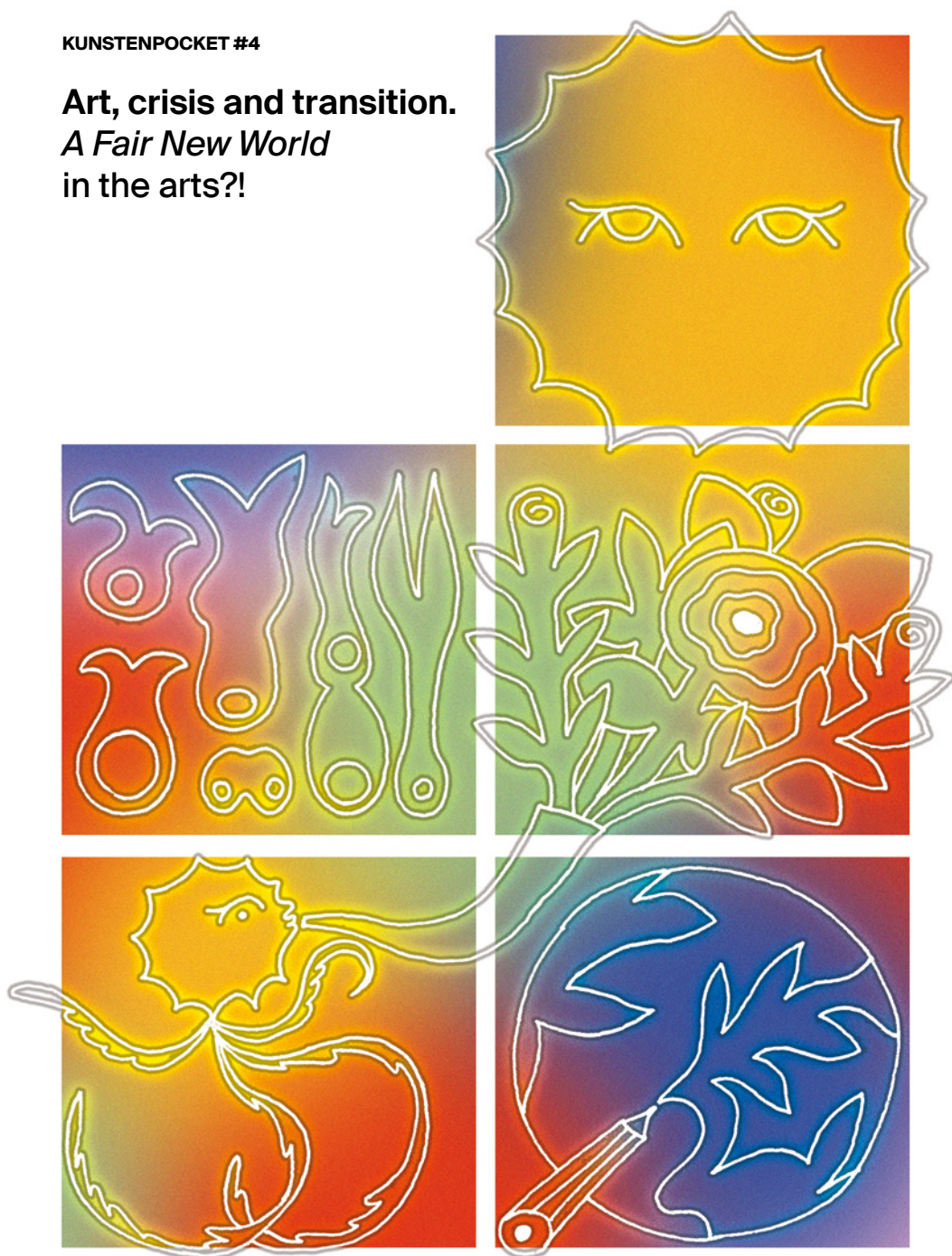# Art, crisis and transition.
## *A Fair New World* in the arts?!

**FLANDERS ARTS INSTITUTE**

Throughout this publication, you will find terms that may require more clarification. These terms are highlighted in the text. Explanations of how they are used in this context can be found in **the Glossary of Terms** (pp. 163-186).

**The bibliography** (pp. 156-162) includes all the works referred to in this text.

The **QR codes** in the margins of the text lead to more in-depth information about the topics cited here.

One of the components of *A Fair New World?!* was ***A Fair New Idea?!***, a series of four open calls for proposals, followed by juried selection procedures and the projects that resulted. Explanations about these calls and the selected projects can be found on p. 142-155.

# Art, crisis and transition
## *A Fair New World* in the arts?!

# Table of Contents

# Multiple Voices in *A Fair New World*

# Introduction

When this is over, do you want to go back to the way things were before? Or do you want a different world, a new world – safer, healthier and fairer? Let us not return to the way we were. Let us not go back to 'the normal, the usual'.

The coronavirus has exposed existing inequalities and injustices like never before. We need social change, a more humane and eco-friendly economy, a more inclusive democracy and a culture of kindness to prevail... It is time to reimagine, rebuild ourselves, our societies and our world.

Elif Shafak on Instagram, 8 April 2020

Dear Reader,

Here before you is the written review of ***A Fair New World?!*,**
**an innovation and development trajectory in which Kunsten-**
**punt/Flanders Arts Institute reconnoitred how we give shape**
**to our arts sector in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic,**
**and how we can do that in a fairer, more sustainable and more**
**<mark>inclu</mark>sive way than before**.

*A Fair New World?!* took place from the au-
tumn of 2020 through the end of 2022. In
May 2020, we sowed the first seeds with a
news flash entitled *Bericht uit het ongerijmde*
(Message from the Incongruous). We then
spoke about how Kunstenpunt/Flanders
Arts Institute would continue to fill its mis-
sion during the corona crisis, which had
erupted just two months earlier and was
challenging how so many of us worked and
operated.

Like the rest of the world, we could no longer carry on as we had
been accustomed to doing. Our work relies largely on bringing
people together, physically, both in Belgium and internationally.
All that was suddenly no longer possible.

The other part of our operation – documen-
tation, research and analysis – could per-
haps have continued as before, but it felt far
removed and distant in the face of the acute
misery in which people, organizations and
systems suddenly found themselves.

Our economy, our education, our associative lives, our health,
care, and our social and cultural lives: everything had been dis-
rupted. As a first reflex, we did not want to remain at a distance
and just document what was happening. Nonetheless, that was
what we decided to do, and it turned out to be the right choice.
We at Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute had our hands free
and the resources available to remain close to our core mission
of monitoring and supporting the arts ecosystem.

Translating that to the pandemic, it meant we could investigate the impact it had on our sector, analyze support and safety measures, monitor policy reforms and give visibility to arts practices in all their ingenuity and resilience.

You can read about all this in greater detail in our _Re/set_-series, in which we continued to follow activities in the field throughout the crisis, as well as in the interim state of affairs report _Kunsten na corona_ (The Arts After Corona) commissioned by the Flemish government, in our two annual reviews and _our major corona overview summary_.

Flanders Arts Institute followed and documented the impact of corona in the arts for two years. Check out our findings.

It also meant that we had the mental space to look ahead. In 2020, calls for a different and better future rang very loudly, in the arts as well as elsewhere. In interviews and essays, in memes on social media and so on, everywhere, we could hear the same sigh: things had to be different. It was like a clarion call that this was indeed the lesson that the coronavirus was teaching us.

Of course, a virus does not have the intention of teaching anyone any kind of lesson. The problems that Covid so painfully exposed – loopholes in the social safety net, underfunding for care, systematic **exclusion** at home and abroad – had been created by people, not a virus. So they also need to be corrected by people. This is precisely what our innovation and development trajectory has been able to get its teeth into in _A Fair New World?!_

# 1.
# Ideas for a New (Arts) World

*A Fair New World?!* has put a sharp focus on **what change – fairer, more sustainable, more <mark>inclusive</mark> – can mean for the arts in Flanders**. We investigated what we as a field of engaged arts professionals can and must do in order to help make this happen. True to our mission, we did this in consultation with arts professionals and makers, and we did that with an international focus.

