

# The words

By **Frans Oosterhof**, visual artist, designer, columnist, and editor of the DOGtime Papers

In October last year, Manel Esparbé i Gasca asked me to curate an exhibition to mark the tenth anniversary of DOGtime, his very own evening course at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie. I was familiar with the academy and certainly with Manel – we had got up to all sorts together in the past, and where Manel is involved, fireworks are guaranteed – but I had only heard about DOGtime on the grapevine. I didn’t need to think before I accepted.

I still didn’t know what the material was to be, except that it had to be something by the lecturers who had been there from the very beginning. That’s also typical of Manel – he always gives you a free hand. Only the location had been set: a row of shop-window-like glass cases in the St. Nicolaasstraat that are known as ‘Eight Cubic Metres’. An alternative exhibition space in the centre of Amsterdam. I found this a bit thin for an anniversary exhibition. After making a variety of mental detours – painting the windows over and allowing the public to scratch holes in the paint through which they would see a new horizon unfolding behind, or light boxes bathing the dark alley in a hellish light – I soon realised that these concepts, although inspired by limited space, were somewhat prescriptive. Was I to start giving the lecturers an assignment? And one that barely left them any room? That was going a bit too far. Then the penny dropped: a wall newspaper! After all, the literal flatness of a newspaper has great figurative depth, offering immeasurable space that reaches far beyond the glass cases themselves. A wall newspaper that is three times the size of a normal newspaper and which can’t be closed. Boldly screen printed, a placard, pages like windows to the world. In it I would be able to feature the lecturers’ stories and offer them pages for images: stages on which they could present themselves as teaching artists in a different dimension, with their own work, or in the contemplation of my question. A catalogue as exhibition. Simple to conceive, simple to make, but a little out of the ordinary.

Through the interviews I conducted with the lecturers, I thought I would be able to lift the veil that obscures DOGtime. That proved not to be so simple. Everyone beat about the bush, no one got to the heart of the matter. Sometimes words are inadequate. Apart from the words DOGtime and IDUM. They speak for themselves. They both flaunt their meaning and mystify at the same time. They are not only words, but also logos, as cryptic as they are explicit. Of the words available to us in the interviews, a few have stuck in my mind. Together they form a crystal clear amalgam that is DOGtime.

chaos  
transparent  
difference chemistry motif  
ambition free tough trust risk  
failure respect core aware choice  
dynamics criteria construction  
context medium cohesion  
own rules  
open

It looks like a spinning top, doesn’t it? A top spinning and whizzing and whirring like mad, kept upright just by its motion. Each blow gives it new energy, producing a change of tack, shifting the words from the interviews or forming new ones. Words that seem to contradict each other.

The stories may differ, but nevertheless they form a compact whole. The sum of the parts has many facets, which over the years Manel has polished into a diamond, a new educational model. Understanding the relationships between these different facets demands rather more of the reader than just a quick scan. Thus came the call for a newspaper in a handy format. After all, when you’re able to leaf back and forth, you can compare, and study in depth. The DOGtime participants come from all over the world, as does the growing interest. We therefore decided to produce an English translation of the DOGtime Papers, which you now hold in your hands.

# Armed with the love of art

By **Manel Esparbé i Gasca**, visual artist, head of DOGtime Bachelor of Arts programme, mentor and lecturer at Painting Lab and Art Gossip & Research, final examination tutor in Fine Arts.

*“DOGtime is more than a community, it’s a commitment. A commitment towards me, towards your teachers, your classmates, art and your future.”* (Speech at Mussel Day 2011)

DOGtime is the five-year Bachelor of Arts programme at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. It was launched in 2003 as the innovative successor to the ‘old’ Evening Classes that were phased out around the turn of the century and were finally discontinued in 2003. In 2002 the Executive Board asked me to head the new part-time programme and devise both its content and practicalities. My first response was a firm ‘no’. I felt honoured, but foresaw a depressing amount of work ahead of me. But I soon understood the challenge and saw the possibilities to enrich the existing Rietveld culture. I then retracted my refusal and answered with a wholehearted ‘yes’. I worked to construct a different educational model in which talented students with a greater or different experience of life are brought face to face with new, specialised lecturers. It seemed to me that these students in particular needed to be offered the opportunity to develop in freedom, but not without obligation. In the 1990s I was involved in bringing together visual art, entertainment and education. I wanted the public to become a witness, sharing responsibility rather than being a consumer. I wanted to rescue the world from prejudice, convention and dogma. Very idealistic and intrepid.

DOGtime was the logical continuation. I believe art is about the relationship between details, and about the necessary precision in how to reveal or conceal it. There is no greater whole, but there is a desire for it. Art education should reflect this. Small changes to details have major consequences. Just look at the reduction in Bachelor of Arts programmes. Look how other academies are anticipating it. One part-time course after another is disappearing. Not DOGtime though – the Executive Board supports us in the necessity to keep offering the programme.

DOGtime is in fact the only part-time Bachelor’s degree programme in the world with its own a two-year foundation course followed by two specialised departments: Fine Arts and Interactive Design Unstable Media. DOGtime meets the need – almost without being noticed – for arts education that is substantive, broad, vertical, reflective, demonstrable and based on personal qualities.

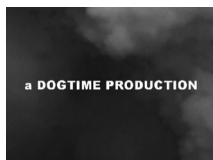
Through our specific experience and qualities, effort and enthusiasm, we are able to bring students together, motivate them, develop them and arm them with a love of art. Our five-year programme is caring, relative, intensive, educational, informative, competitive and exclusive.

Visual, conceptual, critical qualities and skills are required and developed in different ways for each lecturer.

One of my tasks each year is to put together the right team of lecturers so they are able to remain true to themselves, complement each other and enrich the team as a whole. It is precisely because of the lecturers’ contrasting outlooks on art, working/teaching methods and basic assumptions that students are offered a rich and broad view within which they can work together freely and to a maximum extent.

From the second year onwards students must be able to continue developing optimally in their new environment and keep making use of the curiosity, confidence and awareness they have already acquired. This is why lecturers teach in more than one year and department. They safeguard memory, provide a point of contact and assure continuity.

Finding the right balance between societal ambition and inner necessity, to be able to operate either stably or unstably but always autonomously in the domains of art, is crucial and the most valuable thing we can bring about.



## Anything’s possible as long as that’s what it’s about

A conversation with **Ken Zeph**, visual artist, tutor and lecturer in Sculpture & Concept, DOGtime foundation year, final examination lecturer in Fine Art.

**What impression of DOGtime did Manel give you?**  
Honestly? Well, you’d better turn the recorder off, haha. He came round to my place and we had a nice day together. Over a couple of glasses of wine we started talking about DOGtime. Actually I can’t remember exactly what we said. It was then the name DOGtime came up. We were talking about Dogtown and the Z-boys, the skateboard movie. That’s my vague memory of how it started. In a nutshell, it was ‘This is the job, come and do your thing.’

**A continuation of the evening classes?**  
No, our ambitions were totally different from the old Evening Classes, which were rather on their last legs. That’s what everyone felt. Even in

my time as a student, from 1983 to 1988. I think during the programme I only received three comments that were of any use to me. I’d made a suitcase and wanted to show it and I asked a lecturer what table I could use. And I was told, ‘Why not make your own table?’ and I thought damn it, I never thought of that. The eye-openers are always the most stupid things.

**And the second comment?**  
Oh, that was, ‘It looks as if what you’re doing is very well made, but it isn’t well made at all,’ when it was actually that personal touch that I was looking for in my work. The third was actually a good teacher, Paul de Goede. If he hadn’t been there, I

might have given up. For the rest I had those old-school public art artists, who did nevertheless give me unconditional support and trust. DOGtime is very different. It’s a lot more energetic. Full marks to Manel for choosing good people and having his own very personal and independent vision. He had a very open approach, and on the other hand you could feel his compelling ideas about what needed to happen. Because of that whole atmosphere you immediately felt at home.

What sort of ideas?

You could just see it in the choice of people and how he’d put them together, and the freedom you were given. He knew that the people he’d chosen would teach in a certain way, with a lot of enthusiasm and individuality, with their own ideas. And I thought that was very special. You’re going to teach sculpture, but you can also talk about drawing or painting. And that’s pretty much right, it’s not just specifically about the one discipline.

Different from the kind of teaching you had.

I also see – now I’m retiring this year – that the way I used to teach was also kind of old fashioned. Not like it was back then, but I’m now aware of the underlying danger in the way I used to work based on the modernist avant-garde story. The love and blind trust in art, and the linear development of art. I did that for a long time very enthusiastically and I think I did it well. But in recent years I’ve realised that this simply isn’t relevant anymore.

What’s not relevant about it?

Well, art has become highly fragmented. You can’t work based on that idea anymore, that story about what’s good and what isn’t, it won’t do any more. It’s not evident what is or isn’t good, not to me either.

The criteria.

Yes, then you’ve got to have criteria. You usually discover them on the spot by thinking aloud. Yes, that’s what I mean, you put yourself into words too. And that’s a sort of love of art. I’m a great fan of art.

Is there a difference between the Foundation Year and DOGtime?

A huge difference. The life experience for example. And the knowledge they have. If I’m talking to a student in the Foundation Year – well, I’m 65 – about something I think is recent, then actually it’s something from when I was 45. Then they weren’t even born yet. That’s really embarrassing, but the big difference is that the people doing DOGtime are more traditional in their view of art. The students in the Foundation Year have a very open mind about it.

Do you give assignments?

Yes, every week. A lot of assignments. They’re real sculpture assignments, in the sense that they’re



about scale or about time, or about how something is made. But even more it’s about the context. Over the last few years I’ve realised more and more that the context determines everything. It doesn’t matter what you make, as long as you find the right context for it. Not only the physical context of the sculpture, but it might also have a social context.

An artwork isn’t autonomous?

No, it used to be. That’s a big difference between then and now. When I was taught sculpture, it was only about formal things. It was all scale and lying or standing and so on. Made with a specific material and made well. And now that’s less relevant.

What should they definitely learn if nothing else?

They should learn to look and become aware that there are choices that can be made. They have to learn to look at their own work. I think that’s the most important thing. To learn to develop an independent working process. An idea that comes out

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r k o m s t v a n z i j n w e z e n d e v r a a g n a  
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k v r a a g t n a a r z i j n w e z e n s h e r k o m  
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Manel Esparbé i Gasca: ORIGENS# 5-2011

of an assignment is just an excuse to start working. In the working process things have got to change. The idea has to be forgotten, because something much more interesting will turn up on the way. You evaluate the work based on the sculpture, not on the idea, and on how you present it – that’s just as important.

Where does the process end?

There comes a point when you say, that’s it. A sculpture occupies space. You understand it more with your body, which moves in space in relation to the thing. It also occupies more space than itself. The main characteristic of sculpture is that it’s physical. You feel it. When I was eight, I was actually a bit blind, but I didn’t realise. At school they found out that I couldn’t actually see anything properly. But I always thought that was what reality looked like, that was the way the world was. Until eventually I got glasses – that was an LSD experience.

