig,brufstätig und versorge mis gliebte Chind

Mit 20 Jahr verloni min Ma, läbe im Huus vo mine Eltere und schaffe professionell als Dealerin

Mit 24 Jahr füehri zäme mit mim HIV-infizierte Gliebte es Reschtorant und betreü ihn bis zum Tod

Mit 31 Jahr lieb i e drogesüchtigi Frou und bi sehr glücklech

Mit 37 Jahr suchi de Kontakt zu mim Vater um ihm z`verzeihe

Mit 38 Jahr ha ni Angscht vor em ellei si

Mit 39 Jahr wirdi obserwirt dur Polizei, aklagt wäge nochwisbarem Handel mit Schuger

Mit 40 Jahr wird i verhaftet, verurteilt und bechume vier Jahr Knascht

Mit 40 Jahr muss i in e vorg`schriebni Therapie und gsschtand mim Sohn mini Drogenucht

Mit 42 Jahr bi ni s'erscht mol clean und sehr depressiv und finde mi in Nüchternheit ned z`rächt

Mit 42 Jahr verliebi mi in en Exjunkj, erfahre ungekennts Verständnis und wehre mi nüm i verbaler Gewalt

Mit 43 Jahr brich i mini Therapie ab, wurde rückfällig in polytoxikomanie Drogenucht

Wo ni 46 Jahr bi,wird i es Jahr lang wäge fortgschrittener Läberzirrose behandelt

Mit 47 Jahr läb i jetzt in Gfangenschaft

p.188        Mella Affolter [1976] | Language: Swiss dialect Walliserdeutsch / Walliserdiitsch

Bi minär Giburt bliibt mis Härz staa

Driijehrig läbi regelmässig va minu Ältru gitränt

Mit acht i liidi unnärum Rassismus gägu mi Papa und mich

Mit 10 wirdi, wägu minär Trüürigkeit und Läbunsmiädigkeit, homöopatisch bihandlut

Mit 12 ubärfordri mini Ältru mit mim chranku Dasii und triichu exzessiv Alkohol

Wani 13 bi, wällunt minu Ältru vilii nit gseh, dassi Alkohol friichu

Viärzähjehrig entziänimi där Üüfdringlichkeit vanu Männer, indäm ich mich entställu ung minä Körpär värlätzu

Mit 15 triibi mi umänand, bitriichu mi bewusstlos und will mit minum Gliäbtu, minär Umgäbig entfliäh

Mit 17 ärträgi mis Hüüsfröiwuläbu näbu mim Fründ

Ninzäjehrig absolviäri mi zweiti Üsbildig und funktioniäru durch Alkoholgebrüch.

Mit 20 gniässi mi Männertbrüäf

Wanii 22 bi, bügli droguabhängig, unnär där terrorisiärundu Fürsorg va mim Chef

24jehrig probiäri mi z`tetu

Wani 24 bi, läbi monatilang ohni di trestundi Wirkig vam Alkohol, brüchu meh Drogä und fa aa, z'halluziniäru

Mit 24 flüchti vor där öffentlichu Blossställig durch minu Chef, zu minu Ältru und probiäru mär la z'hälfu

Mit 25 fühl i mi wohl, inär Gmeinschaft va Junkies

Wani 27 bi, bini beliäbt als Dealer und bi glücklich in minär Beziähig zum ä drogusüchtigu Ma

29jehrig beschaffi Tag und Nacht Drogä fär mi Fründ und mich

Mit 30 veruntreui Gäld vamä Koleg und liidu unnär Schuld und Entzug

30jehrig ubärfalli ä Tankställ und wärd u värhaftut

Mit 30 gani vorziitig in Haft, wärd u mit Methadon bihandlut und brüüchu wenigär Drogä

Wani 31 bii, ställt mu mär zum erstu Mal in mim Läbu ä Diagnosu ubär Ursach und Art va minär Sucht



p.195        Renée Gasser [1960] | Language: Swiss dialect Aargauerdeutsch, Zürichdeutsch

Ich bi d'Tochter vo Eltere wo schaffed und wenig Zit für all fuf Chind hend.