We began with four themes that were especially prominent during the pandemic, and will probably remain so for a long time to come. They are:

· **Caring in the Arts**: what does 'caring for each other' actually mean and how high can we set that bar?
· **Sustainable Internationalization**: what needs to be taken into account and what balances need to be monitored?
· **Working Digitally in the Arts**: how do we do this fairly, sustainably and inclusively?
· <mark>**Multiple Voices**</mark> **in the Arts**: how do we shape that and help them grow, responsibly and in an environment that feels safe for everyone?

In December 2020, we launched our series of <u>Open Calls for *A Fair New Idea?!*</u> in order to **encourage innovative ideas-in-the-bud about these topics**. We provided several grants of €12,000 each, as well as guidance and a sounding board for participants, and we are now able to give the knowledge that this has brought back to our sector.

Since 2022, crises of a different nature have also come more to the fore, with war, energy crises, inflation and so on. This meant opening up the approach of *A Fair New World?!* even further. During the third and final *A Fair New World?!* panel discussion in May 2022, the participants took **a 'volatile new normal'** as their starting point. Here, crises are no longer the exception, but are understood to be a permanent feature.

For us as a field, every new challenge is also a learning opportunity. We believe that knowledge about building a new world that is fairer, more sustainable and more inclusive makes us more resilient for the future.

### 1.1 A *FAIR* NEW WORLD?! > CARING AND SOLIDARY

A Fair New World? Very nice words, perhaps, but what do we actually mean? It was panel moderator Carolina Maciel de França, at the launch event for *A Fair New World?!* in September 2020, who challenged us to be more precise. We perhaps intuitively understood the answer to her question, but we had not yet crystallized the thought. In the meantime, we have done that.

Rewatch the kick-off event of *A Fair New World?!* or read the summary.

In this context, and in the strictest sense, being 'fair' is about correct and appropriate remuneration. In Belgium, payment for work done is formally regulated. In the arts, there are regulation toolboxes, including *Juist is juist* (Fair is Fair), which help keep negotiations fairer. The *Kunstwerkattest*, or new Art Work Certificate, is intended to reinforce the overall social circumstances of arts professionals.

Flanders enjoys a strong governmental support policy for the arts. During the pandemic, government authorities did a great deal to protect the arts sector, but no system is perfect and not all problems of a social nature have been resolved.

'Fair' is also about **solidarity and redistribution**, steps that are complementary and even corrective to existing formal systems. That means new forms of giving and sharing, based on trust and people's individual needs. The *Common Income* initiative – selected for support in the framework of *A Fair New Idea?! #1: Caring in the Arts* – is engaged in investigation and experimentation about this theme. You can read about it in Chapter 1: 'Giving and Sharing in a *Fair New World*'.

**1.2 A FAIR *NEW* WORLD?! > BEYOND THE NORM**

*A Fair New World?!* also focusses on **the insights, wishes and interests of people who deviate from one or another unspoken social norm**, in terms of origin or skin colour, gender or sexual orientation, in terms of physical, mental or cognitive health, and so on. To what degree is our arts field adequately or inadequately attuned to differences; what needs to be done about it, and how?

Specifically, we have prioritized the voices of creators and art workers from migration backgrounds, with neurodivergences or physical disabilities, people who are queer and/or trans or non-binary, and people working in or with a non-Western region.

Together, they create a sharper and more complete picture of how 'unfairness' and exclusion manifest themselves today, and share their ideas for improvement. You can read about this in Chapter 3: 'Multiple Voices in a Fair New World'. Also discussed in Chapter 3 is *A Feminist Server*, the project selected for support after the third open call for *A Fair New Idea?!*.

Throughout this publication, it moreover becomes increasingly clear how much digital technology can be a silent support in a *Fair New World*, but also a factor in exclusion.

It is not the wealth of all these ambitions, desires and knowledge that is new, but the fact that we are calling attention to them. These insights bring nuance and enrichment to what we had already thought we knew, perhaps for a long time, about multi-voiced work in the arts.

### 1.3 A FAIR NEW *WORLD*?! > MORE THAN ART, GREATER THAN THE WEST

'The theatre is in the city and the city is in the world and its walls are of skin.' These immortal words were uttered by dramaturge Marianne Van Kerkhoven during the 1994 TheaterFestival in Brussels. In 2022, performance artist Mira Bryssinck recalled them during her *State of the Youth* speach.

> The arts and society are inextricably linked. *A Fair New World?!* was launched in response to a health crisis that opened up numerous other (pre-existing) social problems. Some of these are reflected in the kinds of changes that we are working on. The knowledge and ideas that we have brought together came from both inside and outside the arts sector. We sought them wherever we were able to find them.

Moreover, the world is larger than Flanders, larger than Europe and larger than the West. The term 'international' reaches far beyond and is much broader than the West. We looked for **voices from inside our more familiar regions, especially beyond the Global North**. These add nuance and shape to what we usually think of as 'working sustainably and internationally'. Working internationally in the arts is a delicate balancing act. *A Fair New World?!* brings new considerations to how we approach our international practices. You can read about this in Chapter 2: 'Sustainable and International in a Fair New World'.

# 2.
# Question Mark? Exclamation Point!

Even for an ambitious supporting organization, it is no small thing to want to explore and reveal how we can make our arts field a Fair New World. This needs to be done without restrictive boundaries and with an open-ended attitude, because the new normal must always be able to cope with a significant dose of unpredictability.

This open-ended attitude also means that in this publication, we adhere as closely as possible to what people have provided us with. As a result, concrete tips are interspersed with reflection, additional considerations and open questions. You will not find a step-by-step plan here for a perfect art world. There is (happily) no consensus for such a thing in our fabulous field. You will, however, find a range of approaches, practices and stimulating insights.

Readers may also find information on concepts or terminology that may be new to them (you will find a glossary of terms at the back) and, wherever possible, tools to help make a quick start.

For the more initiated, the specialists, the activists, we include references to the most consulted sources and authors, with relevant information provided in the bibliography. This provides further depth and background. We also encourage you to take a look at the additional content that we assembled on our _A Fair New World?!_ web page.

Check out all our _A Fair New World?!-_ content on kunsten.be.

Change only becomes a priority when it is made a priority. This is something that lies in the hands of all of us. The '?!' in _A Fair New World?!_ stands for both the despair (Don't we all sometimes have the impression that drive for change inevitably gives way to force of habit?) and the determination (Don't we also agree that stagnation is failure?).

Both despair and determination are inherent in systematic change. Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute will not abandon the themes of working with care, working internationally, working sustainably, working digitally and having multiple voices. This publication does not have all the answers. It is not an end point, but an intermediate step. For the moment, it is up to everyone in our much-loved arts sector ('!!') to get on with the work.

# Giving and Sharing in *A Fair New World*

During the Covid epidemic, makers, freelancers, centres and organizations in the arts lost almost all their incomes. Gaps in the social safety net, already too familiar, suddenly assumed terrifying proportions. What roles did government, the free market, and society each play in this change?

> In Flanders, for the most part, the arts flourish with the help of public funding, by means of the Flemish Arts Decree, regional resources, municipal-level culture budgets and European programmes. At the federal level, the Artwork Certificate (Kunstwerkattest, formerly the Artists Statute) offers makers and arts professionals customized access to social and financial security. In addition, resources are found through foundations and associations, dedicated funds, sponsoring and patronage, through crowdfunding and from earned income, including ticket sales, (co)productions and buy-out fees. Makers and arts professionals also earn income with paid commissions, as well as intellectual property rights.

Broadly speaking, we can say that **support for the arts in Flanders is divided among the three poles of government, the private market and civil society**. Each of these influences the others, from their respective specific interests and logic, and each at its own pace. To continue moving with the times and avoid getting bogged down, they all need one another. This becomes abundantly clear in times of crisis. During the epidemic, each of these three poles reacted in its own way.

> The Flemish government set up an emergency fund, the Cultural Activities Premium and the Innovation Mechanism. At the federal level, reforms to the Artists' Statute were accelerated and participatory. Funds, foundations and intellectual property organizations from various disciplines in the arts began paying early, lowering their thresholds and/or temporarily broadening

their target groups. More information about these responses can be found in our article on *financial solidarity, in our Re/set series* (in Dutch).

There are also supportive structures within the field and in civil society at large, including associations, societies, interest advocates and (citizen) movements of all kinds. These usually take extra initiative when they feel government and the market are failing. New alliances that emerged during the pandemic, temporary or otherwise, made their contributions to new policies.