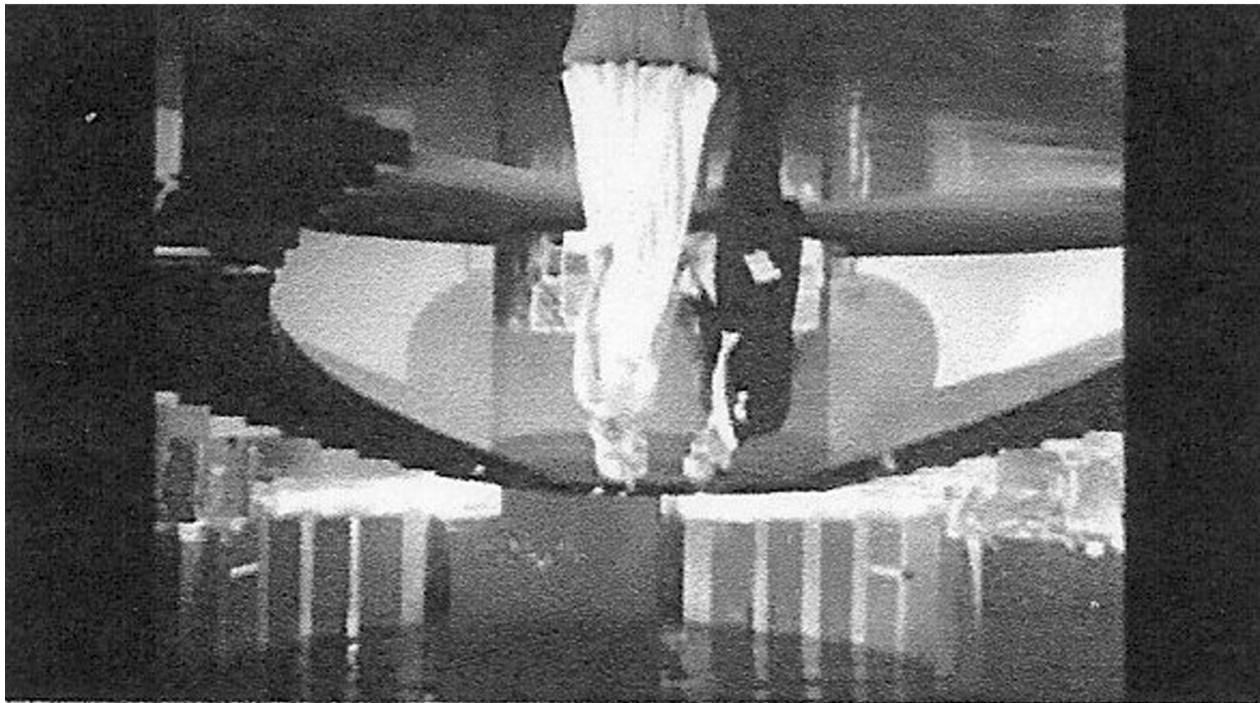
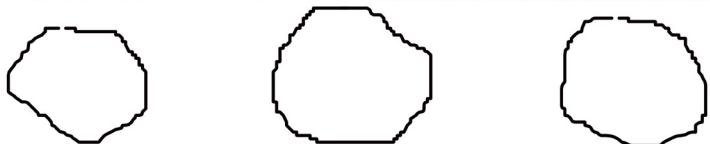
You’d never complained before that you couldn’t see things properly?

No, because I just thought that’s what the world looks like, that’s just what it’s like. That’s what you think if you don’t know any better. And then came that LSD moment, it was just psychedelic. I also remember that day I went and sat in a tree, all day long. Later I thought, why did I actually do that? And then I realised that it was the first time I’d been able to see things in the distance. And I wanted to see as far as possible, and in a tree you can see everything further away. And suddenly I could see it. Because of that experience I think you absorb a lot more. You look very differently. When you’re eight, that really leaves a mark on the way you look at things.

Now you’re good at looking.

Looking involves a lot of very different things. That’s also to do with our times, with certain references. Art can be about anything, about emptiness,





Ken Zeph: FRED/GINGER

ugliness. It can be badly made and still be good.

**Anything's possible?**

No, not anything.

**What isn't possible then?**

Uh, no, yes, anything's possible. Yes, anything's possible as long as that's what it's about. The art has to tell you what it's about, without of course giving an answer. In class you also run into all sorts of contradictions here, like, 'Yes, but about that work you said this and that, and now...' Yes, but I was talking about that other work, not about this one. For each work of art the rules are different.

**Are you hard on the students?**

I'm very hard on them, yes, very critical. But I can also wax lyrical about a work. Sometimes at first I think, yes that's a good work, but afterwards I suddenly think, shit, it wasn't at all. I always try to look at a work very carefully, and the more

you see, the better it can get. Then you do get to the point that almost anything is possible. That's interesting. And then that comes in for criticism too, and new boundaries come into view. That's the most exciting area.

**You still cite the modernist movement?**

Well, perhaps that's because of university in America. I graduated in history and literature. But I look carefully at the work that people bring in. Last Monday a girl got the giggles because without really being aware of it I broke nearly every work in the class. I was saying, maybe you should change this, because this wasn't right and that wasn't right... and then the thing just fell to pieces. Or I walked backwards and bumped into the work on the ground behind me. Usually I take something away but this time it happened unconsciously.

**A kind of slapstick.**

That was an assignment I once gave, after watch-

ing Buster Keaton and Bas Jan Ader. Then I talk about the physicality of that humour. And of the position of the loser. And then they have to make a three-dimensional work about it. Because in slapstick – and this is something that's very good for sculpture – the body is actually a sort of enemy. And all the objects in slapstick are alive. There's a very direct relationship between body and object. Object is almost body. It doesn't have to be funny, because it has a sort of loser quality, and a universal quality.

**Do you learn from DOGtime yourself?**

I don't know if you get any wiser, but you do learn to ask questions. I assume that learning is asking questions. Not necessarily to get a clear answer. That's what teaching at DOGtime is. You also know when you're doing it right, and when you're not. If you don't feel like a glass of wine back home after you've been teaching, then you know you've not been doing it right. Because if you've been teaching well, then you're worked up and you need to wind down afterwards.

**What is DOGtime?**

They have a lot less time to develop anything. So in fact you've got to be able to make decisions a lot faster. No time to lose.

**It's product oriented?**

In the end, yes it is. Yet the kind of teaching they get isn't like that at all. But that doesn't necessarily change the position of the students. They are what they are. They have a job, a family, a career behind them, and they don't have so much time. But the lecturers don't take that into account at all. Actually it's not fair.

Manel has a sort of chaos theory, or he creates a sort of chaos that results in something unexpected. He likes that and I think that's great. The amazing thing is also that in the past ten years there hasn't been any conflict between us all. There are no different camps, or anything.

**It's also always a bit protesty, isn't it?**

Yes, that's a good way of putting it. DOGtime is a sort of statement. The name alone, DOGtime. That's so fuck you, you know what I mean. We do it 'My Way' and over the years that's been accepted.

**That paradox between what you all want and what the students want – I still find that strange. Don't they get cured of their beliefs?**

Oh, yes. But it's a long journey. And eventually, after five years of DOGtime, after the academy, for each student it's only then that it begins. In the final year you see that it's only then that all the students get really confused. I think the first year at DOGtime is essential to this. It's incredibly hard, with four different disciplines, and everyone really on top of you. More than in the Foundation Year, I think.

**But that's where that model comes from.**

Yes, that's also what I hear from all the international students, that they choose the Rietveld because there's a Foundation Year. Yes, of course, if you're 18 you've no idea what you're supposed to do. You have to be given the time for something to grow, and we're constantly talking about what's possible, what's important. It has to be important. That's the only thing, in fact.

I've very often made the mistake myself that I've read an article or a book at home and thought, oh, this is interesting. Then I've gone to school and tried talking about it, and then thought, what the hell are you talking about? Haha. I think it's interesting, but I haven't a clue about it. So my philosophy in the first lesson is that understanding is very overrated. Fifty percent of it you don't catch, and the other 50 percent you don't understand. The not understanding is very important. You've got to discover it for yourself.



# Physics always ends somewhere and then comes the next step

A conversation with **Alena Hudcovicová**, visual artist and lecturer in Sculpture & Space, DOGtime foundation year.

## How long have you been teaching?

I've been teaching at the Rietveld since 1991. First in the Evening Classes and after six years also on the full-time course, in the Foundation Year. Manel and I were really good colleagues then, we had a class of students together. He was the tutor of the class and I taught Space. My way of teaching was very playful, free and open, and I think that appealed to Manel. Then he asked me to come and teach at DOGtime.

At the very first meeting the first group came together in Manel's studio – the core group with really wild ideas about what it ought to be like. And we had a really nice time together, with fantastic food made by Manel.

## And what was the wild idea?

Well, I can't exactly remember any more, but I do remember the atmosphere, like we've got to do something, we want something amazing.

## Did it become something very different from the old Evening Classes?

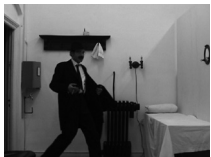
DOGtime is a lot more compact. It's a whole. Lecturers have contact with each other, students all have contact with each other, from the first year right up to the fifth. It's a lot more transparent, more open. It's a very big, international, dynamic group of people who all come here with one aim, and that's art. And the atmosphere is more intense than in other departments. Perhaps that's because the people are incredibly motivated to do something. They've got to sacrifice a lot. People work, have full-time jobs, have families, and then they also study in the evenings. They do the work for DOGtime at night and at the weekend. They don't have any free time.

## How did you come to the Netherlands?

I was 26 when I left Czechoslovakia, I spent two years in Africa and then I came to the Netherlands. I started with art when I was 28 by going to study at the AKI, the art academy in Enschede. I finished that in two and a half years. I was a very fast student. I was also very motivated. And older of course.

## You recognise that in your students.

Yes, I recognise that because if you make that kind of decision at that age, you really go for it. Often they're people who really wanted to do it but weren't able to, and then they get the opportunity. They're often well-educated, with a very interesting background in terms of their profession.



## Do you give assignments?

That's what I was asked to do, eh, that was how you were supposed to teach.

## I get the impression that you're not really sure if there's any point to assignments.

To me it's definitely about freedom. I teach in the first year – how should I define it? It's generating creative processes. Gradually over the years I've developed a kind of method of using assignments to get to the source of the student.

## Give an example.

In the beginning they're just assignments based on the 'I'. Who am I? Introspective assignments. Together with the student I try to look into his soul.

## But how? How is the assignment worded?

The assignment is, for example, how you introduce yourself. First we have a verbal introduction, and then I give the assignment: 'Bring an introductory



object to the next lesson.' In fact what you say verbally is pretty superficial, the outside. When you use visual language, you go more on your character, not your education or 'I come from Scotland', but what's on the inside? Introspection, in other words. The students experience that as something of an initiation.



## Yes, that's scary.

It's scary, but it's not that you have to show some fantastic work of art. You don't have to. It's about the fact that you do it. That you dive in, into yourself.

## It's a general assignment that applies to everyone.

Yes, it is for everyone, but the results are entirely different of course. That changes the assignment, it becomes individual. But it's always about your background, your country, your family. Some people are very reserved, contemplative, protecting themselves, and I leave it that way.

## Are you hard on them?

At a certain point I do get strict, yes. You can do anything you want, the only thing you're not allowed to do is nothing. That's the first condition here, but if you do something, that doesn't mean it's good. You'll then get a critique on it in the lesson.

I want the students to find something themselves within the frame of my assignment. And for us then to have a discussion about it. I feed in an idea, I throw something in the air, and they can jump at it.

## You're also the critic.

Yes, I'm also the critic, but I try not to teach based on my own view of art.

## Does your own work have nothing to do with your assignments?

I guide a student in his process. I convey a certain attitude. And that's playful and based on content. Without content there's no sculpture. This glass of water I'm holding has to acquire a particular content, otherwise it stays a glass of water. How do you transform it into art? That's alchemy. The artist is the only alchemist who can turn anything into gold.

## But how? Can you give an example?

Of course I can give an example of artists. Joseph Beuys, with his chair full of wax. That's an object that has become magical through the material. It's become a shamanistic object because he brought to bear his entire experience, that entire art factory, to transform it alchemically.

### Isn't that a bit esoteric?

Esoteric? Well, anything can be esoteric and anything can also just be realistic, completely to the point, physically quantifiable. You can refer to esotericism, to unquantifiability, to metaphysics. But physics always ends somewhere and then comes the next step. It's no wonder that many scientists are deeply religious, as Einstein was for example. There's no single boundary, eh.

### Has DOGtime influenced your own work?

It's hard for me to make a connection between teaching and my own work, in a concrete sense, in terms of form. But I can in terms of content, the playfulness I was talking about. It's also the case that teaching at DOGtime is very intense. That has a certain influence on my work. In that I give a huge amount, that I have to be able to put myself in the student's place. I have 30 or 40 students a week, and they're always floating around somewhere in my mind. I keep thinking about it. Ninety percent of the time in a very pleasant way.

### Dangerous. That's what they call it if you can't let go.

Yes, sometimes with assessments, eh, they really occupy you intensively. After an assessment it takes me at least a day to recover. Then the entire assessment runs through my head like a film. But you're not only open to the student, but also to art. The freedom there does influence my work, in that you dare to make crazy things. And because I stimulate the students in that way – be free, do what you want to, because you believe in it – I also stimulate myself.