Mit nuni überchummi mini Periode woni mine Eltere fuf Jahr lang verheimlichä

Mit fufzähni würrü vergewaltigt von'eme Maa wo mi bedroht und schlot

Mit fufzähni han i nid dänkt, dass ich chönnt schwanger si

Wo'ni sechzähni bi schtirbt mis Chind, wo'ni nid ha welle

Mit siebzähni nimm'i Tablette vo min'ere Muetter

Mit achzähni schnid ich mi und füeg mir Brandwunde zue und trink Alkohol

Mit nünzähni versuech ich mi umzbringe

Mit nünzähni füehl ich mich geborge und läbe mit enere Frau zämme

Mit nünzähni trink ich viel Alkohol

Mit vierezwanzgi bin ich z'jung für ä Chind

Mit einedrissgi trenn ich mich vom Vatter vo mim zweite Chind und bin alkoholfrei

Mit sexedrissgi bin ich selbstschändig und trink heimlich Alkohol

Mit vierzgi isch mi Fründ abhängig vo mir und Droge

Mit einevierzgi vrgwaltigt und misshandelt mich min Fründ tagtäglich

Mit einevierzgi trink ich und min Fründ git mir heimlich Koks

Mit einevierzgi würrü zwangswiis igliefered dur Polizei i Psychi

Mit zweivierzgi schnupf ich Heroin, trink viel Alkohol und wehr mi nümmi gege d' Gwalt vo mim Fründ

Mit zweivierzgi würrü vrurteilt wege Waffebsitz nach emene Schuss uf min Fründ

Mit drüevierzgi triebt mi min Fründ in ä Glichgültigkeit, erpresst und droht mer, ich deal und bruch Heroin und Kokain

Mit füfevierzgi han i Todesangscht, würr verhaftet und vrurteilt

.....

p.196        Maria von Bank [1962] | Language: Swiss dialect St. Galler-Deutsch

Ich bin s'Chind vonere Muetter, wo nid hed chönne liebe

Mit füfi liid ich under de Gwalt vo mim Vatter, diktiert vo de Muetter

Mit sechsi , wird i de Schuel mini Hyperaktivität veschtgschtellt.

Mit 7 Jahr trink ich Alkohol vo mine Eltere und liede under Einsamkeit.

Wo n' ich 8 Jahr alt bin, wird min Brüeder in äs Erziehgsheim gschteckt

Mit 13 Jahr find ich Geborgeheit bi mine Fründ, zämme mit ihne rauch ich Hasch, Marihuana und schmeisse Tripps

Wo n' ich 15 Jahr alt bin, setzt mir än Fründ min erschte Schuss Morphium

Wo n' ich fufzähni bin, setzed mini Eltere mich uf d'Schtröss.

Mit sechzäh Jahr schprütz ich Heroin und Morphium

Mit siebezähni fang ich uf Wunsch vo mine Eltere än Usbildig a und werde entloh wäge Droge

Mit nünzähni nim ich zuesätzlich Kokain, Medis und Tranquilizer

Wo n' ich einezwanzgi bin, wird min Sohn mit'ere geischtige Behinderig gebore

Mit zweiözwanzgi werd ich inhaftiert, verlüre s'Sorgerächt für mis Chind dur mini Eltere

Mit zweiözwanzgi lieeb ich ä Frau, nimm wenig Droge und flüchte us äm Gfängnis

Mit vierözwanzgi fall ich zrug id'Polytoxikomanie und deale mit Hasch um mini Sucht chönne z'finanziere

Mit siebenezwanzgi konsumier ich usser s'Methi kcheini Droge um zwei Wunschchind chönne z'becho