They did so for two reasons. The problems were so painful and so acute, and the possibilities for making rapid changes in policy so limited that postponing action was not an option. The second reason was as a signal: '*Dear society, something is wrong here.*

> *We are taking up the slack, but something must be done.*' For example, artists' organizations created shelters for people without homes. For an extended period of time, Toestand, a social cultural organization, delivered morning coffee and cookies to undocumented people spending their nights on Allee du Kaai.

People do their best to fill the gaps that suddenly spring up, but it is rare that they can keep it up for long. Nor is that the intention: extra volunteering efforts are undertaken and organizations take on roles that are beyond their intended mission. As An Vandermeulen, artistic coordinator for Globe Aroma, phrased it at our third *A Fair New World?!* panel discussion, '*You are trying from a whole citizen movement to work with this gap and to make it visible. And from there on, you're working on influencing policy.*'

> The triangular poles of government, the market and civil society are not communicating entities. It is not the case that when government withdraws, the market or society automatically leaps in to fill the void. But they all do influence one another. Ideally, they inspire one another and exchange knowledge and expertise. This often goes hand in hand with difficult negotiations, with the democratic process serving as an arena for confrontation between different ideas.

# 1.
# Through the Net

With *A Fair New World?!*, we are especially interested in formal and informal initiatives that arose during the pandemic in both

society at large and the arts field in particular. These focussed on people who slipped through the gaps in the social safety net and who are insufficiently or entirely unrepresented by other advocates.

Each of the cases examined helped to define how giving and sharing could be organized, not as a replacement for the services of our welfare state, but as a complement to and refinement thereof. They contribute to the knowledge that our society possesses about solidarity in times of crisis and transition.

# *A Fair New World?!* examined how giving and sharing could be organized, not as a replacement for the services of our welfare state, but as a complement to and refinement thereof.

This is extremely valuable knowledge, because we know that there are new challenges to come and that solidarity will continue to be indispensable and crucial. After the Covid crisis came the invasion of Ukraine, with new streams of refugees, an energy crisis and inflation as a result. The climate catastrophe continues to worsen. We do not know what is yet to come, but it is clear that we are facing turbulent times.

This is also no doubt the reason why most of the experiments we investigated looked beyond the arts sector. Social problems in our society are not just in the arts field, nor are the initiatives that people undertake to do something about them.

Earlier publications by Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute, including our first assessment in *Loont passie?/Does Passion Pay?* (2016) and *Kunstenpocket #3 – Do It Together*, describe the

socio-economic positions of art makers and other arts professionals. An updated version of *Loont passie?* was published in 2022, based on data from 2019, before Covid-19. That research showed that makers spend most of their time on their core artistic activities, but generally earn the least from their own work. For most of them, their primary sources of income are from associated activities, such as teaching, or a job outside the arts sector. On average, income earned from holding multiple jobs is also low.

> '*The median net income earned in 2019 (from all sources combined) was between 16,000 and 26,000 euros annually. In comparison with the Flemish population as a whole, and despite their higher educational level, creative professionals earn significantly less than the average person in Flanders. (…) In addition, the portion of total income earned through creative work is relatively low. (…) The majority of creative and performing artists invest time in their creations, but only a small group succeeds in being directly or fully compensated for that work.*'

We know the reasons for this. A great deal of artistic work is invisible, and it is either unpaid or underpaid. Investigation and research, rehearsals and training, prospecting, preparatory work, try-outs, development, looking for partners and financing, and so on, are often unremunerated.

> If recent years saw earnest engagement with fair practices, the coronavirus exacerbated the urgency. In June of 2020, the juistisjuist.be website was launched. It includes tools for greater transparency and solidarity between artists and their clients. In September of 2020, the Belgian federal government included the reform of the Artists Statute in its coalition agreement. And in April of 2021, the Arts Decree included the principles of fair practice and standards set by *Juist is Juist* as conditions for

receiving subsidies and grants. But people still slip through the cracks. No system is watertight.

In their article, _Tussen de mazen van het vangnet_ (_Through the Safety Net_, 2020) rekto:verso magazine collected reports and statements from makers and independent arts professionals who suddenly found themselves in deep water during the pandemic. They offer better insight into the various causes.

> '_If the minimum income with which you can just pay your rent and food suddenly falls away, you have not yet built up social benefits, have no partner and are in disagreement with your family, then from one day to the next, you are out on the street._' (anonymous artist's statement in conversation with Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute)

In circumstances like these, it is no surprise that initiatives in our civil society are being undertaken to intervene in at least the most urgent cases. This leads to new and informal forms of giving and sharing.


# 2.
# New Forms of Giving and Sharing


The first theme in our _A Fair New Idea?!_ series was 'Caring in the Arts'. The working group decided to focus on the issue of Common Income. Their proposal consisted of research and experiment in small-sized systems of care in Flanders. These include **circles of shared social safety nets and/or collective saving, alongside and in addition to more formal systems**. These might be rooted in the arts sector, but they need not be limited to the sector.

> The _Common Income_ project began by collecting and analyzing examples of this type of model found all around the world. One

Read all about *Common Income*'s research into models of giving and sharing worldwide.

might think of tontines, of 'bread fund' collectives or the <u>*Common Wallet*</u> project, in which 11 Brussels residents share incomes and bank accounts with one another. <u>The results of this preparatory investigation</u> into models of giving and sharing can be found on the Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute website. The initiators of the *Common Income* investigation then developed a number of experimental models for our own local context. These will be tested in 2023.

In preparation, the *Common Income* working group organized <u>*Money Moments*</u>, a series of confidential conversations between artists and arts professionals in Flanders about their personal views about money (sharing) and possible financial worries. Talking openly about your income or financial situation is often not an easy thing, and this applies all the more to those with money problems. People feel ashamed, or that they have failed in their profession. This type of support system, however, can only work if participants can explain their individual situations in complete safety. After all, this is what determines which rules are agreed upon, what parameters will be taken into account, the distribution of resources, and so on.

**Trust** is a key word, confidentiality usually a sine qua non. The *Money Moments* conversations were an initial exercise in sharing very personal information, in formulating and motivating requests for help and in jointly looking for solutions, in complete safety. They led to a better understanding of artists' alternative strategies for making ends meet or redistributing resources, as well as of the emotional complexities and ideological layers associated with the very notion of money itself.

A first project that came out of *Common Income* after these discussions is called *Lotto Lokal*. It is a concept devised for people who live in each other's physical proximity, in the same borough, neighbourhood or street. *Lotto Lokal* wants to recreate a

welfare state on a smaller scale – referring to it as a 'care street'. Participants can deposit a monthly amount, according to their ability. One half of the amount raised is then raffled off during a monthly street tombola, while the other half is saved and can be used annually for a local initiative that the residents together decide upon. In 2023, *Lotto Lokal* will be tested for the first time in a street in Brussels.

> '*The lottery visits door to door each month and residents decide how much they can contribute. If they do not have any surplus budget that month, they do not put in any money. The front-door conversations are a crucial factor. How do people from different backgrounds look at money? What, in addition to financial resources, do they perceive as their assets? To what extent can they imagine sharing that wealth with their neighbours?*' (Nele Vereecken and Elien Ronse, artists organizing *Lotto Lokal*)

From this connecting experiment, the initiators hope to expand and test a second phase in the same community: *Triangle of Support*. Here, people will be able to exchange surplus income, time or skills with one another. These can be small chores and/or mutual services, such as grocery shopping for those less mobile, child care or helping schoolchildren with homework. The idea is that this also strengthens the social fabric in the urban metropolis, creating a barrier against the loneliness and isolation that are today generating so much human unhappiness.

> *Triangle of Support* shares much in common with *Werktitel!* (Working Title), one of the proposals for *A Fair New Idea?! #1,* which was ultimately not selected for further investigation. *Werktitel!* wanted to experiment with small communities of mutual care, primarily organized around artists. One of its proponents, Nixie Van Laere, explained the idea during the second panel discussion in *A Fair New World?!*.

Rewatch the second *A Fair New World?!* panel discussion or read the summary.