### You can do what you like.

Of course you can do what you like, that's what you're here for. You want to make art on the basis of your own vision, but how do you achieve that? I can't teach you how to make art. I can teach you the alphabet, but you've got to write the books yourself. You can't say, I want to be a poet, so I'm going to train to be a poet. That's not possible, either you're a poet or you aren't.

### What should they definitely learn if nothing else?

They should learn to tap into creative processes. Discover your true motivation to make art. Why do you actually want to do it? And I can help you to discover that through assignments. As soon as we've found that thread, then I dive into your labyrinth with you. That's my job.

### So you're saying, I teach people to get to know themselves, I do a lot of digging into their psychology. Don't you sometimes think, oops, I ought to be careful with that? Perhaps that's nothing to do with me? I'm not equipped to deal with it?

In principle that doesn't worry me. A student will say himself what's on his mind. I don't ask him to talk about his traumas. If you want to evade a trauma, then make evasive art. What we're all here for is the artistic product. And that has to work on its own, exist somewhere but without you. It's your baby that you let go of and it has to get by on its own.

### What is DOGtime?

DOGtime is a fantastic ensemble of people, space,

place and time. People here come together from all corners of the world. The people who want to study at DOGtime are exceptional a priori. That's already a guarantee of quality. And the quality is incredibly high, you see that in the degree show.

Something Manel came up with at the beginning – and I had trouble with it – was that we had to do an exhibition every three months. I actually thought that was over the top. Too ambitious. I didn't believe in it. It was like rearing chickens too fast. Then they get wobbly legs. But then I found out that it simply works. People are capable of much more than you would think. Those exhibitions stimulate them to take a very serious look at their work. At the same time they learn to work in a big space, in connection with other people.

And what's also very nice is that actually you can never make a mistake. If you make a mistake, you only learn from it. Actually you should make the mistake. It's a good thing.

### Tightrope walking

Yes, exactly. The most interesting art is art that I don't completely understand. If you can completely understand it then it's no longer interesting. You first approach it with your instinct, your senses, and then you hold on to that feeling and think about it more.

An artist is an artist 24 hours a day. Also in his dreams. It constantly occupies you. An artist never goes on holiday. And he never retires.

# Light in the darkness

**A conversation with Willem van Weelden,** researcher, media theorist, publicist and lecturer in Unstable Media Theory, DOGtime foundation year, IDUM final thesis lecturer.

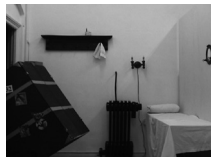
### You've been with DOGtime from the start.

Yes. Manel was still sorting things out with Tijmen, the director, so he could have the opportunity to do it, and I remember that he was here in April 2003 and he sounded me out a bit. At the time I was already in a sort of transition period. I'd stopped teaching Interaction Design at HKU [Utrecht School of the Arts], at Art, Media and Technology and the European Masters of Multimedia Arts, and for me it was a roundabout route to the Rietveld. I'd done something before at Graphic Design, but that wasn't very successful, although that had its reasons. I liked teaching at the Rietveld, but I didn't think I entirely...

cycling home and thinking, 'I reckon this is the start of a very good friendship.'

### You started work at DOGtime.

Manel came to me with this amazing story that he'd come up with all sorts of new subjects, and everything had to be a bit different. I was to teach Communication. And actually I've always been surprised at that, because I feel I'm a bit hampered communicatively. So I thought, well, it's a bit like psychiatry, in the end it's always the weak brothers that teach it, or who help people. So I thought that this actually felt completely right too, that he was absolutely right. Of course he did know that I



was a bit theoretical, but he also understood that I wouldn't be an orthodox theoretical lecturer, so he always gave me the freedom to do everything as I thought best.

### And how was that?

By always linking theory to a practical assignment and by trying to get enough confusion into the relationship. The snag in theoretical teaching at an academy of art is that things often aren't related to each other, as if the things don't follow on one from another, or aren't actually one and the same thing. That's what I've always aimed at in my own practice, that these things are simply one and the same, that things are linked together.

### What's your own practice like?

It's now completely taken up by lectures, writing, seeing things, teaching, that's it. And a project now and again. I've been finding it increasingly hard to hold on to that neutral position I have.

With students I've done a lot of projects, and of course I've brought a lot to them conceptually, but I really wanted it to be a vehicle for them.

### Which year do you teach?

First years, but also year four and five. In recent years that's been a bit standard. I always do more than one thing at a time. I've also had periods that I did year three, four and five of IDUM, and then again the first year. Interaction Design Unstable Media, that's like the Russian doll principal. We started in 2006, three years after DOGtime started. And since then we've had 20 graduates. It's a relatively small department, if that's what you call it.

### All those names. DOGtime, IDUM. The logo.

Yes, because you especially have to watch out how you spell it, DOG in capitals and time small.

### It's an advertisement and a mystification.

That too, absolutely. It's a complete mystification, which Manel thought up. Interactive Design is more the applied side, you might say, and Unstable Media is more the artistic, the autonomous, and



that comes together, or it clashes. That's the idea behind the department. And in particular it's vital that the application has to be based on a demand, on a context. Instead of an artwork being conceived at home or in a studio, you consider existing situations.

### Do you give assignments?

For the second year I've now come up with this. There's an exhibition by Juha van 't Zelfde in De Hallen in Haarlem, called NON-FICTION. He'd won a prize and as the winner he could curate an exhibition, and he chose the theme Dread – Fear in the age of technological acceleration. This exhibition is about three layers, in fact it tries to put its finger on the culture of fear not by portraying it, but by considering the technological aspects of it or technologies that contradict fear. I've taken this exhibition as a starting-point for students, to look at it carefully and write a review of it. In this they have to say how they relate to the topic. The

### Why?

Well, I can't remember, it was a sort of bacchanal that got out of hand. I don't know, but I remember







on the other hand of course it's very vulnerable because you can never really point out problems very clearly. Differences of opinion are masked by friendship and good intentions and so on.

We started with the idea that there should be confusion. Confusion was the binding element of the curriculum. That's about assimilation – what has painting got to do with that mixed-media-type approach of mine and that heavy theory? How does it interact, what happens, how will it ferment, boil and bubble, in that oven?

**So it's about the people.**

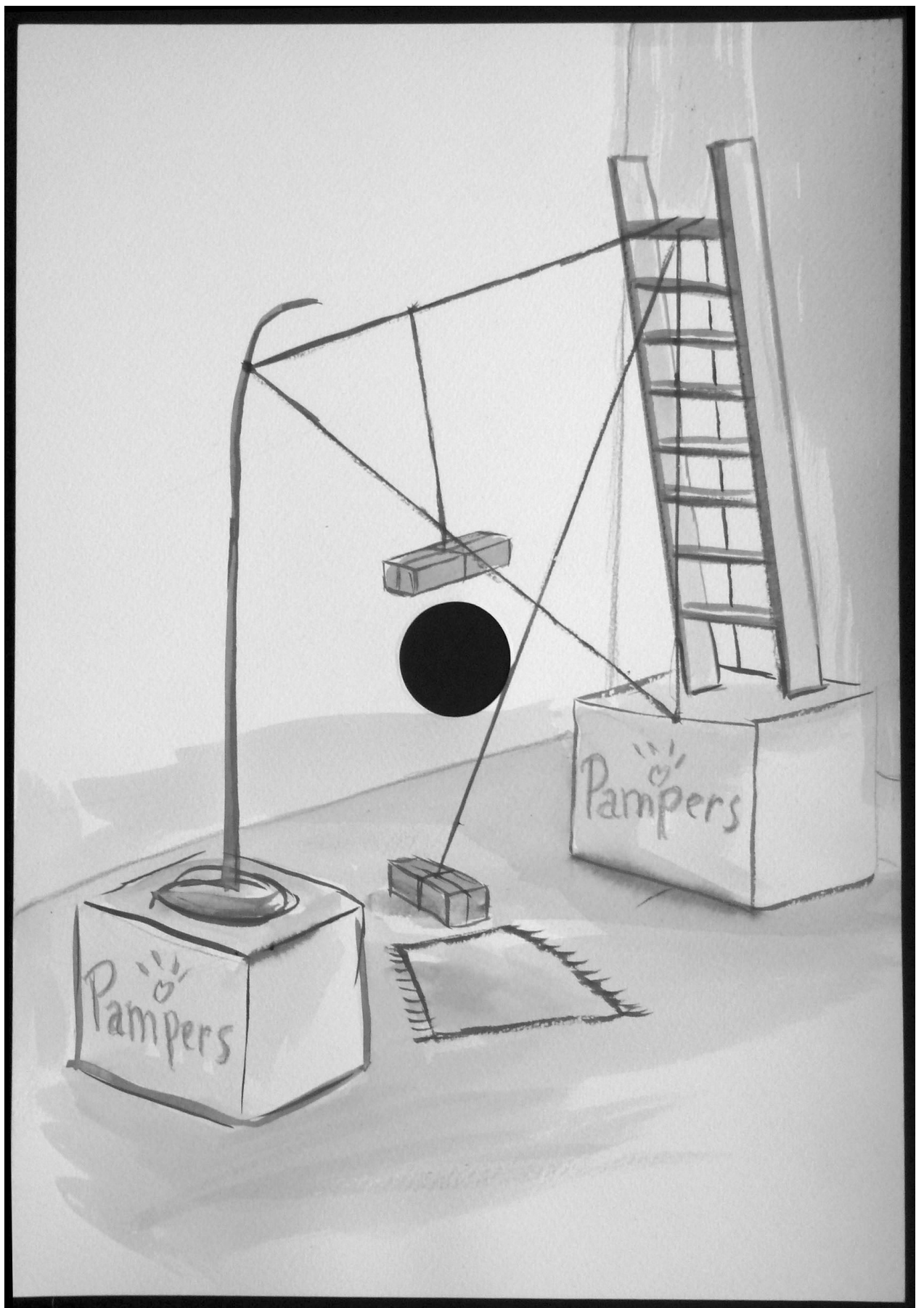
It's about the components – that's not just the people, it's also the activities. That was the idea in fact, the very simple idea that one and one is three. Precisely by orchestrating these clashes, you create something new, a new connection, and that happens both in the heads of the students and in the heads of the lecturers. So they understand you should switch the focus onto yourself through the eyes of the students, and that's actually liberating. I understood right from the start that that was what it was about.

Do you know that book by Jacques Rancière, The Ignorant Schoolmaster? Not that I'm a big Rancière fan. But I think people worry too much about teaching methods these days. No one pays any attention any more to what hands-on education actually is. They only look at the end results.

**But without a set of rules you can't actually teach.**

I think that what you can offer is the intensification of a student's qualities, and inspiring them and pushing them to declare themselves. To make them realise the context around them, and that within it they're free to make choices, even within art education.

The fact people have to be squeezed through final examinations like a sort of funnel so eventually they can make great art or meet some sort of fictional demand, that's nevertheless what I try to avoid.



Serge Onnen: Een pagina uit "The last cent"



# His drawings are excellent but he can't actually draw well at all

A conversation with **Serge Onnen**, fine artist and lecturer in Drawing, DOGtime foundation year

**How did you end up at DOGtime?**

I can remember exactly. I was on my bike on Van Woustraat when suddenly I got a phone call from Manel. I knew him a bit from the art scene but not very well. He asked me, 'Do you want to come and teach?' just like that – well, you know Manel – straight to the point. Then we went for a drink and I told him I was an autodidact, I'd never even been to an academy. But he thought that was all fine. I also said, do you think that's a good idea? He actually thought it was only an advantage.

**Did you have any idea what DOGtime was?**

No. Manel also didn't ask me anything about what I was going to do. He still doesn't ask me. I sometimes talk about it with my colleagues – what makes something like that work? I think there are two things: he looks for people who insist on doing their own thing, and he gives you the freedom.

**Do you give assignments?**

I have a couple of regular assignments. One I've been doing from the start and which still works

really well is that I ask everyone to bring a dummy, one of those empty books, and they have to choose a design for it which they have to discuss with me. It mustn't be a landscape or a portrait, but they have to choose a thing. And then they spend three months drawing nothing but that.

