

DISTILLED FROM HERE
INTRODUCING THIS BOOK

by Freek Lomme

Is not every work of art a starting point to define its own concrete location in the world in a different way? And doesn't every artist's oeuvre contain a fundamental point of departure in this? This book moves into Kathrin Schlegel's work and constitutes a point of departure for various reflections on the social potential and aesthetic experiences of art when it manifests itself publicly.

When is a work of art finished, what is it that makes it complete and whole? This may be something that happens in the public arena, outside the established context of production and the conventional authority of regular spectators in a White Cube, and the process of creation in the safe and relatively secluded domain of the studio. Exactly because of the direct interaction between art, its environment and a wider audience in the public arena, different dynamics may develop in the experiences and meanings which works of art generate and exchange, as Marcus Lütkemeyer mentions in his text *The Place to Be?*. Here he comments on art's capacity to touch the public's sensibility. Through this capability, art unfolds itself in relation to its public, and actuates a deeper understanding amongst the public by its physical and ephemeral qualities: a process which generates meaning through experience. What then is the *Right Place, Right Time*, and how it is derived from the capacity of art to manipulate the interpretation of space, is described by Alexandra Landré in her essay of the same name. Starting from the ephemeral

presence of art relating to, and residing in its context, she describes how the public processes its connection with and its embeddedness in the present, as a process fundamentally imbedded to time and place.

Kathrin

Schlegel's work moves in a "double interaction between the existing space and its potential audience", as Maria Rus Bojan explains in a description and interpretation of a number of key works. Bojan describes Schlegel's art practice as a manifestation of translation, because both the people involved as the work itself are continually renegotiating their meaning and position in the context concerned. She describes how this work – exactly because of its expressive potential, grafted on an expanding symbolic repertoire – is trying to approach the reality of its location and its public and how, on the other hand, it causes a reflective reaction in its public, which allows them to actualise the location and its meaning.

"Symbols enable us to speak about abstract concepts and act in accordance with fundamental motives," Nils van Beek argues. The title of his text, *Re: Symbolism*, indicates the major *modus operandi* of Schlegel's work: playing with signs and symbols, often found at the location where the work comes about. Van Beek poses the question if and to what extent iconology in the present (post-)Google era

still has any significance to the public. In the extension of this question he describes the cultural pessimism which is lurking in the experience and appreciation of art. *On Seeing and Believing*, Alena Alexandrova's contribution, describes the position of iconology from the perspective of the production and interpretation of images, (covertly) motivated by religiosity. She elaborates on their inscription from the perspective of both author and the reading spectator, in which the imagination not only provides the energy for the production process, but can also determine the dynamic validation of the produced – something also emphasized by Nils van Beek.

As Marcus Lütkemeyer is critical of the position and legitimacy of works of art within the art world's structure and Nils van Beek has doubts about the symbolic potential of the image in the present image culture, and as Alena Alexandrova suggests that this symbolic potential is tied up with a tiny cog in spiritual signification, Freek Lomme poses the question to what extent we, in our technocratic society, have access over our choices within the context wherein we motivate our choices: where *faces* are taken over

by *interfaces* and where our imaginative space is not anymore a domain of individual spirituality or cognitive freedom, but of a technocratic society.

With Kathrin Schlegel's work as a starting point and on a quest for the potentiality of art, this book discusses how we can and want to relate to our environment. It poses the question of the possibility of social interaction through symbolic gestures and through the meanings manifesting themselves in and via a work of art in its context. In particular, it elaborates on the context of the presentation, the relationship between the author /work and the public, and the way the meanings concerned move in time. The publication also contains descriptions and an extensive review of Schlegel's most recent work, *Save our Souls*, also by Marcus Lütkemeyer, as an illustration of her art practice and as a showcase in which these gestures take root.

The sum of this book discusses the posture and potential of meaningful experiences and the process of signification through art in its (public) context. As Kathrin Schlegel motivates: "It *has* to work."