Wo n' ich zweiedrissgi bin, cher ich mit mim Fründ zrug id'Drogesucht und bring mini Chind in ä Pflegefamilie

Mit achtedrissgi läb ich i fataler Abhängigkeit vo Maa und Droge

Mit vierzgi bin ich obdachlos, läbe uf de Schtröss oder i Notunterkchünft

Mit zweievierzgi zwingt min Fründ mich zur Proschtitution und ich schtich ihn abe

Mit drüevierzgi han ich än Närkezammebruch und werde under Zwang id'Psychi igwiese

Mit vierevierzgi werd ich inhaftiert

Mit füfevierzgi han ich Angscht vor Traum wo mir min Tod akchündiget

.....

AUSTRIA

.....

p.227        Alma Kahn [1983] | Language: German / Deutsch

Ich bin die Tochter eines gewalttätigen Trinkers und meiner verängstigten Mutter

Mit 3 Jahren werde ich zum ersten Mal wegen der Misshandlungen meines Vaters ärztlich behandelt, ich bin ohne den Schutz meiner Mutter

Mit 6 Jahren vergewaltigt mein Vater mich und meine Mutter schickt mich für ein Jahr ins Heim

Mit 9 Jahren vergewaltigt mich mein 16-jähriger Cousin und meine Mutter beschuldigt mich als Lügnerin und Verräterin der Familie

Mit 11 Jahren lerne ich kiffen und fühle ich mich wohl in der Gemeinschaft von Outsidern

Mit 11 Jahren lassen mich meine Eltern in die geschlossene Psychiatrie einweisen, ich wehre mich verzweifelt und werde mit Tranquilizer ruhig gestellt

Mit 13 Jahren überlebe ich meinen ersten Selbstmordversuch, werde von meinen Vater verstoßen und flüchte mit meiner Freundin aus der Stadt

Mit 13 Jahren setzt meine drogensüchtige Freundin mir den ersten Schuss Heroin und nimmt mich mit auf den Strich

Mit 13 Jahren bin ich drogenabhängig, ziehe zu meinem gewalttätigen Zuhälter und lebe in Scham

Mit 15 Jahren hoffe ich auf die Aufnahme von meiner geschiedenen Mutter und werde abgewiesen

Mit 16 Jahren heirate ich meinen Zuhälter

Mit 17 Jahren verliebe ich mich in einen drogenabhängigen Mann, bin glücklich, clean und werde Mutter

Mit 19 Jahren kehre ich zurück zu Heroingebrauch und Prostitution

Mit 21 Jahren unterhalte ich meinen inhaftierten Geliebten und meinen Sohn durch Dealen

Mit 21 Jahren breche ich den Kontakt zu meinem Vater ab



Mit 22 Jahren wird meine Leberzirrhose diagnostiziert und ich breche meine erste Therapie ab

Mit 23 Jahren wird mein Freund aus der Haft entlassen und wir fliehen vor meiner Verurteilung nach Deutschland

Mit 23 Jahren werde ich verhaftet, verurteilt und langjährig inhaftiert

Mit 23 Jahren werde ich von meinem Freund verlassen

Mit 23 Jahren verstehe und vergebe ich den Verrat meiner Mutter

Mit 24 Jahren bin ich schwermütig, verletze mich absichtlich und suche Hilfe

.....

p.247        Kara Linasielka [1987] | Language: German / Deutsch

Ich bin das Enkelkind meiner alkoholabhängigen Großmutter

Mit 6 Jahren holt meine Mutter mich mit ihrem Freund nach Österreich, um der Armut in Polen zu entfliehen

Mit 12 Jahren alarmiert meine Lehrerin das Jugendamt wegen der Misshandlungen von meinem Stiefvater

Mit 12 Jahren genieße ich die Zuneigung der Betreuer im Krisenzentrum

Mit 13 Jahren laufe ich von zu Hause weg und suche den Schutz des Kinderheimes

Mit 14 Jahren will meine Mutter den Vater meines Bruders meinetwegen nicht verlassen

