

My Sight

Research document

Jill Padberg

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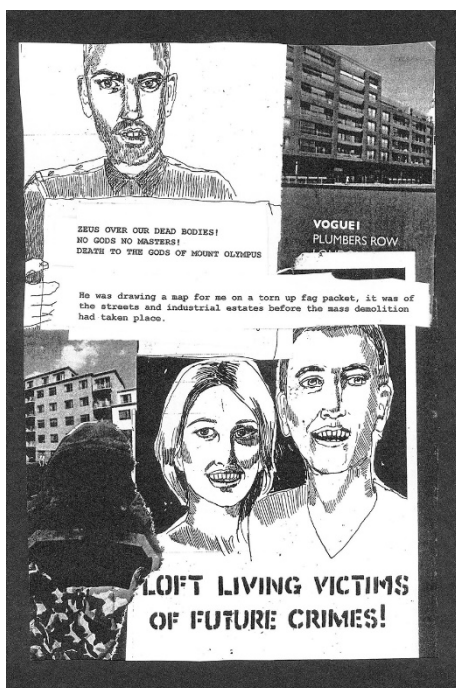
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Introduction

Right in the middle, between the Westersingel and the Mauritsweg, you can find a esplanade next to the water. When I got accepted at the Willem de Kooning I wanted to see what Rotterdam had to offer me. I went on a trip to the city with a friend of mine to see all the nice places. When we arrived a central station we just started walking straight ahead, not knowing where exactly to go. We stumbled on this spot between two busy roads. A esplanade between Westersingel and Mauritsweg. We decided to sit down for a while. This is my first favourite spot and memory of Rotterdam and also the perfect place for this project.

In this project I will observe this space, find out more how people move through the space and also what I feel towards this space in relation to these observations. Ever since I was little I rather watch my surroundings then engage with them. Observing gives me the feeling like I am included, even though I am not participating in conversations or activities that are happening in the space. Jiddu Krishnamurti said “to observe is the most important thing in life... to learn the art of observing without any distortion, without any motive, without any purpose, just to observe.” I’d like to look at this project that way, that it is not really about the outcome, but more about the observing itself.

Because I had such a great feeling about this spot since I first came to Rotterdam, I wanted to see if that feeling would hold if I come there more often. At the esplanade you can find both fast and slow movement. Some people see it as a through pass to other places. The Mauritsweg, on the other side of the water, is a busy road filled with trams, cars, cyclists, pedestrians all moving to get somewhere. At the same time there are others enjoying their lunch, smoking a joint from the coffeeshop across the water or looking at the 17 artworks placed next to the Singel. That’s why it is a good place for this project, there is so much happening that I can make many observations and make a work out of this.



Laura Grace Ford, *Savage Messiah* (interior spread), 2019. Courtesy: Verso Books

To communicate these observations of the site with others I will make a zine. I like working with different mediums and a good way to formulate these different mediums is through a zine. A good example of a publication like this is *Savage Messiah* by Laura Grace Ford. In research from Jacques, the zines – a combination of Ford’s drawings of urban spaces, collages, handwritten notes, and type-set monologues – were produced in small print runs, gaining a cult following. This type of creating is how I like to work too.

So, what does this place has me to offer? What is there to observe at this spot and what can I find out about it in general?

This in relation with my own thoughts and feelings towards these observations and then formulated through a zine with different mediums.

First idea

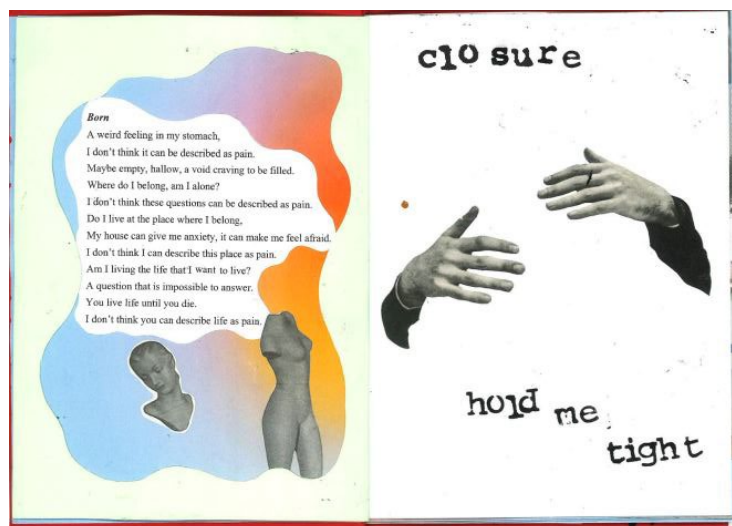
When I first started this project I had in mind to make something big. I wanted to make a big sculpture, something I had never done, something out of my comfort zone. Because it has to be site specific I thought it was nice to make a sculpture that interacts with its surroundings. I got the inspiration from Christo and Jeanne-Claude who have made amazing sculptures by wrapping everyday objects, to deprive them of their function. Christo said “We make beautiful things, unbelievably useless, totally unnecessary”. The aesthetic of these sculptures spoke to me.