*'Imagine, for example, that I can cook really well and have someone near me who has trouble preparing meals. What if I can offer that service to that person? This goes farther than a financial transaction. Where can we literally contribute to building community, as a kind of community for artists?'*

The difference between *Werktitel!* on the one hand and *Lotto Lokal/Triangle of Support* on the other is perhaps that the latter does not start out from people who already know one another (well or not so well), or who already have an affinity with one another, regardless of where they live. The street where these projects will take place is socio-economically, culturally and generationally very diverse.
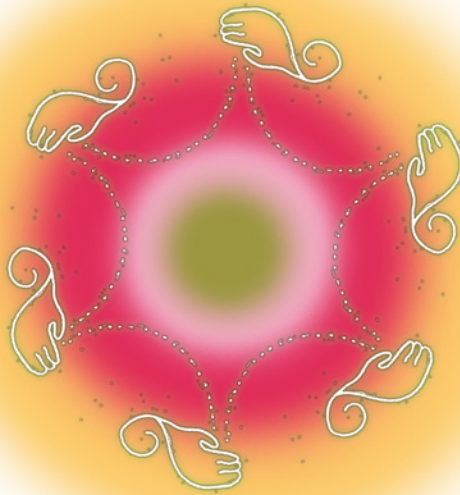
In these projects, equity is defined more broadly than just in financial terms. This can be emancipatory and motivating. People no longer need to think – or not exclusively – in terms of the redistribution of precarity. Melat Gebeyaw Nigussie, general and artistic director of Beursschouwburg, noticed this when Nixie Van Laere came up with the idea for *Werktitel!* As she explained:

> '*Above all, we have to stop thinking from the perspective of scarcity. Scarcity and competition are … detrimental … to our art field, but have long been the paradigm. I think that there is now an opportunity to think from solidarity, from abundance and from reciprocity. (…) Putting that reciprocity at the centre was something that was missing for me, and maybe now there is an opportunity to put that more at the centre. Just to put that scarcity-thinking to one side. Thinking from the perspective of care is also very important.*'

Another *Common Income* experiment complements and further develops fair practices in our sector. Their *Toolbox for Asymmetrical Pay* should facilitate the conversation about the kind of parameters that cannot be captured in fixed pay scales. Think, for example, of temporary setbacks or windfalls that cause someone to need something more at a given moment or, on the contrary, is able to contribute something. Think of the difference between people who have well-paid jobs in addition to a project and those who do not, those who require only a small or even no fee, or those who, conversely, are having a very difficult time and can use all possible extra support, for example with child care or transportation.

> There can be even more to all this. To what extent do a person's gender, disability or social or cultural background generate specific starting points and needs? By analogy with the Pay-what-you-can/want schemes that we see emerging in the sector, *Common Income* explores the principle of Earn-what-you-need as a new interpretation of fair pay, in addition to the familiar, contentious

issue of equal pay for equal work. How do we take these different needs and starting points into account in discussions about the distribution of available resources? In other words, can a so-called 'unequal compensation' sometimes be fairer than equal shares for all?

Of course, discussions such as these are not intended to replace wage negotiations in contractual employment. They can, however, be useful for projects in which participants together manage a limited budget, and therefore also jointly decide how it is to be spent. As compensation for their time and input for the *Money Moments* conversations, participants could choose between four (smaller) amounts, depending on their needs. For some, this turned out to make a world of difference. For a two-day *Common Income* workshop with artists, the earn-what-you-need principle was applied, based on an open and transparent group discussion.

In the course of 2023, *Common Income* will publish regular updates on their findings on the Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute website.

All of these models are mini-systems of care that require strong engagement from their participants. They are, after all, self-directed and horizontally organized. Conditions, rules and agreements are developed together. This requires time, trust and some form of closeness. In most cases, anonymity is not an option.

These models are mini-systems of care that require strong engagement from their participants. They are self-directed and horizontally organized. This requires time, trust and some form of closeness.

That was not the case with _SOS RELIEF_, perhaps the most radical experiment in giving that emerged during the pandemic. An initiative of State of the Arts, it was an online platform that brought 'givers' and 'receivers' together on the basis of mutual trust. If you let it be known that you were in need and indicated the amount you needed (between 50 and 400 euros), you would be put in touch with someone who was able to miss that amount. Both the giver and the recipient remained anonymous, except to each other and those managing the platform. In 2021, _SOS RELIEF_ resulted in State of the Arts being crowned with a Vlaamse Ultima culture award. They have not been accepting requests for support since mid-2022, but are currently exploring avenues for decentralization and sustainability.

Trust of this kind is a consistent theme that runs through all the other Belgian and international practices that _Common Income_ charted. Initiatives such as _Collective Capital_ (the Netherlands) and _Social Income_ (Switzerland & Sierra Leone) provide basic incomes to those in precarious circumstances, based on crowdfunding and with no checks or controls. Nor do they require accountability for what happens to the funds after they are allocated.

# 3.
# More than Money

At the beginning of our third panel discussion for _A Fair New World?!_, we asked **what structural systems of solidarity with people in acute crisis might look** like.

Rewatch the third _A Fair New World?!_ panel discussion, read the transcript or the summary.

They would go far beyond mere financial resources. For example, it might be about people who no longer have a roof over their heads, because of a climate disaster in Belgium or elsewhere, or because they are in our country as refugees or undocumented migrants and have no right to work, and/or because they lack any form of network.

What directly led to this particular conversation was the Russian invasion of Ukraine. It triggered a stream of refugees for which all kinds of collection and benefit campaigns were set up, in the arts and elsewhere.
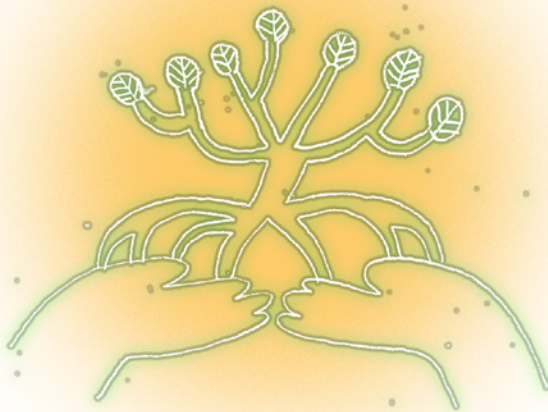
> Would the arts be able to more clearly for-
> mulate their own potential added value in
> such crises as these, and then incorporate
> them more systematically and more struc-
> turally, with due attention to people in need,
> regardless of their origin or background?

Indeed, we do not know what challenges will follow the ones we currently face or what new complexities they will entail. That is why **we need to broaden how we think about solidarity**. This means more than sharing money and resources. It means **systematization**, as well as **flexibility**, at the same time. Moderator Milica Ilic, a cultural worker specialized in transnational cooperation, phrased it as follows:

> '*How can we imagine mechanisms of soli-
> darity that can be activated long before the
> irreparable happens, long before people are
> killed or hurt or traumatized or displaced?
> And how can we create mechanisms for soli-
> darity that can continue a long time after the
> crisis in question is gone from the front pages
> or the social media feeds?*'

In the same panel discussion, An Vandermeulen, artistic coordinator for Globe Aroma, proposed the idea of an online space-sharing system for undocumented artists looking for a roof over their heads. She had noticed that arts organizations were contacting her in search of people who had fled Ukraine, in order to offer them working space or a temporary place to live. At the time, many Ukrainians had only just arrived and were still trying to orient themselves, so it was still too soon, but Globe Aroma always knows of people from all kinds of backgrounds who are looking for shelter or a hot shower. This gave her the idea for an online system, a kind of Airbnb, through which organizations could indicate which spaces they have available in which periods. Globe Aroma would then mediate and guarantee the person making use of the space. Vandermeulen also sees this as a form of influence, for both government policy and for the arts sector. As she says:

> '*When you see how space and the use of space
> have changed… Space is such a highly pres-*

*sured thing, and the situation is so different from five years ago. Each organization now thinks, "I have this huge hall that is not used during the day because it's only used during the evening when people queue for tickets. So maybe we need to do something with this space." It is a very recent evolution. And if one institution starts, another follows, and then another, and then suddenly now ministers are writing calls for breeding places for cross-sectoral work. So it's about small-scale policy influencing.'*

More insights from the third panel discussion are discussed in Chapter 2: *Sustainable and International in a Fair New World*.