Mit 14 Jahren besucht meine Mutter mich regelmäßig und bringt mir Süßigkeiten ins Heim

Mit 15 Jahren bin ich ein aggressives Kind, wehre mich gegen meine Fürsorger und weigere mich, mich anzupassen

Mit 15 Jahren rauche ich zusammen mit anderen Heimkindern Marihuana und trinke Alkohol

Mit 16 Jahren nehme ich XTC und Speed, werde in einer schulischen Wohngemeinschaft untergebracht und passe mich dem Drogenkonsum der anderen Bewohnerinnen an

Mit 16 Jahren stehle ich das Haschisch eines Dealers, eifere seinem Vorbild nach, bin stolz auf meine Souveränität als Drogenhändlerin und kann mir maßlosen Heroingebrauch leisten

Mit 17 Jahren werde ich zu einer Gefängnisstrafe verurteilt und meine Geliebte verlangt die Änderung meines Lebens

Mit 18 Jahren treibe ich mich herum, suche die Gemeinschaft anderer ausländischer Abhängiger und brauche immer mehr Drogen

Mit 18 Jahren suche ich Hilfe bei meiner Mutter, lasse mich in der geschlossenen Psychiatrie aufnehmen, werde entgiftet und auf Drogenhemmer eingestellt

Mit 18 Jahren breche ich die Therapie ab, bin rückfällig und richte meine Aggression auf meine Mutter

Mit 18 Jahren verlasse ich die WG

Mit 19 Jahren werde ich inhaftiert und meine Freundin trennt sich von mir

Mit 19 Jahren habe ich Angst vor dem Alleinsein, besorge mir eine Waffe und mache mich wichtig auf der Drogenszene

Mit 19 Jahren werde ich inhaftiert und nehme erstmals Behandlung an

Mit 20 Jahren bin ich clean und überwinde meine Verletztheit als Sündenbock und Außenseiter

Mit 20 Jahren bete ich zu Gott um ein giftfreies Leben

.....

p.232        Ingeborg Kleinberg [1980] | Language: German / Deutsch

Ich bin das zweite Kind meiner alleinstehenden minderjährigen Mutter

Mit 6 Jahren bin ich der Sündenbock meines Stiefvaters und er beginnt mich zu misshandeln

Mit 12 Jahren versucht mein Bruder vergeblich Anzeige wegen meiner Misshandlung zu erstatten

Mit 13 Jahren verliebe ich mich in meinen Freund

Mit 13 Jahren hänge ich herum mit älteren Jugendlichen, fange an Haschisch zu rauchen und trinke Alkohol

Mit 14 Jahren gebrauche ich zum ersten Mal Kokain und andere Drogen

Mit 14 Jahren wird im Krankenhaus monatelang mein Nierenversagen behandelt

Als ich 14 Jahre bin, beginnt mein Freund Drogen zu nehmen

Mit 16 Jahren beschließt meine Mutter den Abortus meines Kindes

Als ich 17 Jahre bin, erschießt sich mein Freund mit einer Pumpgun

Mit 17 Jahren verliere ich meine Mutter und meine Zuversicht

Seit dem Tod meines Freundes versuche ich mit allen Mitteln Selbstmord zu verüben und meine Großmutter leidet unter meiner Traurigkeit

Mit 17 Jahren lasse ich mich auf Morphinum einstellen und nehme zusätzlich illegal Methadon

Mit 18 Jahren lebe ich in Isolation und Depression und übernachtete auf dem Grab meines Geliebten

Mit 19 Jahren wird meine Leberzirrhose festgestellt und behandelt

Mit 20 Jahren werde ich in die Psychiatrie gesperrt und flüchte nach zwei Monaten in erneute Selbstmordversuche

Mit 20 Jahren werde ich wegen eines Gewaltdelikttes zu Gefängnis verurteilt und gehe nicht in die auferlegte Therapie