Christo and Jeanne-Claude for the Wrapped Reichstag, Berlin 1995, picture: Wolfgang Volz, © 2021 Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation

As I started doing more research on how to create something such as these sculptures on my own and discussing this with my tutors such as Michiel and Arvand, I felt the pressure growing on me. With no actual explanation other than that I liked the way it looked, was I able to define why I wanted to make this project. When the time came closer to materialize things I got even more anxious, I didn't want to start this project, it did not feel like it was mine.

One weekend, I started looking at my older projects. Because of the internship last year and the holiday in between I hadn't made anything for at least ten months, I lost track of what suits me speaking about art. Browsing through these older projects I realized I keep it small and intimate, nothing like these massive sculptures I was forcing myself to make. Looking through zines a huge weight came off my shoulders. I now knew what I had to do. I think it is important to address this mistake I made through my research. I wouldn't have felt this relieved and assured of making a zine for this project without forcing myself in making these sculptures at first.



*Look with care by Jill Loulou Padberg, Publication, 2021.
Scan: Jill Loulou Padberg*

Location

After I established the idea of making a zine, I needed a location. What was it I wanted to tell with the zine and what kind of location fits that idea? All my life I've been observant. I never liked to engage with others but I do like to see them adapt to a space and how they engage with others around them. Like I said before, observing makes me feel like I am a part of the things that are happening without having to interact with others. What better project to use than this one, as it had to be site specific, I could capture the movements and engagements of a certain place and formulate this into a zine. My tutor Natalia helped me realize what I searched for in a location. We talked about if there has to be fast or slow movement. So does it have to be a busy place like central station where a lot of things are happening, people walking in and out all on their way to do something, or, maybe a bit more serene place, like a park, where people take their time and maybe even sit down to enjoy their time. While talking to Natalia I thought of a esplanade between Westersingel and Mauritsweg. I came there after I got accepted at the Willem de Kooning and went to see what Rotterdam had to offer me. At this place you can find both fast and slow movement which gives character to the place by the two contradicting with each other.



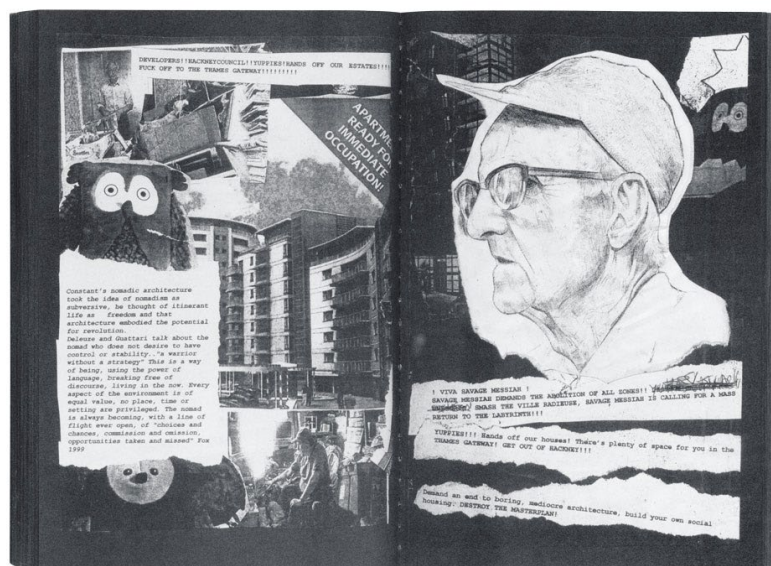
De Vlecht (2020), Kalliopi Lemos. picture: Bram Vreugdenhil

To observe a place you need consistency. You can only observe if there are similarities in your visits if you make them on same days of a week or same times of a day. I made a schedule to visit every Monday and Wednesday and mostly arrive around 5pm and would see how long I would stay. Some days had more to offer than others so the duration of my stay would depend on that. Now I just started gathering information of the place.

My perception

After going to the spot for a while and gathering information I had a talk with my tutors Raluca and Natalia at Roodkapje in Rotterdam. I had all this information but I had a hard time visualizing my ideas, mostly my feelings and thoughts towards these observations I made. While talking to them we came to the conclusion that I needed to stop and try to make it informative and state facts about this promenade. This zine would be more of a perception by me about this place. Natalia told me "It is already generous that you dedicate so much time and effort to just a regular space." This helped me to see I have all the freedom in this project as long as I give it to myself, I set my own limitations. I felt free to write down my own thoughts about the place. I found out that the nice place I thought it was changed into something a little darker, where homeless people and junks came together to hang around. I accepted that over time my view of this place had changed and that it was okay to formulate this into the zine. After all, that is what I wanted to find out, what it had me to offer and if my perception of that place could change.