# International and Sustainable in *A Fair New World*

'All modes of cultural exchange and artistic explorations are entangled in the complex mesh of geopolitical and economic power relations. (…) Today it is not just naive but frankly irresponsible to ignore that.

What does it mean to be mobile at the time of enforced migrations, reinforced borders, growing xenophobia, escalating climate crisis?'

Taru Elfving, writer and curator,
in *(Re)framing the International*, 2018
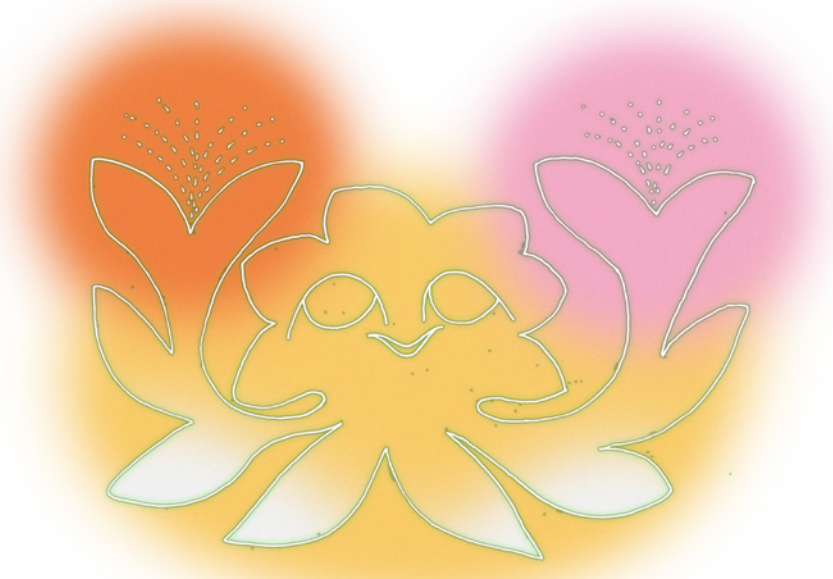
In 2018, Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute published the pop-up magazine, *(Re)framing the International: On New Ways of Working Internationally in the Arts*. It assembled data and information about the international character of the arts field in Flanders, identified a number of paradoxes and points of friction and indicated possible courses of action to help make international work in the arts more sustainable.

In that publication, artists advocated a paradigm shift, a radical new system – a *Fair New World* before the fact, if you will – for international arts practices. There is acute need for a new narrative about what it means to work at the multinational level, with

> cultural, economic, social and ecological considerations having equal weight in the balance.

The corona crisis made that need even more urgent and more extensive. It was more urgent because of the clear link between the pandemic, climate change and movement between different countries. It was broader because our attention to differences in opportunities has greatly increased, both nationally and internationally.

> That was one of the reasons why *A Fair New Idea?! #2* (Working Internationally in the Arts) did not select a single focus, but chose a multivoiced, diverse and internationally composed working group that worked on several proposals. *(Re)framing the International* had brought together knowledge and tips for making international practice in the arts more sustainable, even if it is primarily developed in and from the West. This discussion deserves further enrichment.

In the context of *A Fair New World?!*, we organized additional interviews with makers and art professionals from Palestine, India, Bulgaria, the African diaspora and Iran. It was an exercise in **decentring our Western view** (see chapter 3: *Multiple Voices in a Fair New World)*. What have we learned from all this? And what do these insights add to the pioneering work of *(Re)framing the International?*

# 1.
# International Mobility
# and Sustainability

We begin with what we here in Flanders primarily associate with internationalization and sustainability, notably the **ecological and human impact of frequent travel**.

> In an interview with Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute, Lien Van Steendam, coordinator for Werkplaats Walter, commented, '*That international concert life – does that still exist? Or will it still exist in the way we have done it so far? The one-time event, that pure touring life, the constant connecting of data … with excessive costs for organizers and too little or no connection with the local scene: to us, that actually seems a bit passé.*'

In *(Re)framing the International*, we showed how makers and organizations developed decision frameworks in order to travel differently, less, or in any case more conscientiously. That involved avoiding air travel, paying compensation when travelling by air, and prioritizing train travel or organizing alternative transport by land or water. Among other things, we published what has since been our heavily consulted <u>*Start to Train* map</u>. If you do fly, you should get as much added value as possible from your stay, by avoiding one-off presentations, by expanding the work you do while in a given region, with extra workshops or artist talks, or through studio visits and other forms of exchange at the local level. Together with the *(Re)framing the International* publication, we also released <u>a card game</u> for the sector, aimed at helping to get a better grip on the balancing act around this issue. All this information can be found at kunsten.be.

Read all about new ways of working internationally in the arts and our trajectory *(Re)framing the international* on kunsten.be.

> Frequent travel for longer periods can exact a human toll. Something that is initially exciting can become exhausting or lonely, certainly when you have to do it in order to sustain your career. Artist Sarah Vanhee compared the hypermobility of artists to cut-out paper dolls: hanging loose in time and space, as if they needed no grounding, no rest, no connection with friends or family. We use the term hypermobility to describe the need for creators and teams to travel more than they want to, because the system in which they operate demands it.

The corona crisis forced us to take a step back. It taught arts professionals to investigate different, notably digital ways to continue working internationally. In *Kunsten na Corona/The Arts after Corona* (2021), we brought together examples of exhibitions, concerts and stage performances that were developed remotely and presented online. The knowledge accumulated here now contributes to a more mindful and enlightened approach to mobility. Today, we have a better awareness of what is possible at the digital level and what the limitations are. Working digitally is a new, additional consideration in the kind of thinking that working internationally requires of us, bringing its own advantages and disadvantages, possibilities and limitations.

# Working digitally is a new, additional consideration in the kind of thinking that working internationally requires of us, bringing its own advantages and disadvantages, possibilities and limitations.

The last few years have seen a surprising amount of experimentation in making international work in the arts more sustainable. At the European level, policy frameworks have evolved that support this process. One can think, for example, of the Perform Europe and Creative Europe projects.

The five-year, international *S.T.A.G.E.S.* (*Sustainable Theatre Alliance for a Green Environmental Shift*) project deserves mention here. With support from the European Union, 14 theatres in and beyond Europe are responding to the issue of ecological sustainability that working internationally entails. NTGent and the Ontroerend Goed company are also involved. The latter is working on their *Handle With Care* performance, which is able to tour without performers having to travel with it. It is a board

game in a box, which is opened by a live audience and in doing so they themselves initiate the performance. It is setting a trend that Ontroerend Goed wants to continue: making productions with local teams and then distributing them across multiple regions. And they are not alone.

> For *A Fair New Idea?! #2*, Kris Nelson, of LIFT, the biennial London International Festival of Theatre, shared his experiences with their *Concept Touring* project. In it, LIFT provided budgets for nine experiments, in which 15 makers investigated how they could have their concepts, creative processes and/or results tour with no (or very limited) physical travel. Their results can be consulted online. They are models-in-the-bud for remote artistic practices for the future. For LIFT, this is all the more important today because of the growing difficulties that artists from the global South are experiencing in order to get to the UK. We have similar challenges here in Belgium (See below: *Know Your (Fair New) World #2: Art, International Mobility, Passport Power*).

A similar initiative is *Songs of Nature* by Muziektheater Transparant and B'Rock, with music by the late lamented composer Wim Henderickx. *Songs of Nature* should have been created in Flanders with Shuang Zou and would later go on tour in China. As a result of the corona crisis, however, the performance had to be directed by Zou from Beijing via zoom.The premiere at the Klarafestival also had to happen online, conducted live by Wim Henderickx. Both Henderickx and Zou were helped by on-site assistants. Later, a Chinese set was also built, in addition to the Belgian scenography. This resulted in two parallel tours, one in the Low Countries and one in China. For the performances in China, Shuang Zou works live on set with the Shanghai Camerata orchestra, a Chinese soprano and a Chinese conductor. The B'Rock musicians do not have to travel for the international presentation of the work. Aglaja Thiessen of B'Rock supports this approach, but she also refers to it being a balancing act,

because Flanders is too small a market for B'Rock. Strategies to travel less do exist, but they can deprive the musicians of paid work. The biggest challenge she sees now is to again find that balance by looking locally for more income.

