

editorial / curatorial statement:
introducing Comfort Zone & Disillusion

EMPOWER- MENT THROUGH RUINS OF ACCOM- PLISHMENT

by Freek Lomme

Again, Onomatopée establishes a NEST series, crystallizing trends and testing innovative interfaces. This year's endeavour is titled **Comfort Zone & Disillusion**, evidently referring to a Western heritage of wellbeing, now in decay.

Over the last decades, this very notion of "wellbeing" has become strongly embedded in our cultural expectation: we increasingly expect good healthcare, more spare time, holidays and trips, domestic luxury and so on. This expectation used to commensurate with increased purchasing power. Meanwhile, the Wall collapsed and the free market became free for the world at large, rendering the competitive position of the rich West an illusion. Despite the warning of the credit crisis, a culture of greed has remained submerged within the ashes. On all levels it is all too easy to become conservative; to become a protectionist. Look at the London looting: could we state that the world is a PlayStation and that everyone should play, or should we play about something different? Consequently: how can we design our lives beyond current currents?

Man-age-ment

There is increasing support for a policy that unifies the Left's desire for mercy and the Right's desire for tax reduction: a policy that effectively feeds off its own excesses. Both traditional leftist as rightist systems are currently operating in a populist and conservative manner, simply in order to allow us to maintain a sense of security behind a façade of wellbeing and welfare. As this economic globalization is a natural outcome of neo-liberal politics based on left and right wing parliamentary pragmatism – as well as the conjuncture of left and right-wing power – this is the excess of their own policy, their own system.

Here, in this formal decay of near governmental authorities, our private responsibilities reach out into the global socially via personalised one-on-one responsibilities that manifest via (social) media and cheap travel: our private scene's got global. Therefore government's social responsibilities, as those expressed to the electorate, target the right crowds. But they are expressed by a paralyzed political management that cannot offer a political mandate to act in the realm where the power manifests: the global realm where powers manifest beyond political reach. At the same time, the electorate gladly takes on any opportunity to uphold welfare and wellbeing, blind to the nationalist economic system that they have established and that we chose to partake in; indeed we have always been economy-based fascists. In order to overcome this conservative state of parliamentary politics and cultural protectionism of the electorate, we need to start acting progressively by acknowledging the wider framework of our cultural accomplishments.

Cultural and economic innovation stems precisely from progressive attitudes: from progressive qualities of "innovative thinking". Effectively, this means that we – you and I – should overcome our primal need for "the comfortable". We must dare to acknowledge our assumed reality as an illusion, and dare to experience this illusion. The disposition of disillusion, the ability to rethink and reposition your desires and character, is a pious position in a spoiled culture. Eindhoven is as equally in decline of demanding the better as London, Liverpool, Liege or Lisbon is, but is equally on its own. When it comes to joining forces to reframe our demands, we could benefit mutually nonetheless. Not only in crystallizing the

actual trends within our "European situation" but also to open up beyond that.



banner Brainport region Eindhoven

Expectations in demand!

We – both as electorate to the parliamentary politics as well as being consumers and producers of our culture's future – need to focus on a different form of people's sovereignty and people's representation within structures proposed but not yet offered. At present, that is too far off from our daily lives. Nevertheless we can, within our daily lives, produce our cultural politics differently. We are not simply conservative, but also smart global communicators and travellers. We should ignite our expectation through our consumerist demand's ethics morally. We can do so via our experience-economy's diplomatic capacity: as consumers of the experience-economy that empowers the neoliberal's facade, in order to imagine it differently and to bring about change from the bottom up. The stylists of the Nest 2011 "unsolicited advisers" – namely, DIY event providers **heyheyhey**, surreal architect **Willelem Claassen**, hedonistic ecologist **Nacho Cabonell** and bottom-up urban-cartographer **Jozua Zaagman** – very much propose such worthwhile perspectives here and now. They elaborate their morals via technical capacities that effectively stimulate new thought and actual relations, and produce settings that enable us to implement the progressive in the global village: modestly and respect-

fully. And yes, indeed: the global village is economic, and yes it is exclusive, but come on: we can learn from our fascist past and build upon our moral and technical capacity. Let us prove how fucking smart we are, and activate our environment truly democratically through emancipation and participation!

Ignorant to the neoliberal façade all the way through, the play of Comfort Zones allows capacities to forefront and activate beyond, and exactly in spite of it all. We will act, simply because any action – even stand-still – leads to results and we should therefore at least try to play upon the consequences we produce. We can reconsider the modes that have driven us, and reorient our destination without giving up on technical capacities; we just have to process wisely and economically

different. We should distrust old prescribed motives, doubt and position our own, and we should use all our technical capacities to produce anew. Through application, we can learn from the progressive capacities of specified practices, and try to express ourselves freely and knowingly through joy and play. In this sphere, economic recession does not equal cultural recession, but allows culture to manifest its worth with respect to the ruins. Now is the time to playfully enact design within a relational framework that enhances a truthful and personal configuration beyond the comfort zone of conservative protectionism: to play upon its politics progressively. There will be risks, there will be economic crisis, but we will relate with dignity and, surely, with lots of joy!

Let us prove how fucking-smart we are, and activate our environment truly democratically through emancipation and participation!

The **Comfort Zone & Disillusion** series affirms the luring capacities of masks at various levels – local, regional, national – and touches upon the European situation. It tries to overcome its demise by empowering joy, wonder and temptation democratically. The exhibits at Onomatopee drew over 20.000 visitors, and through this publication we hope to empower even more consumers! Instead of distrusting or criticizing the joy of the facade and of experience, this series aims to zoom into the actual conduct of practitioners who expand upon and allow for deeper involvements. They enable our reality to become more resistant by pragmatically and playfully expanding upon experiences, thereby allowing us to self-attribute our reality into deeper understandings of experience variables and, possibly, new capacities to self-activate our relation with the experience-economy and thus the shape of this fundamentally neoliberal corrupted economy. This could, in the end, re-examine and reposition our neoliberal achievements – that resulted in the corrupted financial economy fed by a turnover of wellbeing experiences – and enable us to emancipate beyond this barrier, by expending upon it instead of taking it down. We are already wearing masks, but we can try to decide which ones to wear; which ones might suit us best; which ones allow us to be ourselves more; and which ones remain fashionable in a changing world, simply

starting here and now. We can wear masks and take on responsibilities at the same time. Masks and their resulting perspectives are not per definition hedonistic and/or egocentric.

Lastly, I would very much like to thank all the people involved in this endeavour. First of all I would like to thank Ellen Zoete: who was critical in fine-tuning the process throughout, and was helpful to all. Secondly the investors to this project, the municipality of Eindhoven: thanks for your assistance in producing the diversity of Eindhoven's capital, and the Province: thanks for putting your trust in this project. I hope we can build upon the quality's present in our accomplished capacities of experience, by taking on these experiences morally thorough. Thirdly **heyheyhey, Willem Claassen, Nacho Carbonell** and **Jozua Zaagman** for the obvious reasons of putting in effort, enthusiasm and inspiration, to amount to a maximum practically. Fourth is our intern, Maartje van der Schoot, who worked her ass off enthusiastically. Fifth are all writers thanks to whom the entire project's parameters have extended beyond expectation. And, of course, David Crowley of the Critical Writing in Art and Design programme at the Royal College of Arts and all of the critical voices involved within. Finally I would like to thank everyone at So Far The Future, for enabling the exhibition and presentation in London. I personally very much appreciate this sum of individual efforts and applied engagement, and I hope we can keep up with such practices: let's use Onomatopee!

Respectfully!

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curator/editor Comfort Zone & Disillusion and director Onomatopee