Mit 21 Jahren absolviere ich eine Zwangstherapie und lasse mich nach Rückfall auf Methadon einstellen

Mit 22 Jahren wehre ich mich nicht länger gegen eine neue Beziehung mit einem Mann

Mit 24 Jahren bin ich glücklich über die Geburt unserer Tochter, werde drei Tage später inhaftiert und psychiatrisch behandelt

Als ich 24 Jahre bin, ist mein Kind verschwunden und ich erfahre von dessen Unterbringung bei einer Pflegemutter

Mit 27 Jahren hoffe ich auf die Bewältigung meiner Vergangenheit und meiner Isolation

.....

p.241        Ivana Landmann [1984] | Language: German / Deutsch

Ich bin das wissbegierige, religiöse Kind geliebter Eltern

Mit 3 Jahren erzwingt mein Vater mein Zuschauen bei den Vergewaltigungen meiner Mutter

Mit 5 Jahren beginnt der Liebhaber meiner Mutter mich sexuell zu missbrauchen

Mit 8 Jahren entführt mich mein Vater und erklärt meine Mutter für tot

Mit 9 Jahren terrorisiert mein berauschter Vater meine Mutter und mich mit sexueller Gewalt

Mit 10 Jahren befiehlt mein Vater mir, ihn körperlich zu strafen und er versucht uns beide zu töten

Mit 11 Jahren wird mein Bruder geboren und mein Stiefvater hört auf mich zu vergewaltigen

Mit 11 Jahren muss ich das Gymnasium verlassen, leide an Anorexie und werde in der Psychiatrie medikamentös gegen Halluzinationen behandelt

Mit 13 Jahren gebrauche ich Speed, Tranquilizer, Alkohol und Methadon

Mit 14 entdecke ich meine Bisexualität

Mit 14 Jahren führe ich ein intensives, ruheloses Leben ohne zu wissen wie ich mich beweisen kann

Bis zu meinem 15 Lebensjahr laufe ich weg aus Internat, Wohngemeinschaften, Heimen und prostituiere mich für maßlosen Heroingebrauch

Mit 15 Jahren suche und finde ich Bindung in der Gemeinschaft von Außenseitern

Mit 15 Jahren beschuldigt mein Stiefvater mich vor Gericht, ihn sexuell verführt zu haben, und er wird vorzeitig aus der Haft entlassen

Mit 16 Jahren leide ich bei Drogenminderung an Verfolgungswahn, Psychose und Halluzinationen

Mit 16 Jahren wird meine Leberzirrhose diagnostiziert

Seit meinem 16 Lebensjahr wird mir regelmäßig nach polytoxikomanem Drogengebrauch in Notaufnahmen das Leben gerettet

Mit 17 Jahren lässt mein Vater mich zwangsweise in der Jugendpsychiatrie entgiften

Mit 17 Jahren werde ich zum ersten Mal zur Gefängnisstrafe verurteilt

Seit meinem 17 Lebensjahr werde ich verurteilt zu Gefängnisstrafen wegen illegaler Prostitution, Drogenhandel, räuberischem Diebstahl und Hehlerei

Mit 17 Jahren lebe ich zur Miete in der Villa meines Onkels und seinen Huren

Mit 22 Jahren endet die Giftbeziehung zu meinem geliebten Mann

Mit 23 Jahren bin ich clean und erkenne nicht die Ausrichtung meiner grenzenlosen Energie

.....