Another interesting contribution to *A Fair New Idea?! #2* was from ART HAPPENS, a management and distribution agency for the performing arts. They derive their income mainly from percentages on the representation and distribution of artistic work. For years, ART HAPPENS has been investigating how it can approach the tours of the artists and their surrounding teams in a more environmentally sustainable way, without losing sight of the artists' well-being and the economic sustainability of the company. This was what ART HAPPENS focussed on during *A Fair New Idea?! #2*.

This led to an additional model in which the ART HAPPENS know-how is linked to broader structures, instead of just companies. Important international festivals and theatres have since been partnering with ART HAPPENS, making use of their knowledge and expertise in multiple areas. Two examples are the VIERNULVIER arts centre and Festival d'Automne à Paris. ART HAPPENS are in residence at VIERNULVIER and support the house by keeping international professionals in the performing arts informed about important upcoming events. In their collaboration with Festival d'Automne à Paris, ART HAPPENS is organizing European tours by non-European artists whom the festival wants to include in its programming. This has proved beneficial for all parties involved and the collaborations are ongoing.

## 2.
## The Same Boat,
## Different Seats

A decision framework for international travel – Kunstenpunt/ Flanders Arts Institute is also approaching the issue from this standpoint. We hope that many players in the arts will continue to mutually inspire each other in regards to this problem, so that we can together keep our overall footprint within limits.

> The question arises when 'inspiration' slips into 'expectation', or even a precondition for participating as a maker, and when and whether that is fair. Europe is a small enough region, and certainly the West can be accessed by train and/or bus. Land transport is more expensive, and sometimes impractical, but it is generally feasible.

Digitization allows exhibitions to be set up remotely, and concerts and choreographies to be rehearsed online. This also applies to works realized since 2019 by the French choreographer Jérôme Bel. These are rehearsed via video conference and performed by different performers in different places in the world. It is an explicit part of Bel's intention to no longer fly for his work. He links this to an appeal to the wider (stage) art world to do the same. In an interview with the *New York Times* in the autumn of 2019, Bel wondered aloud whether he could still trust artists who contribute to global warming with air travel. Here, however, he seems to be taking little account of different contexts, other than the French or European, for example, or with those who enjoy fewer resources or privileges.

No longer travelling by air can be a conscious choice in a European context, but it does not take those who have fewer resources and privileges into account.

Consider, for example, vast countries such as China or India, or the African or Latin American continents. Distances are much greater, and rail infrastructure is limited or even non-existent. In an open letter to Bel, published in *Etcetera 162*, Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez, director and actor with the Lagartijas tiradas al Sol company in Mexico, who trained at the AHK University of the Arts in Amsterdam, wrote:

*'If you ask the performing arts field to proceed in a new way, it would affect different people in different ways, and these effects unfold asymmetrically. You are one of the strongest voices in today's international scene and you belong to the most privileged 1% of our art world. You come from a country that allocates one of the greatest budgets for art production in the world. (…) We are all in the same boat, but we travel in different seats. (…) Your proposal sounds good for and from Europe, but if we apply your standard to everybody else, it would condemn us to only work locally. (…) Without a larger program, your proposal would mean yet a greater concentration of resources and cultural capital in the richest cities of the world. Europe would become, even more so, an island of harder and harder access, one that can barely listen to what happens away from its shores. [To say] 'Stop travelling by plane', at the end, is like saying that everyone should stay where they are and, as it happens, you stay next to the water well. Solving an ecological problem without considering social inequality is just another way to reinforce the colonial structure.'*

By **speaking from a different context and perspective**, by alerting Bel to his blank spot, Rodríguez adds nuance. Historically speaking, who is the biggest polluter? Who owns the most financial, symbolic and cultural capital, and why is that the case? Who has access to realistic alternatives to travelling by air, and who does not?

We can ask ourselves similar questions about arts professionals in Flanders. Who is how far along in their career, who has built up the network and/or visibility to be able to tackle things

digitally, especially after the caesura that corona brought us? Who has the resources, the time and the framework to organize tours via overland travel? These are inevitably the more established and/or well-networked makers and producers. The message here seems to be, **Know your privileges: put your own house in order**.

Something similar was said by visual arts curator Heidi Ballet during a focus interview with Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute in 2022. For herself, she deals with travelling by air both critically and selectively. She first looks at what is feasible by train or online. To maintain relationships with regions outside Europe, however, flying is often crucial. '*For me as a sinologist, it is a pity if it becomes impossible to physically meet people in China. (…) There are fewer art professionals from China at events, and a Chinese cultural centre in Berlin has closed its doors because travelling has become too expensive. This way, you get cut off from each other.*'

In that same interview, KVS Royal Flemish Theatre dramaturge Gerardo Salinas further focuses on a number of historically-grown imbalances: '*For those who grow up in the periphery of the Western world, for those who experience the hard impact of living in a postcolonial society, being able to travel is very important. We are talking about countries in which Europe has played a central role. That still shines through in their history classes, national holidays, etc. Our children need to live in a fairer world, in which [better] circulation of artists is crucial.*'

# 3.
# Beyond Export #1:
# The Same Work, Different Context

Gerardo Salinas continues during the Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute focus discussion on working internationally (autumn 2022):

> *'If you just think, 'I saw that there and now I want that here', then you don't have a map of the broader balance of power. (…) Abroad is more than a market: it feeds productions. That goes beyond the idea of export that defines us so strongly in the arts, and also beyond train travel, which means that you only stay within the Western world.'*

For Flanders, working internationally is often associated with – even narrowed down to – presenting Flemish work abroad. This strengthens our image as an art region, our networking, and it brings in income. Since the 1980s, it has put Flanders firmly on the cultural map and attracted international talent to our major cities. For a small region such as ours, profiling ourselves internationally is and remains of great importance. The Arts Decree provides specific instruments to help achieve this.

> Flanders exports most of its artistic work to neighbouring countries, by extension within Europe, far less beyond those frontiers. The reverse, namely the import of artistic work from outside Europe into Flanders, happens more often, as we learned from *(Re)framing the International*. In addition to European countries, Morocco, Turkey, Japan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, China, Canada and the United States are high on that list.

For an extended period, the corona pandemic brought the international circulation of in-person work in the arts to a halt. It is still too early for the figures to tell us to what extent things have

now recovered, and how the international circulation of artistic production from Flanders is currently faring. Those two years of near-stagnation have made people stop and think about other factors, such as the question of what it means to move art from one geographical, cultural or political space to another.

Just as an artist is not a separate, cut-out paper doll (see Sarah Vanhee's description above), artistic work does not happen in isolation. Art carries meaning that is shaped in interaction with its audience. **Audiences and frames of reference can differ, and work is sometimes read differently than intended**. We are not referring here to the double entendres, ambiguity or confusion with which art regularly seriously engages. Instead, we are talking about a lack of access to meaning, or worse, about the risk of a reductionist, stereotypical reading of the work. If a maker or producer is less powerful financially, culturally or (geo)politically than those who present and frame the work, this can lead to problematic results. Those who think about the distribution of art only in economic terms risk turning it into inaccessible abstraction.

Golrokh Nafisi is an Iranian visual artist, trained in Amsterdam. In an interview commissioned by Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute with Jumana Al-Yasiri (art manager, writer and researcher) Nafisi said, '*Art institutions have for a long time been moving artworks from here to there with no context. They try to sell this idea that it does not matter if you see a painting here or there, because it is a valuable painting and it can be universal, global. But the result … is that this has become a global market. It has not created solidarity, has not built bridges between people, but just one strong bridge between capital cities.*'

Listen to or read the interviews Jumana Al-Yasiri did with artists and art professionals from Palestine, India, Bulgaria, the African diaspora and Iran.

She gives an example of new work she created about the typical concrete blocks that

are found in cities all across North Africa and the Middle East, and that are often used to control how people move about.

*'Crowds and people are controlled by these blocks.… In Iran, if you don't pay taxes, they place them in front of your shop. In Cairo, they guide protests during times of uprising. In Beirut, they compensate for the lack of urban planning.… I made works about them and was happy and satisfied to show the similarities. But when it came to Amsterdam, I felt that the level of exoticism and the misunderstanding of the audience were huge.'*

Ultimately, Golrokh created new work for the Dutch context, focusing on crowd control barriers instead of concrete blocks. It can be thought of as a sister creation to the original work. Both are about power structures and crowd control, but the context of the presentation has been taken into account and there is no longer a risk of the work being stereotyped.