**A thing, you say. Should we take that literally?**

Yes, they mustn't do an emotion, anger or lying. So yes, an object, whether it's a chair or an animal. It's about the fact that at first the students are just

like children, like ‘I don’t know what to draw!’ Well, it’s always the same story. After a month you get, ‘Yes, but now can I draw something else?’ Because they take it very literally. And then I say, well, perhaps you could make an alphabet with chairs. Or make a tree with chairs. Or a house with chairs. Or I don’t know what. You know, the point is that eventually they shouldn’t just be occupied with that object anymore. Like Morandi, who wasn’t painting pots anymore, but just painting.

#### A pitfall.

Yes, but what I also really like about this assignment is that I give them very individual instructions. Because in a class of between 10 and 18 students, there’s always one good one, or two or three. Preferable three good ones, because then they carry the whole group with them. Because then the others think, but why am I not as good as that? With one good one it’s not as stimulating, because then they think, well, he’s so good, he’s on a different level. So I like group-type assignments, because they’ve only just met each other and it’s cosy and comfortable to huddle together. You can’t prevent it, so I think then I’ll do something with that energy.

#### Do they have very specific ideas in the beginning about what drawing ought to be?

Yes, and standard ideas too. The girl or boy who comes to you in the first lesson and says, ‘Yes, but actually I can’t draw at all.’ As if it’s a disability, like there’s something wrong with my leg, or I’ve got my period. I always laugh at them. But then I explain how they should see drawing.

#### Because they’re still assuming it’s the imitation of observable reality.

That’s why I do things with letters or typography. That can also involve expression. I don’t make such a distinction between typography and drawing. I also always bring in a whole bag of books, which I hand out, or leave behind and see what happens to them. I always show a lot. By people who draw very precisely, Rembrandt for example, and then show that it’s done with a couple of well-chosen lines. It’s so good because it has that incredible speed in it. Or I show them David Shrigley and say his drawings are excellent, although he can’t actually draw well at all. But he can get it so right, and of course he’s got a fantastic sense of humour. He knows how to make use of that clumsiness. It’s always so nice to explain that. But yes, it’s also dangerous, because then they think, OK, so I should draw like that. But no, that’s not the idea.

#### Can you explain an idiom?

How to draw? You could compare him to Dik Bruna. But then a bit punky. Well, I really don’t like Dik Bruna at all, but I do like David Shrigley. You can see that he gets it just right. That it can



only be done the way he’s done it. My whole way of teaching has changed since I spent six months in Beijing in 2012. I spent a lot of time at the art academy. It’s a sort of military art academy. Totally the opposite of the Rietveld. And you see there that there are certain things they can do well, that they’re very good at. The painters who leave there can paint better than any lecturer at the Rietveld, so to speak. I’m only talking about technique, not about content – there hardly is any. That’s changed my entire perception of art in general and therefore also of art education. To me that importance of attitude has a bit had its day.

#### The Rietveld mentality?

Well yes, for years it’s been the hippest school in the Netherlands, eh. As soon as you arrive here, then you’re already quite something, you know. And that something, that’s not so great of course. Because actually you’re not anything yet. That idea, like, ‘just do anything, it doesn’t matter

what material you use, as far as I’m concerned you can draw with peanut butter’, that’s all very well but I don’t do it anymore. In one class you can only work with Indian ink. Most of them have never done it before. It’s a particular technique, which is also Chinese, and of course there’s a lot you can do with it.

#### You haven’t lost your love of David Shrigley because of China, haha?

No, no. Not my love of Miró either – that’s very subtle – or Michaux. In the first year I always say, whether you’re going to do fashion or glass blowing or textile design or architecture, you should use drawing as a way of thinking. If you draw a lot, it really becomes a tool connected to your body.

If you have singing lessons then at a certain point you’re able to sing, and then you don’t need headphones anymore or music or a microphone, and then it really gives you lot of benefit and pleasure. It’s also something that keeps on getting better.

#### You draw a lot – does it change?

What drawing develops in me is that I keep applying different techniques. I use drawing as a basis with which I might print wallpaper or fabric, or make books. So that drawing quality, the hand, that’s always there. Also in the animations I make. I’m now working on a printed curtain for an exhibition in Taipei.

#### It’s writing?

Well, yes, what I like about drawing is that it’s the most basic way of making an image with your body. That it’s something very physical.

It’s more about the action than the observation. Yes, for me it is. The observation, look, I always point it out to the students. But certain people just don’t see things.

#### Are you hard on them?

Yes, I am. If people don’t understand, I get impatient, and also if they do sod all or make excuses. Then I think, well... About half way through the ten years I thought, goodness, now I’d like a higher year, but actually this is fine. Now I only see the advantages. I can say tough things because they’ve only just got here, they’ll get over it. I give them a kick up the backside. I have the feeling that it’s highly motivating. I now focus a lot more on actually doing something in class. There are so many lessons where they only sit and talk and then they have to do everything at home.

#### Is there interaction among the teachers?

I’ve often no idea what they do – I sometimes ask the students. Manel has a huge amount of trust in his teachers, and I think that’s very special. Right from the very start. And we hardly ever have

meetings. Meetings don’t amount to much. By then the damage has already been done. ‘Oh yes, this student is doing well and that one isn’t.’

#### Is there consensus about that?

Well, not always. I’ve sometimes leapt to the defence of, say, psychological cases who completely opened up with me, but who didn’t get a chance with other lecturers. It’s also interesting that there are things you can’t judge at all. A couple of years ago there was a Polish girl who had a history of drug use. In any case in her drawings it was all really heavy stuff, with lots of needles and blood and so on. Well, I can’t judge that. I can only say, fine, carry on. I can only stimulate it. That’s perhaps an interesting theme to deal with at a symposium.

#### Should anything be allowed?

Well, I don’t know about that, of course. This year there was a boy who stalked everyone. Who chased after teachers. He was expelled. Of course that’s not acceptable. Sometimes you get that kind of student, the kind there’s room for at the Rietveld, people who have nowhere else they can go, but who do have a sort of creative karma, a certain energy.

#### What is DOGtime?

I think the students have a very big influence on the direction it takes. Because of course there are a lot of people who are already quite accomplished. There’s no getting around it. They’re not kids. I think that’s really good. It’s not that people over 50 are better, but I think they have a lot of mutual respect. A lot of people have a certain agenda, ‘I always wanted to go to the Rietveld but it wasn’t possible, first the children had to leave home.’ Of course you also have archetypes. For example I always like it if there’s an Israeli in the class. I’m always happy to have them.

#### Don’t they still have to do two years’ military service?

I hope so. Because they’re so disciplined – that’s great – they get right behind the wheel. They roll over everything like a tank. Then you don’t have to do nearly as much.

At the moment I’ve got a woman who’s set up five Mars factories all over the world. For those Mars bars. Three in Russia, one in Italy, one in Switzerland. Now she’s at DOGtime.

#### And is there a lot of interaction among these people?

Yes, they’re actually a bit clingy with each other. But then I think, it’s the first year, where friendships develop. What is irritating is that when you criticise someone, then immediately two of these ladies will be standing up for them. Of course, I also make it worse by doing a lot of group things, haha.



# Love is not enough

A conversation with **Jonas Ohlsson**, visual artist, DJ and lecturer in Drawing, DOGtime foundation year.

#### How did you end up at DOGtime?

Through Serge Onnen. He’d been teaching first years for six months, then he went to New York as an artist in residence for six months. He asked me if I would take over his classes. We both spend a lot of time abroad. I was an artist in residence in Los Angeles myself for three months and later he did the same again in Beijing. We then said, maybe we can share a job.

#### Was it the first time you’d taught?

I’d taught in Sweden. First I trained there at an art academy for three years and then I gave lectures

and workshops. A long time ago I also taught painting to children, but this was the first regular job as a lecturer.

#### What kind of work do you make?

Sex, drugs and other things. Electronic music, drawings and installations.

#### Drawings and electronic music come together in installations?

Yes, it usually works like that. But now I notice that I go through periods where I work on one thing in depth. For example at the moment I’ve





**Is it an international mix of people?**

Yes, definitely, you really notice it. It's unique that it's so international. Sometimes we have people from Taiwan, Uganda, Israel, Japan or America. So the things they find embarrassing vary a lot. But the idea is also that they should be embarrassed about what they make – that's something a lot of people don't dare to do. My intention is that they should take it to the limit, where things start getting dangerous.

**Does age matter?**

Not really. Of course, DOGtime is an evening programme, so we have a lot of older students compared to the Foundation Year. Of course there's a wider range of students, I think that's great, because they've also got experience. With VAV [The Department of the Moving Image] or Fine Arts some of them are 18, they've never done anything else. Perhaps they've studied something or other, or they've been to a couple of rock festivals, but they don't really have anything to say. They're very young, but they are passionate.

**Young and tender.**

Yes, tender, and that's also a strength. At DOGtime you sometimes have people who are really successful in science, politics or as writers and then they still have an idea or need, like, 'I've always wanted to do this but I've never had the time.' They don't see it as a career choice. Sometimes we have people who earn a lot of money, but they're searching. They're curious about a different way of looking at creativity, thinking differently, and they want to open up to new ideas. Experiment, do and make things themselves. And that leads you to art.

**Is there interaction among the students?**

Group dynamics are very important. I also notice that it influences me when I'm on an admissions committee. Do we have too many of that kind of student? The male-female balance is important. It's nice if there's a good-looking boy or girl among them, then everyone does their best. And you should also have a rebel, who always says 'no', who goes against the grain. And a couple of people who hold it all together.

**Cohesion.**

You also need some well-behaved people, then you notice that you can make huge steps forward. All together. Then you have a good discussion and then everyone makes progress, including me. If you have too much from one side or the other, it doesn't work, it makes for a slow year.

**What should the students definitely learn if nothing else?**

To be open. And to dare to listen, that's the hardest thing. The problem is that most people who come to an art academy want to prove themselves, like 'Look at me do this, look at my drawing, my ideas.'

Jonas Ohlsson: Fingerspitzegefühl



been working on music for six months because I'm bringing out a record. It's electronica, psychedelic, crowd, a bit Faustian sometimes, at least I hope it is. But sometimes also a bit acid.

**Do you also perform?**

Yes, more and more. Solo, as DJ Lonely.

**The drawings are also psychedelia?**

Yes, psychedelic, a bit trippy. And larger installations. They developed out of the drawings. At first they looked very flat, a bit like a two-dimensional, three-dimensional installation. Then they got deeper and deeper, but always in combination with drawing and text. Now I'm working with porcelain, a commission by SKOR [Foundation for Art and Public Domain] at Museum Het Dolhuys in Haarlem.

**Do you communicate your work to your students?**

Not the work, but I do communicate the love of

art, I think. I always bring in books. I collect books by artists I admire, like Jason Rhoades, Mike Kelley, Bjarne Melgaard, Paul Thek. It's about the fact that I strongly believe in art and that's what I try to convey.

**Do you give assignments?**

Yes, but not often. Usually at first I just bring in books and then I talk about why I think they're important. Important to me, but also in general. Then I DJ some music while they draw for three hours.

Later I give assignments like, do a drawing that embarrasses you. I'm trying to push it. It's interesting, because embarrassment is a feeling that's easy to achieve. First years find everything a bit embarrassing or ridiculous. I want them to actively search for when something goes too far, gets too private, or too ridiculous, or too big, or too megalomaniac. There are a lot of different forms of embarrassment.

But if you go to an art academy, then the main thing you should do is look and listen. It's not very important what you make or do, it's mostly important that you absorb things. That you also look at your fellow students, and listen to them. Sometimes there'll be 20 people all talking about your art. People who join in talking about the creative process and have opinions and start arguments, right from scratch to the final result. That's unique. That's an opportunity in your life. Which you should take, even if it's hard and even if you get criticised.

**Are you hard on the students?**

Yes, I'm hard on them because I love art so much. A while ago, for example, the Swiss artist Thomas Hirschhorn did a three-month project in Bijlmer [in southeast Amsterdam]. That's something they've got to see. It's here for 90 days. Every day, he gives lectures, makes installations. He produces a newspaper. It doesn't matter whether you like



it or not, you'll never get a chance like that again. And I was absolutely furious with the students who didn't go.

Does that have consequences?