CROATIA

.....

p.247 Pia Herc [1976] | Language: Croatian / hrvatski

Rođena sam jer moja majka pobačaj smatra smrtnim grijehom

Od moje četvrte godine majka brutalno nasrće na mene svaki put kad pitam za svog prešućenog oca

U dobi od devet godina počinjem igrati košarku i majka me čitavo vrijeme nagraduje

U dobi od jedanaest godina uzvraćam majci na njezina sadistička zlostavljanja i poniženja

U dobi od četrnaest godina nestaju svi izgledi za sportsku karijeru

U dobi od četrnaest godina napuštam srednju školu i sestre i majka me premlaćuju

U dobi od četrnaest godina pokušavam se ubiti da bih majku oslobodila tereta

U dobi od šesnaest godina napuštam geodetsku školu i pomažem bosanskim izbjeglicama u UN-ovom kampu

U dobi od šesnaest godina pripadnici Plavih kaciga me uče duvati i uzimati XTC i LSD

U dobi od šesnaest godina majka mi zabranjuje udaju za Arapa muslimanske vjere

U dobi od sedamnaest godina radim i mogu si na partijima priuštiti speed, LSD, XTC, hašiš, marihuanu i gljive

U dobi od devetnaest godina zaljubljujem se u Party dilera i naša simbiotička veza započinje

U dobi od devetnaest godina moja me svekrva prihvaća kao vlastitu kćer

U dobi od devetnaest godina koristim heroin za spužtanje nakon previše kokaina, XTC i speeda

U dobi od dvadeset i jedne godine sretna sam u vezi sa sadašnjim mužem

U dobi od dvadeset i jedne godine čista sam i veselim se rođenju prvog od naše četvero djece

Od moje dvadeset i treće godine muž brine za nabavu droge i novca a ja za sretnu obitelj

U dobi od dvadeset i tri godine moja me majka prijavljuje na policiju kao ovisnicu da bi me razdvojila od djece

U dobi od dvadeset i tri godine policija prijeti da će mi oduzeti djecu ako ne priznam prijestup

U dobi od dvadeset i šest godina osjećam olakšanje nakon smrti svoje majke i sestra me okrivljuje za njezinu smrt

U dobi od dvadeset i devet godina potapljaju me u zatvorskoj bolnici da bih prebrodila apstinencijsku krizu

U dobi od trideset godina uzimam metadon dok mi je muž u zatvoru i teško podnosim razdvojenost

U dobi od trideset i dvije godine osuđena sam na zatvorsku kaznu, čista sam i očajavam zbog razdvojenosti od muža i djece

U dobi od trideset i dvije godine osjećam krivnju zbog patnji svoje djece

.....

p.251 Justina Kralj [1968] | Language: Croatian / hrvatski

Ja sam mlađa sestra svoje mrtve sestre

U dobi od godine dana roditelji me ljutu ostavljaju kod bake u Jugoslaviji

U dobi od pet godina roditelji me uzimaju sebi u svoju gastarbajtersku Njemačku i prisiljavaju da se sama prilagođavam nepoznatom

U dobi od jedanaest godina otac mi postaje saveznik, a čežnju za domom nadomještava blagostanje

U dobi od četrnaest godina ne bojim se konzumacije kokaina u društvu djece iz dobrostojećih njemačkih obitelji

U dobi od šesnaest godina bježim u školu u drugi grad, što dalje od roditeljske kontrole

U dobi od osamnaest godina zaljubljujem se i udajem za kriminalca iz Jugoslavije i prilagođavam tradicionalnom životu u ulozi supruge

U mojoj devetnaestoj godini muž se nakon bijega iz njemačkog zatvora ne snalazi u Jugoslaviji, pa ga dovodim sebi u Švicarsku



U dobi od dvadeset godina živim u luksuznoj dokolici i dnevno perem 20 000 švicarskih franaka od trgovine drogom i oružjem koju vodi moj muž

U dobi od dvadeset i pet godina muž me terorizira nasiljem i prijetnjama smrću i počinjem redovito konzumirati heroin

U dobi od dvadeset i pet godina abortiram neželjeno dijete i pokušavam se ubiti

U dobi od dvadeset i šest godina roditelji me odvođe iz Švicarske, zatvaraju u ludnicu, a otac prijeti mojem mužu

U dobi od dvadeset i šest godina muž me iz ludnice izvlači pod oružanom prijetnjom, trošim heroin, alkohol, crack, kokain