**Stereotyping** is also something that Mohamed Abusal of the Eltiqa collective objects to. Eltiqa is a collective of artists in Gaza that works in various ways to help art flourish in Palestine. It does this, among other things, by creating international visibility for Palestinian works of art, despite the occupation and isolation. In 2022, Eltiqa was invited to participate in documenta 15, the five-yearly arts event in Kassel, Germany. Documenta 15 was curated by ruangrupa, an artists' collective based in Jakarta. Eltiqa was invited as part of a broader Palestinian group, called The Question of Funding. For documenta, an archive was created of all the work that Eltiqa had done since its inception in 2002, and several paintings were also exhibited.

Even before the opening, documenta 15 was embroiled in controversy, when the one-man Alliance against Anti-Semitism Kassel organization objected to the strong Palestinian representation among the curators and participating collectives, accusing many of anti-Semitism. The accusations became louder in response to anti-Semitic

elements in a mural created by the Taring Padi Collective (with no link to either Eltiqa or Palestine). The mural was removed, but in the wake of the controversy, several other exhibited works were also accused of anti-Semitism, without clear grounds.

So too the Eltiqa archive. The archive reveals the resourceful ways in which the collective smuggles materials to make art into Gaza. It can be read as a critical commentary on the occupation of Palestine, but it contains no anti-Semitic elements. Shortly after the opening of documenta 15, the location where The Question of Funding exhibited was vandalized.

As Abusal put it, '*People were surprised at the production that we exhibited at documenta 15. Some, namely journalists, tried to read something different into it, see it only the way they wanted to see it. (…) There we were, thinking that we would be going to documenta just to present our work and be hosts and to receive a nice audience. OK, they were a nice audience, but some of them put us into a corner, saw us from a special angle. But we present our own art, our own visual language.*'

The fact that art is interpreted in multifaceted ways, that it produces friction and misunderstandings – especially if a change of context also carries a political charge – and that ideological differences play a role, is not a problem in itself. No one can be opposed to multiple voices (see chapter 3). It is true that some voices sound louder and get a wider platform than others. But rarely are these the voices of non-Western makers being presented in the West. Mohamed Abusal's complaint here is that the Eltiqa artists were deprived of their artistic language and expressiveness by a one-sided political reading of their work by Western media. And almost by definition, they are inevitably louder than that of an artist from Palestine.

# Some voices are louder and have broader platforms than others. Rarely are these the voices of non-Western makers being presented in the West.

In a public discussion about documenta 15, Els Silvrants-Barclay (researcher, curator and activist) made the following statement:

*'The criticism of this edition points to an existential crisis. Practices and attitudes outside the Western framework no longer wish to occur in an already-written story and want to write their own story. Dominant devices and frameworks are being shaken to their foundations. The nice newcomer is not so nice anymore. (…) To label this documenta as just a process and not as an aesthetic experiment in its own right is proof of the fact that we still do not consider certain forms of expression and aesthetics as such, because we can only look at them from the dominant frameworks.'* (8 January 2023, LLS Palace, Antwerp)

On 27 July 2022, ruangrupa published an open letter on the e-flux platform, stating that there was also, among other things, a question of anti-Black racism, islamophobia and trans-phobia against the participating artists.

# 4.
## Beyond Export #2:
## Space for Development, the International Arena

An important signal being heard in the arts today is **the need to slow down, also in terms of international practices**. In general, the arts in the West are well financed and institution-alized, but as a system, it may be overheating – especially if you take into account the numbers of burnouts in Flanders and

across Europe. An exhausting working pace is something that is built into the Western arts economy. It is very professional and efficiency-oriented, with high-performance networks and functional processes aimed at producing tangible results.

Artists who participate in that system must create and produce at high speed and frequency. This is especially true in Flanders, where presentation possibilities are limited, due to the small land area. In our Landscape Sketch of the Arts, 2019, we spoke of the **compulsion to produce**.

Read our Landscape Sketch of the Arts 2019.

Artists also have to travel a lot, sometimes more than their practice should actually need, or more than benefits their work (see 'hypermobility' above). And they have to persist in doing that if they want to keep their careers going. After all, participating in this system is achieved through high visibility and constant artistic innovation.

Concerning her own musicianship and burnout, lutenist Sofie Vanden Eynde said in *Knack* magazine (23 August 2022): '*By living more intensely, you get tired faster and you need more moments of stagnation. These used to be easier to enforce. On an international train, from city A to city B, you temporarily withdrew from existence. Now, with the smartphone and internet everywhere, that time on the train has become desk time.*'

We previously discussed a number of strategies and models to keep international touring within acceptable limits (see *International Mobility and Sustainability*). But before you can present your work, it has to be made, and prior to that, you usually have a long phase of what we have come to refer to as **invisible work**. Makers need time to think, to try things out, to share results, to learn things, to test material, to be inspired, to talk to people about their work, even just to take a rest. In 'Landscape Sketch of the Arts', we call this **space for development**.

Residencies are one of the ways of making time for this, preferably well framed and reimbursed. We find, however, that residen-

cies are being used more often than before to compensate for short production processes, which are in turn linked to shrinking budgets. The pressure on makers is high, and so is the pressure on residencies to come up with new names. This is diametrically opposed to the idea of creating space to slow down or achieve greater depth in your work.

# The pressure on makers is high, and so is the pressure on residencies to come up with new names. This is diametrically opposed to the idea of creating space to slow down or achieve greater depth in your work.

Dramaturge, choreographer and author Yasen Vasilev, who took part in our *A Fair New Idea?! #2*, advocated returning to the basics. What is the role, what is the true added value of arts residencies? In an interview with arts manager and researcher Jumana Al-Yasiri, he stated:

> '*In the best case, people perform abroad, receive some public money, and they can develop a project for a month or two. And then they move on again. For a lot of places, they can't come back. So basically, you just need new people all the time. And rarely is there a meaningful, lasting conversation between the artists and the institution.*'

Vasilev wants to add something to that. Together with people from Bulgaria and Syria, he coordinated the Radar Sofia residency, which operated until recently in Bulgaria. Radar does not aim for high rotation, but instead forges long-term relationships with its makers. They are invited for several periods in succession, thus building a deeper connection with the location

and better able to expand their networks. In turn, this also benefits the Bulgarian art scene, which is somewhat cut off from the Western system due to its peripheral location. Artistic processes are integrally supported, including the invisible work described above.

> '*Before you get into this one-to-three month period of production, you need to be thinking at length, researching, talking to people, reading, watching other works. This is work that takes time and is expensive. I guess that's what I mean by slowing down: not making a new piece every year. The actual production pressure is completely unsustainable.*'

During our public conversation entitled *Landschapsversterking in Werking* (September 2021), Orlando Maaike Gouwenberg, artistic director for Jester (formerly FLACC and CIAP) told a similar story about a residency she had set up in New Orleans:

> '*We went to New Orleans and rented a house with the artists for three months. The agreement was: You come here with an interest and a question, but first you let that go: first, go and discover where you are. You can't just enter a city and say, 'I'm going to do this now.' You have to understand the context, especially a city like New Orleans, where a lot of cultural appropriation happens. (…) In the end, this resulted in a very broad network, with about 20 to 30 partners. (…) Because we dealt with the artists in a very human way, and didn't expect them to be in a production process, but really listened – what happens in that particular place? What is your proposal? They still have many ties in the city.*'

Composer Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman also speaks of a minimum of three or even four months to really 'land' somewhere as a maker, in her case in the contexts of Rwanda and Tanzania, where she does her artistic research. If that is not possible, she prefers to go to the location several times in a row: '*With a week,*

*you do window shopping and have no idea in which areas things are different. The idea of time is a huge taboo. That is despite corona, or maybe it is even worse now. (…) We've become so used to those hellish rhythms.*'

# 5.
# Beyond Export #3:
# New Interpretations
# of International Connectedness

For our <u>second call for *A Fair New Idea?!*, with the theme of working sustainably and internationally</u>, it was striking how many proposals revolved around the rethinking of international relations and the meaning of sustainability within those relationships. For many participants, the international system as it works today is inaccessible, too product and sales oriented, with too few voices (see *Beyond Export #2*) and based on inequalities which colonial histories continue to influence. The attention to local context also appeared to be strongly present in the responses (see *Beyond Export #1*).