Yes, that certainly has consequences. Then I explain, imagine you like reggae and Bob Marley is playing in Bijlmer for three months and you don't even go and see him – that's just not on. Or say you're a Catholic and Jesus Christ is giving workshops for three months... Then you can't maintain that you love Jesus Christ, or art. Of course I can't throw anyone out, but I do send a very angry e-mail. They're also allowed to get angry with me. You have to give it your all. Teaching is a hard job. It's only enjoyable if you give it your all. If you get into a routine, you start using clichés.

So you also learn from it?

Yes, absolutely. And of course that's what's great about DOGtime. Sometimes you have someone who's an expert in psychology. Different knowledge from my own, but absolutely applicable to the creative field. I make art because I'm afraid of death and loneliness – it's not a career choice. I find art the best way to occupy yourself with deeper things. Yes, 100 years ago I would have been a monk or something, and for me that's now art.

Do you also give formal assignments?

Yes, sometimes it's gets too much about psychology. At first it's only about emotions and feelings,

about trying to go deep. Then I saw that some of them couldn't even draw a tree. Then we started drawing our hands. Firstly hands are very difficult to draw and secondly they make an easy model. Your left or right hand is always there for you. And of course I'm also a person who likes outsider art, like Jean Debuffet. My strength doesn't lie in making people better at drawing a car or a hand, but at expressing what they want to say. Of course that's very difficult in art now, because no one knows what students will end up doing. Maybe they'll do performances with blood injections or write philosophical texts. Then learning to draw a horse is no use to them at all.

Is that true?

Well, no, I don't believe it's entirely true. Of course there's something very nice about looking. But I mean, I make electronic music although I could never play guitar or piano. But I did know what I liked and found exiting in music. And now you've got synthesizers, drum machines and computers, so a lot of non-classical possibilities to express yourself.

It's not about skill but about authenticity.

Yes, I think that's right, and of course that you should be good at something. Conceptual artists too, they have to be good at thinking. Every art needs something good. Even in punk, they couldn't play the guitar, but they were good at making a noise, at stage performance, at provoking people. I mean the Sex Pistols were good at provocation, though perhaps they couldn't play the guitar well.

This is a very hard world and you never know whether you'll have success or money. The only thing you can know is: does the idea of going to your studio make you horny? Whether it's music or anything else, then you're on the right path and automatically it will be good.

I played football when I was young and I never wanted to stop, although I was a bit too fat to get really good at it. But I was good at dribbling, technically. Later on I had the same thing with music and drawing. In the end I became good at it because I liked it so much, I just couldn't stop.

Necessity.

Yes, that love of art, it's not only pleasure. It's important that you can make the link between necessity and love. That's also what I tell the students: love isn't enough. All those old ladies who sit painting flowers all day have that too.

Love and courage.

Yes, exactly – maybe that's a good one. Love and courage, having the need to talk. I remember when I saw Edvard Munch for the first time, I was nine or ten, my mother took me. I thought wow, I felt the power of art. I didn't understand it. But I felt the fear, the loneliness. That made me able to move on to other emotions, other spectrums of expression. All good artists have the will to communicate. It's also about being able to move other people. That it transcends something. For that you need guts, balls, courage.

My body is cleverer than my mind

A conversation with Bas Medik, visual artist, tutor and lecturer at Het Lab, DOGtime foundation year and Spectatorship, IDUM.

How did you get to know Manel?

I had him as a tutor in the Foundation Year and we've always stayed in contact. In 1999 I graduated in Autonomous Sculpture.

So it was only four years later that you started teaching?

Yes, that's right. I started in the second year that DOGtime existed. I missed the first year, the kick-off. Manel had asked me then, but I had the idea

ments that stimulate you, you understand why someone is looking for a specific approach. You see that in each other in the assessments and discussions. The lecturers have a lot of trust in each other – that's important. It's not that you have to fight for your own territory or defend it in relation to a wider context. In that sense you do feel that there's freedom to open up and experiment with students.

Are the lecturers very different in what they offer?

Yes, I think they are. Everyone approaches it very specifically from the perspective of their own focus. Their own discipline, perhaps.

Do you communicate your own work to the students?

I don't think so, that's not something that's on my mind. Personally I concentrate on sculpture and work on publications. That's also something I often do with students. There's a relationship in outlook, or at least, it's an area I can relate to. But my specific demands don't play a role in formulating or assessing assignments.

Can you give an example?

One thing that's essential is our brains, or thinking about art – something that can be very problematic in the working process. As soon as you involve the way we interpret or read the world in the working process, a lot of misconceptions arise. I feel that the work then becomes completely rational nonsense. The things you can point to and name aren't very interesting. What I steer people towards is that you should base everything entirely on your body. I think my body is cleverer than my mind, that it communicates with the world in a different way. Let's say, my body passes something on to my mind, and my mind puts it in a framework and can point to it. But to me that mechanism isn't so interesting in making or looking at work.

So the first assignments actually have to be very fast, so the students don't have time to think. That's essential. And I often relate these assignments to the body, such as, 'Make a visual translation of a physical sensation.' So you drink a bottle of cola very fast – what then happens exactly? Then you feel those bubbles in your gullet, your



that teaching wasn't for me. I didn't know what I was supposed to do there, so I didn't do it. Later he came back to me and I said yes. By then I'd got an idea of DOGtime through conversations about it with Manel. I also talked to other lecturers. So gradually I got an impression.

What was that impression?

My impression was that it was almost a pact through which people wanted to express the same mentality. And they created that mentality together. An extremely rich chemistry developed among everyone and I think Manel was very sharp in choosing a very specific combination of teachers. DOGtime has grown and produced side shoots, but in my view the foundation is still there.

Is there cross-pollination among the lecturers?

I think that's perceptible to the students. What the cross-pollination comprises is that it's very stimulating to work together. That when you get assign-

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forehead goes cold, you get a sort of tingling in your fingers. How do you represent that in an image? You can represent it in two or three dimensions. Very simple assignments, but maybe they work so well because there’s a lot of space.

How long does an assignment like that take?

Good question – often too long. It takes at least three weeks, I think. There’s always a risk of misconceptions about what you’re asking or what you say in a discussion, and you have to watch out for them. If something isn’t understood, I think it has a lot to do with a different way of applying your intuition in making the work.

Do you also teach in other departments and is there a difference with DOGtime?

Yes, in the Foundation Year and Fine Arts. There are a number of differences. Firstly I think the DOGtime students come with different knowledge. They’ve more often seen exhibitions, read books, they bring a knowledge of the world. That can be very good and it can also really get in the way. The other difference is that you’re expected to turn your whole life upside down when you start studying at DOGtime. At any rate, you’ve got a job, often you’ve got a family, so if you suddenly start doing a five-year degree programme, it demands a lot of you. I really admire students who take that on and reorganise their lives to a great extent.

What should they definitely learn if nothing else?

What’s essential – and it’s something you can’t actually learn at all – is that I actually want them already to have a mentality, and then they should learn to formulate, develop and apply it.

Can you be more concrete? At the Rietveld I often hear the word ‘mentality’ – it sounds so vague.

To me what mentality means is that within your research and work you determine and develop your own criteria. That’s what I’m gradually realising. You start with certain criteria, you determine them beforehand, and then you test them within the working process. Probably as you’re working you’ll discover there are different criteria. In this it’s essential – and that’s one of those Rietveld clichés – that failure has a special role to play.

Are there other clear criteria?

Not hard criteria, I think. But I think – and again that comes back to that mentality – that non-conformity is desirable. That’s quite essential. As soon as you try to relate to what already exists and deal with it in a conformist way, the results won’t be particularly interesting.

Is anything possible?

Within the restrictions you set for yourself, yes. Though you should set restrictions for yourself, by choosing a starting-point or an approach. Within

these restrictions, some things are possible and others aren’t. You determine these criteria yourself as a student. The lecturer should find out a student’s criteria, because it’s about his or her focus. He or she wants to discover something in them. You can expect of a lecturer that he or she should look carefully and reflect on decisions in the work and not just impose a particular viewpoint.

It does have something to do with your own work, doesn’t it?

I think it doesn’t play a role in my work as a lecturer. Let’s say, the things I regard as important are entirely private. They aren’t by definition interesting to the student. If I have a particular fascination for red, or car accidents, beyond that it’s not particularly interesting. What we can talk about though is what those ideas do for me. Then you’re talking about the way you can translate or make use of fascinations.

The individual student is the starting-point, but you give everyone in the group the same assignment?

Yes, only I hardly ever give specifically personal assignments. No, naturally I have a programme, but crucially within it I have certain experience with pitfalls you can come across within the process. And these obstacles are what the students have to relate to. As soon as they start nimbly avoiding them like a sort of jiu jitsu master, it’s very clever, but it’s precisely what it’s not about. I think that’s a mechanism that’s unique to art – that there’s actually nothing better than completely failing all the time. Over and over again.

Don’t students find that very hard?

Absolutely. If there’s any kind of curriculum at all, then that’s my curriculum for the first year. I think success has become a standard in society. That’s dangerous. Or at least, I think it makes for very safe work, and nobody takes any risks. So you’re more concerned with what’s going on at the moment and you relate to that, conform with it, instead of saying, OK, now I’m going to find things out entirely for myself and it doesn’t matter to me at all what comes out of it.

Anything is allowed?

I think the problem with a very clear curriculum is that in the first place they focus on me and then take into account what I want from them. I think that from day one it should be clear that I don’t want anything from them, apart from the fact that they should challenge themselves and be prepared to take risks. And the assignments are in keeping with this. I don’t want to give them clear directions in what makes a good or bad approach.

Not about taste.

The final work is proof of a process that led to it, of questions, of an approach. I think that 98 percent of the research, or of everything that’s made possible within it, isn’t visible in the final result. I compare it with monochrome white: it takes three thousand hundred million decisions to arrive at that final image. Firstly it’s essential that it’s absolutely not about self-expression, but about your relationship with the medium. That in the first place the work is about the medium you choose.

Are you hard on the students?

There are different ways to deal with a subject. But as soon as the work gets too calculated, coquettish, safe, then I can really be merciless. If on the other hand someone does totally impulsive things, knocked together in three minutes so to speak, I don’t think that’s a point for criticism.

Does your work with the DOGtime students influence your own work?

No, but I think it does influence my own thinking.

My interaction with fine art. I think it sharpens the mind. As soon as you talk to colleagues about a subject, then often you stumble your way towards a particular point, you miss bits out, you scrape things together. That’s something that doesn’t happen when you’re teaching. Then you start with A or C and work your way to L and you have to include all the letters in between. That’s valuable for yourself too. So I think indirectly it does have an influence, that I get better at analysing.

What is DOGtime?

I think that it’s high quality evening classes with dedicated, capable lecturers who are attuned to each other in an exceptional way. And of course that’s a difference with other departments, the fact that Manel started from scratch and has been able to put the team together like this. That’s unique.

# We experience more than we understand.

From our Berlin correspondent: **Katinka Neyen**, designer, relaxation therapist and former lecturer in Communication, DOGtime foundation year.

**Assignment:** Close your eyes and imagine a circle.  
**Question:** What color has a circle?

## Das Geistige ist die treibende Kraft

From **Hans-Peter Dürr**, physicist, member of the Club of Rome, executive director of the Max Planck Institute as the successor of Werner Heisenberg, the founder of quantum mechanics and formulator of the uncertainty principle.

