

Facing the Crowd

On and Around Lecture Performance

Exhibition: 09.10.2021 till 09.01.2021, Opening: Saturday 09.10.2021, 7 PM

Location: West Den Haag in the former American embassy, Lange Voorhout 102, The Hague

Participating artists: Ed Atkins, Joseph Beuys, Paul McCarthy, Andrea Fraser, Karen Finley, Dan Graham, Hanne Lippard, Jesper List Thomsen, Agnieszka Polska & Jordan Wolfson

Curated by Ory Dessau

A lecture performance is about speaking up. It is about appearing in public, owning yourself in front of others. However, it can also challenge the common notion of speaking up and appearing in public, while questioning the concept of a shared public setting.

A lecture performance puts an emphasis on the individual's body and speech, reflecting on the consequences of acquiring and conveying a sense of self, a distinguished identity. It can also put an emphasis on the absence of the individual's body and speech, reflecting on the consequences of losing one's own sense of self for a split, modifiable identity.

A lecture performance encapsulates processes of subjectification and embodiment, as well as desubjectification and disembodiment, in a real time event unfolding here and now for a limited duration. The immediate quality of a lecture performance is associable with both physical and virtual live events, with claiming a specific identified presence among other specific identified presences, and with being converted into a fabricated digital image in a community of fabricated digital images.

The exhibition 'Facing the Crowd: On and Around Lecture Performance' presents documentations of performances along with performative video works utilizing the form of a lecture, speech, or a sermon. Including works from the mid-1970s until present-day, 'Facing the Crowd' articulates the different ways in which language, human behavior, the artist's body and voice, modes of verbal expression, and social identities, become the medium and material of the work of art.

While following the path paved by 1960s performance art, the presentation at West Den Haag also relies on the important role played by spoken poetry and live storytelling in contemporary art practices. It is informed by Bertolt Brecht's method of breaking the 'fourth wall' to incorporate the audience as an integral part of the scene, and at the same time, responds to the videoblog aesthetic of YouTube and other sharing platforms.

During the exhibition, West Den Haag will host performances by Ed Atkins, Hanne Lippard, and Jesper List Thomsen. Please keep an eye on our website.

Ory Dessau (1979, Tel Aviv) is an independent curator and writer based in Brussels. He has collaborated with museums such as the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, S.M.A.K., Ghent, and Moderna Museet Malmö. Dessau's texts are regularly published in different (inter)national art magazines and is the editor of several monographs, for example, 'Stanislaw Fijalkowski: Before and after Abstraction'

If you have any questions, please contact MJ Sondejker: marie-jose@westdenhaag.nl or (0)70.3925359

The former American embassy 'Onze Ambassade' is managed by ANNA Vastgoed & Cultuur and Art Institute West Den Haag. The program of West is supported by the municipality of The Hague and the Mondriaan Fund.

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