U dobi od dvadeset i šest godina koristim moć supruge da bih vršila pritisak na dilere i biram ljubavnike s puno novaca i droge

U dobi od dvadeset i osam godina gubim dozvolu boravka u Švicarskoj i u Njemačkoj trgujem švicarskom drogom

U dobi od dvadeset i devet godina u Njemačkoj me osuđuju na 5 godina zatvora i prebacuju u Hrvatsku

U dobi od trideset i jedne godine sam čista, učim hrvatski, radim i bojim se

U dobi od trideset i četiri godine dilam i trošim gomilu heroina i kokaina

U dobi od trideset i četiri godine dolazim za mužem na more, bespomoćno se odajem kobnoj konzumaciji droge, puštam da me tiranizira, siluje i zlostavlja

U dobi od trideset i sedam godina napuštam muža i vežem se za mladog ratnog invalida iz Hrvatske

U dobi od četrdeset godina odrađujem zatvorsku kaznu, bolujem od hepatitisa c, ne trošim drogu i namjeravam kick zamijeniti obiteljskom srećom

p.249 Vana Knez [1981] | Language: Croatian / hrvatski

Pri rođenju sretna sam zbog svog života

U dobi od devet mjeseci stric me spašava od smrti i pritom gubi život

U mojoj drugoj godini majka neprestano prigovara i žali se, a otac ovisnik o alkoholu redovito je tuče

U dobi od tri godine roditelji mi se razvode i majčin dečko me maltretira

U mojoj šestoj godini otac premlaćuje majku tako da ona završava u bolnici a ja sam sretna što su mi roditelji ponovo zajedno i što odlazimo živjeti kod obitelji na selo

U dobi od devet godina selimo u grad i mlatim dečke iz škole koji mi se rugaju

U dobi od deset godina poistovjećujem se s ljubavnom pričom Christie F.

U dobi od jedanaest godina moj me pijani otac okrivljuje za stričevu smrt

U dobi od dvanaest godina pijem alkohol i duvam

U dobi od trinaest godina siluje me dečko kojem se divim

U dobi od četrnaest godina sretna sam i uspješna u školi zahvaljujući heroinu

U dobi od petnaest godina volim osamnaest godina starijeg muškarca i jedno od drugog skrivamo ovisnost o drogi

U dobi od šesnaest godina roditelji me cinkaju policiji i zabranjuju mi ljubavnu vezu

U dobi od sedamnaest godina depresivna sam i dilam heroin da bih pokrila vlastite potrebe

U dobi od devetnaest godina zbog očeve sam prijave osuđena na zatvorsku kaznu

U dobi od dvadeset i jedne godine otpuštaju me iz zatvora i dilam velike količine droge

U dobi od dvadeset i dvije godine upoznajem svog sadašnjeg muža i uvodim ga na scenu

U dobi od dvadeset i tri godine polažem nadu u ljekovitost šamanske biljke Iboge, da bih bez droge dobila dijete

U dobi od dvadeset i pet godina rađam kćer, a muž završava u zatvoru

Od moje dvadeset i pete godine otac mi asistira u prodaji droge i ja ga uzdržavam

U dobi od dvadeset i šest godina otac preuzima dio odgovornosti za posjedovanje droge i dobivam umanjenu zatvorsku kaznu

U dobi od dvadeset i sedam godina čista sam i živim iz dana u dan

p.252 Josipa Božić [1972] | Language: Croatian / hrvatski

Moj je otac jedini sretan što sam rođena kao djevojčica

U dobi od dvije godine oko mene su pobožne očeve sestre i majka koja ga vara

U dobi u četiri godine želim postati svećenica i ne snalazim se u društvu djevojčica

U dobi od šest godina sramim se oca koji pije i više na majku da je drolja i kurva