“Der Grund ist immer wieder, daß die moderne Physik sagt, daß die Grundlage der Physik nicht die Materie ist.  
Also: Wirklichkeit ist nicht Realität, im Sinne, ‘dingliche’ Wirklichkeit.  
Sondern, daß im Hintergrund etwas ist, was wir in der Physik “Potentialität” nennen.  
Das heißt, es ist die ‘Möglichkeit’, sich in jedem Augenblick zu realisieren. - Nur die ‘Möglichkeit’! Es ist etwas, ‘das in der Luft hängt’. Es ist mehr von der Art, wie wenn wir im Kopf eine Ahnung haben. Eine ‘Ahnung’, im Gegensatz zu einem ‘konkreten Gedanken’, an dem wir herumdenken.  
Die Ahnung lässt alles noch offen. Aber die Ahnung ist nicht so, daß ‘alles in unserem Kopf drin ist’. Es hat schon eine Gestalt. - Am Anfang ist eine Gestalt. Es ist etwas das zusammengehört, was ganzheitlich ist, also es gibt keine Teile. Es ist, was sich im Laufe der Evolution zu immer konkreteren Teilen herausbildet.  
Es fängt insbesondere an ‘zu gerinnen’, was wir dann Materie nennen. Und wir schauen auf die Materie und denken ‘das’ ist das Wesentliche.  
Die Materie ist genau der Teil der Evolution, der sich nicht mehr an der Evolution beteiligt!  
Der sozusagen sklerotisiert, verknöchert ist und nur noch als Gerüst dient für das was die eigentliche Evolution trägt. Die Evolution selbst ist offen. Es ist eigentlich keine Evolution im Sinne einer ‘Entfaltung’, sondern ‘Neuschöpfung in jedem Augenblick’.  
Wenn wir danach fragen, ob es hier eine transzen-



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dente Größe gibt, das was man gewöhnlich mit dem Göttlichen verbindet, dann kann ich in einer gewissen Weise sagen: Ja, aber sie ist nicht von der Art die wir dann mit dem Begriff Kraft verbinden. Weil Kraft hat für mich schon eine Richtung und so weiter.

Die Transzendenz besteht darin, daß sie die ‘Möglichkeit’ der konkreten Gestaltung zulässt.

Und bei dem Gestaltungsprozess ist nicht nur jeder Teil für sich isoliert beteiligt, sondern letzten Endes ist ‘die Schöpfung der Welt im nächsten Augenblick’, immer ein Gesamtkunstwerk, an dem wir alle beteiligt sind.

Und nicht nur gewissermassen wir Menschen mit unserem Bewusstsein (die wir auch Absichten haben), sondern alles was in der Welt ist, beteiligt sich an der Neuschöpfung der Welt.

Und da sind selbstverständlich einige ‘Langweiler’ darunter, die, wenn man ihnen sagt: “Jetzt zeichne ‘die Welt im nächsten Augenblick’ “, antworten: “Mir fällt nichts ein!”

Wenn jemand sagt: “Mir fällt nichts ein”, dann verhält er sich wie die Materie.

Also dieses Glas ist ein ‘Langweiler’! Ich halte das Glas ‘jetzt’ und im ‘nächsten Augenblick’ ist es noch dasselbe Glas.

Dem Glas ist nichts anderes eingefallen, als wieder dasselbe! Und das nennen wir Materie. Das ist ‘geronnener Geist’.

Materie ist alles, ‘dem nichts mehr einfällt’. Und der Punkt ist, daß wir die Materie so wichtig nehmen, weil sie sich in der Zeit nicht verändert. Wir sollten sie gerade deshalb ‘nicht’ wichtig nehmen: Weil der Materie nichts mehr einfällt als ‘sich Selbst’! Sondern wir sollten diejenigen wichtig nehmen, denen in jedem Augenblick etwas Neues einfällt. Und da sollten wir den Menschen wieder in den Vordergrund rücken!”

“Die Wirklichkeit ist nicht von uns üblicherweise wahrnehmbare und begreifbare Realität, sondern viel unbestimmter und unendlich offen. Sie ist vergleichbar mit dem Geistigen, eine immaterielle Gestalt, ein Erwartungsfeld von noch nicht umgesetzten Realitäten. Das Eine, die eigentliche Wirklichkeit die allem zu Grunde liegt, ist Potentialität. Die ständige Umwandlung von Potentialität in Realität, entspricht einem ewigen Schöpfungprozess im echten Sinne. Schöpfung meint hier Entfaltung oder Auseinanderfallen von etwas, was schon vorher da ist.

Die Realität wie wir sie wahrnehmen stellt gewissermaßen nur eine mögliche Artikulation des Potentiellen dar.”

“Die Welt in der wir uns bewegen ist nicht mehr ontologisch begreifbar. Ihre zeitliche Entwicklung folgt keinen strengen, determinierten Gesetzen, sondern es gibt nur gewisse Tendenzen beziehungsweise Erwartungen, charakterisiert durch Wahrscheinlichkeiten für mögliche Realisierungen, die wir dann in unserer gewohnten Vorstellung der Welt, als die objektive wahrnehmbare Realität wahrnehmen.”



## Music is much too dangerous

A conversation with **Rombout Willems**, composer, conductor, guitarist and lecturer in Sound & Video, DOGtime foundation year and IDUM.

### How did you end up at DOGtime?

Manel and I knew each other through a group of friends and we worked together on Manel’s opera The Nose. I’d made the music for the film, an installation and a song with a little organ.

In the first place I’m a composer. I write music for theatre and dance companies. I’m also a guitarist and a conductor. So I didn’t have much to do with

art, and I was very surprised when Manel asked me for DOGtime. I think there are a number of aspects that made him think it was interesting to ask me. Firstly because I have an affinity with theatre, and I’ve worked a lot for example with Needcompany, directed by Jan Lauwers, who’s also an artist. In the 1990s I’d already given a number of workshops in the Foundation Year at the Rietveld. Projects that were quite successful. A lot of my friends are artists. And I’ve always followed art very closely. In the 20th century of course art also became a much wider concept. Sound artists also felt more closely related to fine art rather than to the music world. Manel also thought it was interesting that I taught at the dance academy – he was thinking of performance art and so on. He had no idea what I did there. Of course that’s something entirely different from DOGtime. But I told him that I was very interested and that I would start in September. And I was given carte blanche. At first I had no idea what I would do. But now I feel like I’m in my element there.

### In the first year?

I can’t remember exactly, I switched between the second and the first year, which are both foundation years. I then taught in IDUM and then the first and second year again, now again in IDUM 3, so the people there get a better idea of IDUM.

### Do you do anything different in the first year compared to the third year?

Completely different. In the first year I give a lot more separate assignments. I usually start with environment, something in public space. I think it’s very important that they should start listening differently – or start listening. So for example I ask them to cycle through the city, or think of places you’ve been that you can still access. Places that are interesting to you because of the sound that’s in them, because you hate it or love it or it has a political, meaningful context. Then I ask them to add a new sound to that space as a performance. A sound that forms a duet with the existing sound. A sound that has the power of expression, a response to the space, or perhaps you want to silence the sound there.

Later on for instance I give an assignment based on the idea of ‘off screen’. An investigation of the friction between image and sound. Bring together image and sound so they run completely out of sync, have a different time span, and so for the superficial listener they have nothing to do with each other, but for you they have a deeper meaning. So you think, ah, so that’s why the sound is with that image, not because it’s obvious but because you’re seeking the tension.

### It’s more sound than music.

Never music. I try to avoid them working with music. I’m worried they’ll just put music under

something for a cheap effect, with atmosphere and so on.

### Not wallpaper but a construction.

Yes, absolutely. Music is much too dangerous. It’s allowed, because I always say if you don’t listen to what I say it’s maybe even better. They know now that sound is the basis for all my classes. It can also be silence. Through what you do with me in the first three months, you can find out whether sound might be a medium for you, within your oeuvre. And if you find out it isn’t, then you should just let it go.

### How many people still work with sound by the end?

The group that really keeps working with sound is relatively small.

A couple of years ago I introduced the use of sensors and their applicability into my classes. I also taught it. But I’ve stopped. People found it interesting but it always took a lot of time. Also there

are always people who say they find the technical aspect difficult. Once I’m not there as a lecturer anymore, they’re not able to carry on with it.

### Actually there should be a studio with an assistant.

Yes, if you want to do it seriously, then there should be a studio, and I did keep asking for one for years, but it never came, so I’ve stopped. I don’t mind so much for myself, there are enough other things to do.

At a certain point I started making sound installations myself, which also involve sensors. Only after I started working at DOGtime.

### So DOGtime has also influenced your own work?

Certainly it has, absolutely. Yes, I have a bit of a crazy life and quite a tricky one too, I find. As soon as I get a commission for a composition, I’ve got to stop all my work on installations and the like for six months. Then the composing along with the teaching takes up all my time.

### Do you only do commissions?

Yes, actually I do. In the past I’ve written a couple of pieces, but in recent years only for theatre.

### Is your work in a particular tradition?

That’s hard to say. My work also changes a lot. I like to do commissions but actually there are only one or two clients that I find interesting. And I just don’t want to work with the others, no. Things already go wrong at the first meeting if the person opposite me has music in his head that he’d like me to compose. If I notice that, then for me it becomes impossible.

### Abstraction.

Yes, the work is highly abstract. If I make music for Needcompany, then during the entire period Jan Lauwers and I talk for perhaps 20 minutes. He uses 99 percent of what I write. He never asks for anything specific, but leaves it up to me. And I only let him hear it when it’s finished. That’s the way it goes, Jan always says what he wants, and then I take three weeks to think. Then I make a proposal – I want to write for three solo violas, one very aggressive and one very sentimental, and I want an ensemble of ten people who echo this, as it were, at a different point in the performance. And I explain to him why that would be interesting within the concept as a whole. Then he says ‘do it’, and then I write the whole piece. Halfway through I let him hear some sketches, to check if we’re on the same wavelength.

### More in the tradition of Louis Andriessen than of Nino Rota?

Yes, more Andriessen. I sent all my early works to him and he would always give me a few notes. I’ve also played guitar in his pieces. In the eighties and nineties I wrote very difficult music, which the



musicians had to study for weeks before they could play. Now I write a kind of pop music, and now and then I do something with electronica.

### What should the students definitely learn if nothing else?

For me the process is important, I don’t have such a clearly defined aim. In the first years I also often introduce a group thing. For example, we make a show for the audience, based on the idea that we bring independently created sound pieces together in the same space and that we have to find a way to present them. How can we confront sound works with an audience? In the Bunker for example we did a group project. There would be eight works on at the same time, for instance, and all at once a light would start flashing, and another sound would begin to drown the others out, and then five works would be turned off, or another four new works started. A different way of presenting work. So yes, what are you trying to teach with



Christina Kubisch  
every time I do a  
electrical map of sound that  
this general map of sound that  
I'm collecting. It's artistic work, but  
it's a kind of social research too.

Maryanne Amacher  
When I analyzed this I  
discovered a low # was coming  
from Boston Harbor at 91-93 Hz.

Francesco López  
I want to develop a  
music that shows the  
possibilities of the open-  
ness of content.

Justin Bennett  
every city has a typical  
sound, just as some coun-  
tries can be related to an  
extraordinary color.

Marcel Duchamp  
sounds lasting and lea-  
ving from different places  
and forming a sounding sculp-  
ture which lasts.

Michael Asher  
here, the installation func-  
tioned as an expanded ampli-  
fication of sound and at-  
tention of found sound,  
literally channelled  
through architectural  
space.

Pierre Huyghe  
rhythms, automa-  
tisms and accidents...  
sonorities and re-  
sonances, but  
no polyphony.

Robert Morris  
it will consist of a du-  
ration of no sound or  
light and the windows  
should be opened and  
the heat off.

Annea Lockwood  
I'm trying to hear  
and sense and  
think my way in-  
to what the nature of  
a river is.

Rolf Julius  
if I combine a  
normal clear piano  
sound with a dirty red  
pigment, it will strike you  
as odd.

Mark Bain  
the piece was in-  
visible on the surfa-  
ce of the ground, but  
when activated induced  
severe tremors that spread out-  
ward to half a kilometer in the  
surrounding area.

Ryoji Ikeda  
the essential phy-  
sics of sound, the  
raw materiality of  
white light.

Hildegard Westerkamp  
from the exter-  
nal to the inter-  
nal, seeking informa-  
tion about the whole spec-  
trum of sound and its mea-  
ning, from noise to silence to  
sacred.

Michael Brewster  
sound and space  
molded to bring for-  
ward sculptural  
out of sound.

Anri Sala  
to find struc-  
tural and tempo-  
ral resonances be-  
tween sound and archi-  
tecture.

Doug Aitken  
A situation like that re-  
flects my approach: the sound  
has to be intrinsic to the work,  
both specific and accurate at  
once.

Alvin Lucier  
I regard this activity  
not so much as a demon-  
stration of a physical fact,  
but more as a way to smooth out  
any irregularities my speech might have.

Tanel Cardiff & George  
Barca Miller  
operatic song morphs into  
noise and then into bird shrieks;  
a loud, rustling squall and other  
nameless dias crash against listeners.