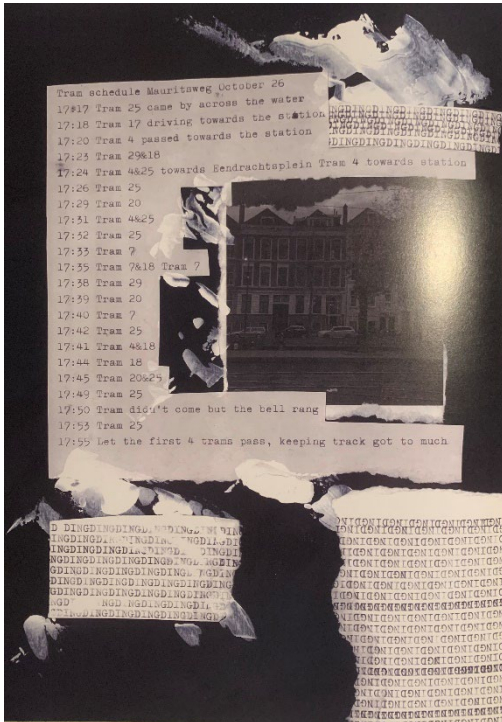
Raluca also offered me to bring the zine *Savage Messiah* by Laura Grace Ford for inspiration and how she worked with capturing things happening in a city. This actually also helped me to find the way I wanted to create this zine, what I wanted it to look like, the aesthetic.



Spread from Laura Oldfield Ford's *Savage Messiah* issue 1, 'Welcome to the Isle of Dogs', June 2005

Materializing

I am an intuitive artist so most of the things I make are feeling based and are made in the moment. For this zine I did need to collect a lot of information and choose what I thought was important to put in there. But along the way of creating this zine I chose on the spot how I wanted to communicate a feeling, conversation or observation. This could be with words or a drawing, a poem or a painting. I used a lot of images I made myself or some that I found on the internet and made collages with them. I found a lot of inspiration in *Savage Messiah* such as the black background, tearing paper, the use of darker tones/black & white and combining writing and drawing on the same page.



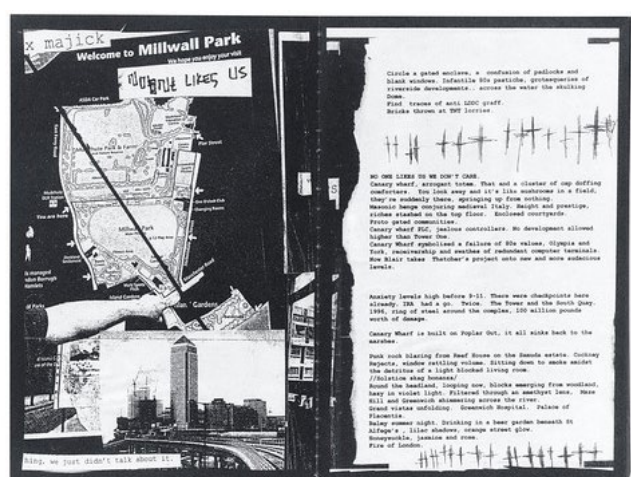
My Sight by Jill Loulou Padberg, Page 7,
Publication, 2022. Picture: Jill Loulou Padberg



My Sight by Jill Loulou Padberg, Page 14,
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Spread from issue 7, 'London 2012 Death to the Gods of
Mount Olympus!! Yuppies!! Hands off Hackney'

Outro

In conclusion I am very content with the outcome of this project. I had a chance to get to know this place better and see how it changed overtime. After a few weeks the glorification I had of this spot changed into something more down to earth, it was just a location. With the help of many people at this esplanade and some digging into history, I was able to create a zine that tells a story about my view on this place. I was able to experience the real place by going there repeatedly, showing a less pretty version of what I had in mind. But nevertheless a rich addition to my observations, making it more interesting to come there over and over again.

To find my way back to how I want to make art during this project deserves a celebration. It got me back on my feet again and started a creative process, turning into this zine that relates to my older projects but also opens up possibilities for future steps and change. I'd like to continue looking at locations, finding a way to tell a story about them through my perception of that place. Maybe now not a place where I have a connection with, maybe important places of others or that have been on the news. Are these places really how we picture them or can I see something different happening? I am curious to see where my next locations take me.

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Images

1. Laura Grace Ford, *Savage Messiah* (interior spread), 2019. Courtesy: Verso Books
2. Christo en Jeanne-Claude voor de Wrapped Reichstag, Berlijn 1995, foto: Wolfgang Volz, © 2021 Christo and Jeanne-Claude Foundation
3. Look with care by Jill Loulou Padberg, Publication, 2021. Scan: Jill Loulou Padberg
4. De Vlecht (2020), Kalliopi Lemos. picture: Bram Vreugdenhil
5. Spread from Laura Oldfield Ford's *Savage Messiah* issue 1, 'Welcome to the Isle of Dogs', June 2005 | Regeneration X. (2012). Eyemagazine.
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6. My Sight by Jill Loulou Padberg, Page 7, Publication, 2022. Picture: Jill Loulou Padberg
7. My Sight by Jill Loulou Padberg, Page 7, Publication, 2022. Picture: Jill Loulou Padberg
8. My Sight by Jill Loulou Padberg, Page 17, Publication, 2022. Picture: Jill Loulou Padberg
9. Spread from issue 7, 'London 2012 Death to the Gods of Mount Olympus!! Yuppies!! Hands off Hackney' | Regeneration X. (2012). Eyemagazine.
<https://www.eyemagazine.com/opinion/article/regeneration-x>