U dobi od dvanaest godina bježim tetki i živim normalnim životom

U dobi od četrnaest godina moram se vratiti kući i teško se koncentriram u školi

U dobi od četrnaest godina oca šalju na liječenje i ja krivim majku

U dobi od petnaest godina vucaram se uokolo, kradem, počinjem piti i uzimam tetkina sredstva za umirenje

U dobi od šesnaest godina napuštam školu, počinjem raditi i sud mi prijeti da će me prisilno smjestiti u popravni dom

U dobi od sedamnaest godina žao mi je bolesnog oca koji ponovo pije

U mojoj dvadesetoj godini od meningitisa mi umire osmomjesečna sestra o kojoj brinem kao da je moje dijete

U mojoj dvadesetoj godini majka pada u tešku depresiju i svi smo neutješni

U dobi od dvadeset i jedne godine ovisna sam o alkoholu i majka me šalje tetki u Njemačku

U dobi od dvadeset i četiri godine pokušavam svoje prijatelje s otoka odvratiti od droge

U dobi od dvadeset i pet godina zaljubljujem se u dečka s drogeraške scene

U dobi od dvadeset i pet godina dopisujem se s dečkom koji je u zatvoru i s kojim dijelim osjećaj usamljenosti i izolacije

U dobi od dvadeset i sedam godina oboje dilamo marihuanu, osuđeni smo, i ja sam u šoku od zatvorskog sustava

U dobi od dvadeset i devet godina puštena sam iz zatvora, uzimam heroin i dilam

U dobi od trideset godina život mi se svodi na heroin, depresiju, predbacivanja, beskrajne samoće, kaos i povezanost s dečkom

U mojoj trideset i prvoj godini šalju nas u komunu u Španjolsku i majka mi prijeti da će me prijaviti ako prekinem terapiju

U dobi od trideset i jedne godine moja je psihička ovisnost o kokainu veća od fizičke ovisnosti o heroinu

U dobi od trideset i šest godina liječim hepatitis c u zatvoru

U dobi od trideset i šest godina po četvrti put sam u zatvoru, čekam novu presudu i živim u strahu od života sa ili bez droge, bolesti, izolacije i slobode



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Women’s prison in Vechta, Lower Saxony  
LÜSA e.V.—Long-term transition  
and support project, Unna

Croatia  
.....  
Galerija sc Zagreb  
B.a.B.e. NGO  
Embassy of the Netherlands in Croatia, Zagreb/  
MATRA KAP Programme  
Ženska Kaznionica Požega—  
Požega State Prison for Women  
Zagreb Taxis

The Netherlands  
.....  
AFK Amsterdams Fonds voor de Kunst  
ARTA Lievegoed Zeist—Anthroposophical  
Therapeutic Agents for Addicts  
Fonds BKVB—Fonds voor beeldende kunsten,  
vormgeving en bouwkunst  
Fonds Kwadraat/Materiaal Fonds  
—material fund  
Mama Cash Foundation  
MDHG—Aid Association for Drug Users  
Mondriaan Fund  
Sundaymorning@ekwc  
W139 Amsterdam

Austria  
.....  
Vienna Favoriten Prison,  
special institution for treating  
offenders  
FWF Austrian Science Fund:  
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—Programme for Arts-based Research  
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As a portrait of a marginalised social group this book challenges readers to engage with the phenomenon of outcasts. It presents a wealth of material generated by art and research projects conducted with female drug addicts in European prisons and treatment facilities, and organises and contextualises the findings. This approach reveals the terms and conditions that are reinforced and perpetuated by social processes, and by foregrounding these in this book seeks to raise awareness that this is clearly an issue and matter of concern to the general public. In texts and images the book documents the biographic and artistic work with detainees, the correspondence involved, the art interventions in isolated, public, and cultural spaces, as well as the transcripts, reflections on, and the results of exchanges with a wide range of specialists and experts from related disciplines.

THIS BABY DOLL WILL BE A JUNKIE

Ulrike Möntmann

Introduction Peter Weibel

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