Christian Marclay  
I'm interested in the sounds  
that people don't want.

John Cage  
In a situation provi-  
ded with maximum ampli-  
fication (no feedback), Jacob Kirkegaard  
to question the sounds  
we hear; maybe the sound  
doesn't only sound as we first  
hear it, or perhaps it can  
tell us something else than  
what we expected.

R. Murray Schafer  
Modern man is  
beginning to inter-  
act with an acoustic  
environment radically dif-  
ferent from  
anything he has  
hitherto known.

Bill Fontana  
creating installations  
that use sound as a sculp-  
tural medium to interact  
with and transform our per-  
ceptions of visual and ar-  
chitectural settings.

Max Neuhaus  
the other difference  
between these works and  
music is that here the  
sound is not the mate-  
rial with which I trans-  
form the perception of space.

Edwin van  
der Helde  
Spatial Sounds  
builds up a physi-  
cally tangible rela-  
tionship with the vi-  
sitor, since it is the game of  
attracting and repelling between  
machine and movement.  
an instrument unto itself.

David Tudor  
the idea that  
the loudspeaker  
should have a voice  
which was unique and  
not just an instrument  
of reproduction, but as  
an instrument unto itself.

Gordon Monahan  
to walk down the resonant  
long wooden sheds, feeling the  
wind through gaps in the walls  
and watching the play of light on  
wooden benches and beams, while im-  
mersed in subtle and ever-shifting  
harmonies.

Bernhard Leit-  
ner  
A line of sound is  
produced when sound  
moves along a series of  
loudspeakers... Lines of  
sound can also define  
space.

Vito Acconci  
But the song  
drifts off; there's  
besides you and  
me, so this a  
recording of war,  
the empire  
of our  
love.

Rachael Attali  
now we must learn  
to judge a socie-  
ty more by  
its song  
now

that? It's precisely the things that are contained in the words: collaboration, research, communication.

## Are you hard on the students?

No, I'm not. I think you have to stimulate them. I don't just condemn something, I try to draw out the positive and indicate how you could do it differently.

found a solution to my assignment but it doesn't come from you at all, I don't think you have any connection with it, I don't know what you're trying to say with it.

## What is DOGtime actually?

For me DOGtime is – though the same goes for the dance academy – complete freedom. Manel also allows this freedom. I think he only intervenes if

tion any more. He wants a sort of anarchy and for things to remain unclear to a certain extent. That's the feeling I get now and then. And I don't oppose it, I respect it.

## But still classes.

DOGtime is extreme I think. In my first class I say that all media are possible, you can do performance, you can make videos, you can do some-



## There are criteria.

Yes, I do always make it clear to them if... oh, wait a minute, I can come across as very tough and direct, but I'm not aware of it myself. I can understand if people experience that as being hard on them.

## Doesn't taste also play a dangerous role?

Taste does always play a role, but my taste can be very broad. I can think something is good even if it doesn't appeal to me. For me it's about whether someone is able to make something clear to me.

## The work makes its own rules.

Look, if I don't understand a work but the student says a few words that make me suddenly get it, and I can also see it, then we can talk about it and then actually that already means the work is good. Or conversely I say let's move on to the next one because I think this is rubbish, and that can come across as very hard. Then I say, I think you've

he notices that a class isn't going well. He certainly knows how you function, but I don't understand exactly how he knows. I'm satisfied and I think my classes go well. I see that people enjoy them – they nearly always come.

## Is there a difference with the dance school?

It's completely different, but there I have complete carte blanche too. They also don't know exactly what I do there, but I don't think Manel knows exactly either, although of course he sees the results. Everyone at DOGtime actually has carte blanche, even the students in a sense.

## There's something paradoxical about it.

Yes, but it's also a dangerous school. The criteria and everything aren't explicit and Manel is the linchpin. He lets everything happen, lets everyone go their own way. If you want more discussion about things, then Manel always gets involved in such a way that no one has any grasp of the situa-

thing with the whole group, ultimately you can translate every assignment and make it your own.

It's handy to have a video camera. Video is a very easy medium because you've always got both image and sound. Then it's easy to take the sound, transform it, manipulate it, or replace it with something else. That way you also learn editing.

The process of having to do it yourself is actually very good in itself. That's also very DOGtime – if you want to do something you have to explore the medium yourself, teach yourself. The lecturer wants to talk about the content.



# Tell a lie which tells something truthful about yourself

Quotes from **Saša Karalić**, visual artist, tutor and lecturer in Mixed Media, DOGtime foundation year and Fine Arts.

†

*I think that in the beginning we all pitched in some bits, some ideas. The way of teaching depends on the type of students you get, the type of subjects you get into, the way you work, the way you think, all these things come together. I think that all the teachers had to adjust and to find new ways at the beginning, it works as a kind of back-and-forth discussion.*

†

*I myself often make events and actions in public space that involve small or large groups of people. In recent years, I've increasingly worked with people who actively participate in shaping my work through talking and discussing things, mainly social and political issues.*

†

*Education is a very important part of my social engagement, but it is a very different type of practice from my own work.*

†

*As an answer to my assignment 'SPACE PLUS EVERYBODY ELSE', one of my students took a big rock and broke the entrance door at the academy. It was a very smart reaction to the assignment but it created a lot of commotion. He planned everything in advance and had even calculated how much the new door would cost. He was an organised guy ready to face the consequences of his action. This made the whole thing even stronger, because it was not set as a wild and uncontrollable act but as a well-planned work using aggression as a tool.*



## The medium is the criterion

A conversation with **Tom Thijssse**, illustrator, graphic artist, founder of DOGtime PRESS and former lecturer in Drawing, DOGtime foundation year.

### You were at DOGtime from the start.

From the first day of term. That was immediately good because I realised how brilliant that idea of the mussel day was. To welcome the students like that, and put them at their ease straight away. But it also put the lecturers at their ease because we immediately had contact with the students, with a plate of mussels in front of us, and that created a great atmosphere. Also among the staff, because they didn't know each other yet. I'd never met Manel and the others before, and he hadn't met me.

### So how come Manel had asked you?

Because at the time, after the Graphic Art department had been closed down, I ended up floating around the entire school. First in the Fine Arts department and then in the Evening Classes.

### How long had you been teaching at the Rietveld?

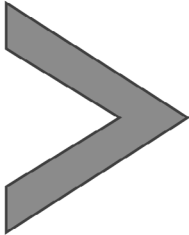

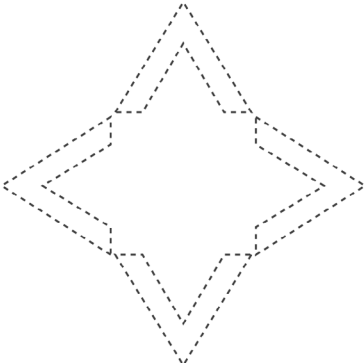

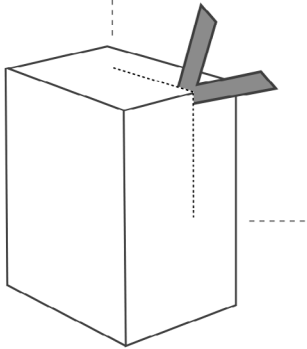
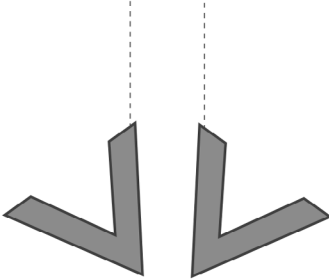
Since 1975. I've taught there for 35 years. A nice round number. First I taught in the Graphic Art department. And in that department, which was a bit of an individual department that did its own thing, I felt really at home. But when it was closed

down, I didn't realise that actually the medium was being discontinued. The fact that the medium disappeared, that hit me very hard.

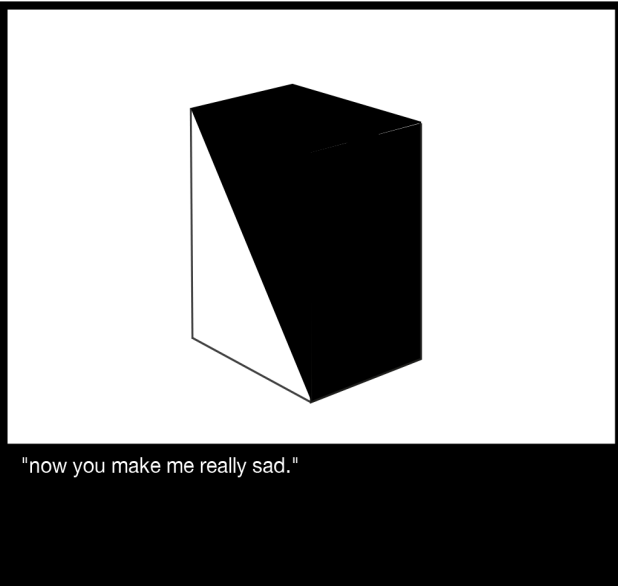
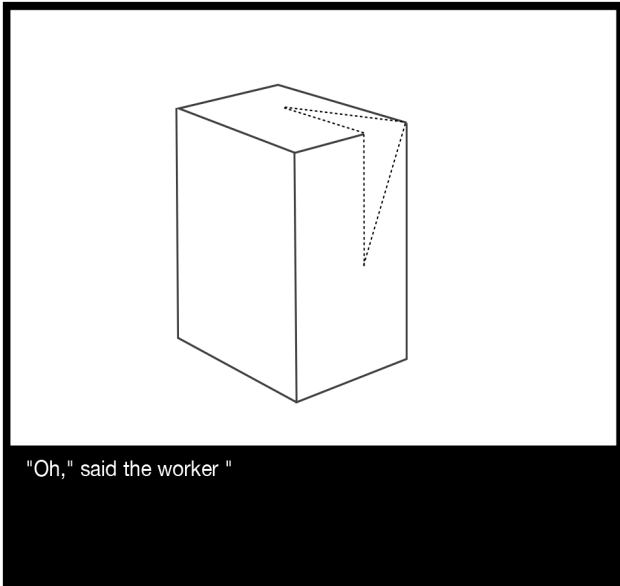
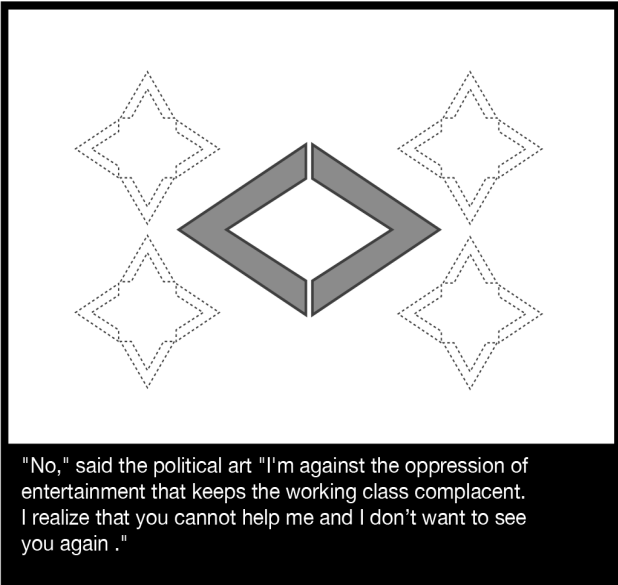
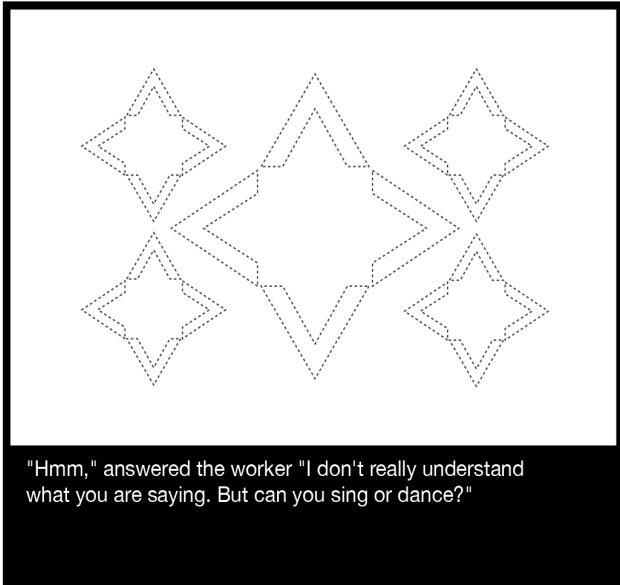
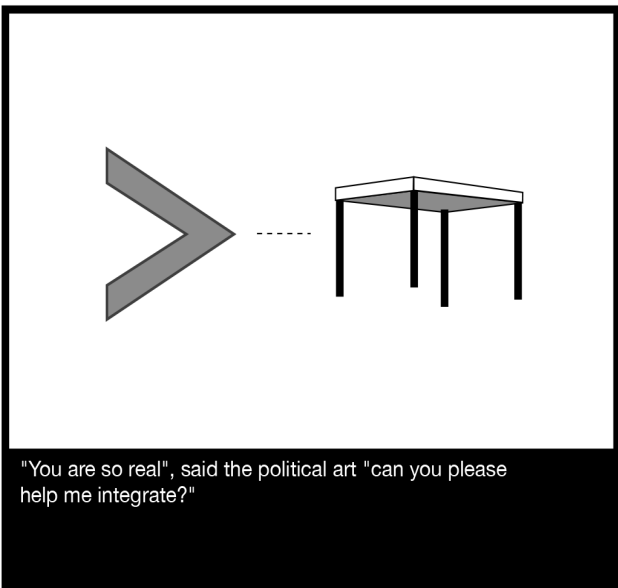
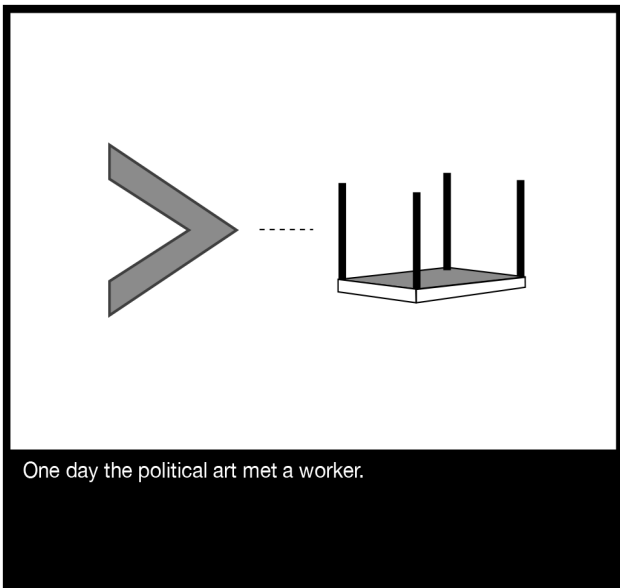
### The media.

Yes, exactly, graphic art as a whole. I then had something of a floating existence. I started off teaching drawing in the Fine Arts department. I was still thinking, just wait, in a roundabout way I'll end up back in my own field. At the same time I was also teaching in The Hague, in the Graphic Art department. And there in fact it was really buzzing. It made a nice balance.

Then eventually I was asked by Manel. I had the impression that I came into the picture because of my drawing and my floating existence. The first meeting with Manel at the Grand Café at Central Station was also nice. It was my impression, and I'm actually sure of it, that we clicked immediately.

Anecdote 03: Political Art	Saša Karalić
 <p>Once a political art decided to become integrated</p>	 <p>and then it got depressed.</p>
 <p>"What am I supposed to get integrated to?" wondered the political art.</p>	 <p>"The Left and The Right speak the same language and it seems that they don't mind it at all. "</p>
 <p>"Am I supposed to become a toy in hands of the anti-globalization movement?"</p>	 <p>"Or a decoration of the neo-liberal discourse?"</p>





One of the important things in teaching is to constantly remind yourself that you are not working in a gallery, that you are not supposed to approach works in relation to your own tastes and preferences. You are dealing with students. The works made in class have to make sense for the students' development and shouldn't only be approached by a general aesthetical judgment. It's much more important that students try to explore new areas, that they are stubborn and ambitious.

†

As Jacques Rancière, a French philosopher, said in his book *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*: 'The schoolmaster doesn't need to know anything, he may well be ignorant to the knowledge that has to be bestowed upon a student. The only thing that the schoolmaster knows and the student doesn't is that there's a way to pass from ignorance to knowledge. The master can know and mark that way but can pass it only together with the student.'

†

Since DOGtime students have less time, they have to push the pedal to the metal and work harder. They have to focus more and deliver more. That creates a certain kind of dynamics and energy. They have to take risks. They have no other choice.

†

The more clear and simple a definition is, the more commonly understood it'll be and the more possibilities within its constraints there will be for things to happen. If you start by calling things original, crazy and mind-blowing, what's left to be done? If you enter into something that's already been called a mind-blowing experience, the experience is already done for you before you even enter.

†

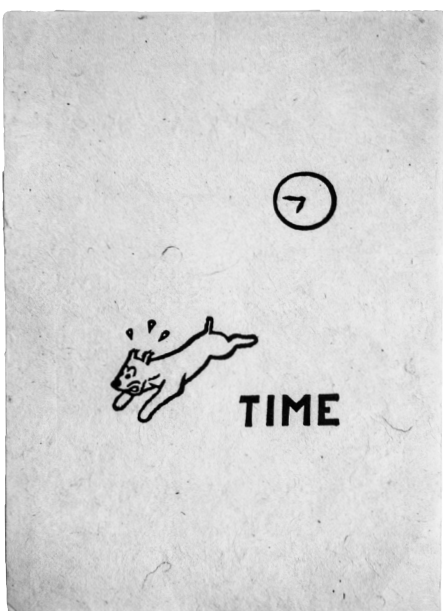
Sometimes I give students an assignment that works very well but I forget to write it down and then it's just gone. But that keeps it more interesting, working with new assignments. I also tried to repeat successful assignments but they often don't work as well in a different class and with a different combination of people.

†

What I often deal with in my class is the responsibility of the maker towards society, to his or her position in the world, and what it means to make art. Form is also important, presentation is important and what things looks like. But the most important is how all this communicates with the audience. There is no work without an audience or society.

†

I don't believe in autonomous art, let's put it like that.



#### Had you any idea what DOGtime was?

At first it was a bit of an amorphous idea with all sorts of people you didn't know, like, 'we're going to start new Evening Classes', but I quickly got the idea, hey, this is going well, I think I'm going to feel at home here quickly. And I did.

#### Didn't he also ask you on the basis of your own work?

Actually I've never taught drawing, not really. In fact I just did whatever. At a certain point we started making really large things. I did keep setting themes that were a bit linked to my own work, in which graphic art did play a role – something I've always involved. Books, prints. The first two years of Drawing actually went really well. Manel also complimented me on it, which I really appreciated after those less good years. So I very soon started feeling at home in the DOGtime environment.

#### You only taught first years?

Yes, I've always only done the first year. So the

people who were starting. Well, enthusing people, showing them a lot, getting them to make a lot. I'm a person who believes that things should come about through the hands via the brain. Not just one or the other. When we returned to the renovated building and we had the new graphic design studio, I steered the whole business in that direction.

#### Do you give assignments?

Yes, every evening a different assignment. Themes to which they immediately have to draw a response, like the homecoming, the scream, the fall, the parting, the meeting, guilty landscape – because then you can also draw lines to other artists. In my own work I always use titles. I'm alert to what a title can be. It's giving yourself an assignment, that's what it comes down to.

#### So you get something out of DOGtime yourself.

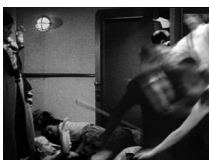
Certainly. That's why I developed those themes.





It's an unexpected question to a student, who has to be alert and give an immediate response. I'm always very curious to see how students will do that through an image. Personally I started doing it by making lino cuts without doing a sketch first. I collect the prints in books, so I create an archive of images. And I also started doing that with the students.

**Can you say something about the relationship between the title and the work? For example, The Homecoming. What sort of image does that produce?** Look, I've got The Homecoming here. It's not a literal description of what you see. What I also try to tickle in students or to get out of them is to switch on an association machine. That you keep making those remarkable leaps of thought to end up somewhere, somewhere you hadn't thought of in the slightest in the first place. That means the results from the students vary a lot. The Fall, for instance – it can be a banana skin, but also something different, you can interpret it politically, it can mean the collapse. I'm always looking for titles that can be interpreted in different ways. Then the discussions with the students are very interesting. That's the reason for those books that bring together



different views. They're immediately wonderful documents. They give you a great insight into what happened ten years ago. Also because the archiving of work at the academy is actually non-existent.

#### **They're always lino cuts?**

Yes, because they go very quickly and it's not difficult, not complicated, and we can all handle it on our own. We print it all at the same time in a single edition, depending on the number of students. A bookbinder in Naarden then binds it beautifully in the Japanese way. Manel agreed to the idea right away. At the end of year assessment the students all get a copy. And for the department itself of course they're wonderful to keep.

#### **Lino cuts are also a bit awkward?**

Yes, that nearly always has a positive effect. A certain clumsiness can actually be a strength. Not like in a drawing, then it's a weakness. If you get a drawing right in one go, it's a miracle. But in lino or woodcuts you can't fiddle with it, and accidents happen that can actually produce something good, as long as you follow them through. The personality, the character of the student, really shows through in the medium.

**Black and white, form and counterform, like with Frans Masereel.**

Ah, I always bring along a pile of books, different every time, and by no means always graphic artists. I do bring Masereel, but also Topor, or the Japanese. Through the student's work I keep coming across new examples and themes. In 1995 when I saw The Scream by Munch, I happened to find out that it was exactly 100 years since it was painted. A nice reason to make your own 'Scream'. You can also create an image in which the scream is outside the picture.

**All that work is narrative, in a sense.**

Yes, in the seventies and eighties that was taboo.

**What should the students definitely learn if nothing else?**

To think in terms of the minimum – what can pure black and white produce? That you can achieve something unique with it, which can't be compared with drawing or painting. That you should try and discover the character of the medium. In general that's what I try to aim at with students. The medium is the criterion. And another important thing is that you have to dare to make mistakes, because you can draw conclusions from them.

**The corroded line of Peter Holstein, the trademark of his etchings, was the result of this kind of accident.**

Yes, now you mention it, working indirectly, which is the essence of graphic art, also means that you keep having breaks to think about what you've got, and what you can change. To look critically and take a distance. Not to mention all that mirror-image business. And if you want to use text in the image, then you absolutely should.

**What was your personal contribution to DOGtime?**

I think that starting the DOGtime PRESS was an important one. It sets a seal, and it explicitly leaves you with something to keep. Students disappear but this is something lasting. An archive. A book, a collection of very different images that nevertheless become a whole. That's also an important characteristic of the medium.

**What is DOGtime?**

Vitality, the contact between the lecturers, the good relationship with the students, even if there are conflicts, that's all part of it. Perhaps it's a sort of island. It's very important that in the big community of the academy there are departments that do their own thing. An island of vitality, through all those lecturers with totally different approaches, which creates confusion. These contradictions are the department's strength.



*The idea has to be forgotten, because something much more interesting will turn up on the way ♦ You're expected to turn your whole life upside down ♦ The contradictions are the department's strength ♦ It's always about the context ♦ It's essential that it's absolutely not about self-expression ♦ They should be embarrassed about what they make ♦ You should set restrictions for yourself ♦ Accidents can produce something good, as long as you follow them through ♦ Precisely by orchestrating these clashes, you create something new ♦ I can think something is good even if it doesn't appeal to me ♦ To me that importance of attitude has a bit had its day ♦ Does the idea of going to your studio make you horny? ♦ Then I DJ some music while they draw for three hours ♦ In slapstick – and this is something that's very good for sculpture – the body is actually a sort of enemy ♦ Say you're a Catholic and Jesus Christ is giving workshops for three months... ♦ Make more and talk or think less ♦ Switch on an association machine ♦ You understand it more with your body ♦ Switch the focus onto yourself through the eyes of the students ♦ It's no wonder that many scientists are deeply religious ♦ I can teach you the alphabet, but you've got to write the books yourself ♦ I try to guide them and bring home the idea that everything they touch comes from somewhere*