Extensive information about the various projects that are part of *A Fair New Idea?! #2* can be found at kunsten.be.

For example, respondents proposed all kinds of experiments on '*the way in which artists in different regions can share work processes and privileges through semi-formal structures, and learn from each other's environment without immediately attaching an outcome as a condition*' (David Bergé, artist);

or '*a sustainable cooperation between international peers in the form of collectives in multiple countries, deepening relationships and building knowledge across different contexts*' (Margarita Pita, artist and curator);

55

or '*collaboration and exchange between photographers to jointly confront the globalized market and develop projects around issues related to internationalization today*' (Ariane Kovalevsky of Inland);

and '*delay and prioritize individual expression and interpersonal communication in the service of greater trust, caring, creating opportunities and mutual support*' (Kevin Faye, dancer).

# For many makers, today's international system is inaccessible, too product and sales oriented, too inflexible and based on inequalities.

In 2018, with *(Re)framing the International*, we already saw how makers and artists suffered from an overheated and, for many, inaccessible international arts system. The long lockdowns finally provided the necessary time and space for **deeper reflection and experimentation with alternative models**. The rise of video conferencing made this international work a bit easier. It enabled exchange and created **access to new networks for a diverse group of artists**, including artists for whom the economic threshold had previously been too high. It also created opportunities for greater visibility for young or alternative art trajectories and practices.
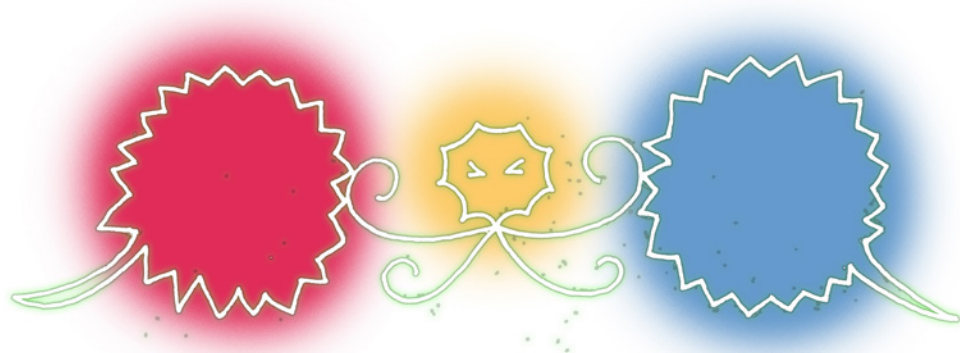
One example of this is the collaboration between Enough Room for Space in Brussels (ERforS, an initiative started by artists Marjolijn Dijkman and Maarten Vanden Eynde) and the Picha artists' platform in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo. Since 2018, they have been working on *On-Trade-Off*, an artistic research project that critically examines the extraction of lithium in Manono (DRC) from different, sometimes opposing perspectives. Manolo is the world's largest reservoir of this valuable raw material, used in telephony, ICT and technological innovation. Its exploitation has roots in the colonial period and is today the subject of worldwide financial speculation. Lithium is a basic element for numerous technological developments that are considered 'green' in the West. With *On-Trade-Off*, artists from Belgium, the DRC (Lubumbashi) and the Congolese diaspora exchange information and materials through workshops and residencies online, in Belgium, in Congo and in China. They use a shared information database. There is maximum equivalence

in terms of access to information, participation and input. This adds new layers to the substantive conversation – especially to Western views on this issue – as well as to the artistic results.

In addition, since 2020, the Cross Commons Curatorial Collective, part of the *Fair New Idea?! #2* working group, has been working on new formats and methodologies for artistic collaboration at a distance. It is an interdisciplinary curatorial collective with people based in the Southwest Asia and North Africa, or SWANA regions, and in Europe. A central factor is having multiple voices, with diverse cultural backgrounds, languages and different expertise, including anthropology, art management, heritage, visual arts and architecture.

The *Beyond the Now* platform, also part of the *Fair New Idea?! #2* working group, explores new, solidary and socially engaged forms of curation, research and production in a post-pandemic world. It was started by art organizations and research institutions in Syria, Lebanon, Germany, Ireland, the UK and the Netherlands. Together, they explore what communitiy, resilience and social justice can look like in a time of growing intolerance and shrinking public space. They focus on combating digital hate speech while promoting free speech, security, democracy, caring for people on the run and caring for each other.

In each case, these collectives **focus attention on the different local contexts in which people live and work**. Their histories and cultural references differ, and they have different advantages and different experiences with power inequality. From a deeper awareness about this, they work on **greater mutual understanding and trust**, in order to then devise new and more solidary forms of exchange, cooperation and production.

Rana Yaziji, facilitator for the *Fair New Idea?! #2* working group, puts it this way: '*Rethinking International Communities is about engaging deeply in exchanges and mutual support mechanisms, while remaining aware and critical of political structures. It entails analyzing the interconnection of these structures on local, national and international levels, and assessing similarities, complementarities and privileges in terms of access and degree of agency. It was easily observed that listening very carefully was essential.*'

We could add the example of the Pan-African Creative Exchange, or PACE. This is a showcase platform that aims to create international opportunities for art by African makers from different disciplines. One of the founders is British research fellow, Nike Jonah. The showcase is organized on the African continent in order to bypass the many problems that African citizens have in getting into Europe and the UK. Because Nike noticed that African work often could not simply transfer well into a Western context, she began focussing on the artistic and/or dramaturgical guidance of the makers themselves: a form of connection of their work with new contexts, so to speak. And because she found that African creators usually go online via mobile phones and frequently unstable network connections, she greatly simplified the sign-up process.

She also works hard on the sense of community between the artists and the curators and programmers who visit the showcases. The latter come from all over the world, and they all bring their own artistic references. This is an enormous added value for work that is created in places that do not have access to a diverse range of artistic input. The atmosphere that is created here is one of mutual support and critical feedback, rather than just 'shopping' and choosing. Using WhatsApp groups, the artists and curators or programmers stay in touch and continue to exchange tips, contacts and constructively critical feedback. In this way, they are building sustainable international networks.

# 6.
# Know Your (Fair New) World #1:
# Stay Interested, Avoid Stereotyping

One of the best statements we noted during A Fair New World?! was from artist and teacher Philippine Hoe*gen*. *When asked if* her activism was perhaps more naïve than optimistic, she replied that such a distinction between optimism and pessimism is a false one. What it is about is staying interested: '*You keep questioning things and you do something with the small openings you see.*'

Philippine was speaking in the context of citizen initiatives to meet people's urgent financial needs (see chapter 1: *Giving and Sharing*). Still, the **importance of curiosity, of staying interested in what you don't yet know and taking the time to do so** resonated throughout all our conversations about *A Fair New World?!*.

This was also the case during the third and final panel discussion, in May of 2022. In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we asked what needs the arts field here in Flanders can help meet, what it is well or less well placed to achieve, and how it can avoid the 'white saviourism' that always seems to be lurking around the corner.

Rewatch the third *A Fair New World?!* panel discussion, read the transcript or the summary.

A number of statements by Ukrainian curators continue to resonate. Artistic institutions that work on knowledge building can focus on those art scenes that they want to give extra support in a given period of time. Ukrainian makers, and by extension Ukrainians in general, may benefit more from the construction and circulation of knowledge about their history and art practices than they do from 'just' an exhibition, 'just' a performance by or with Ukrainian artists,

or even collection campaigns of all kinds – because these last are also being organized by different organizations and committed citizens.

As curator Alexandra Tryanova put it, *'I continue to insist [that] it is a help to those people who were previously underrepresented, [who have] not [been] visible on the international art map, to shed some light on them. Not in a globalist sense, as in, "These are people in need, so let's make an exhibition with them." But rather to talk about the arts in terms of generations, to look into certain practices, not by generalizing, because generalization is what so often occurs in such moments. And also help them in their struggle to decolonialize.'*

Nastya Stefanyuk, who works for M HKA, added, *'I talk to my colleagues about our history, about what we've been going through for the last 300 years. Nobody knows about that. In the best case scenario, everyone knows about events that happened eight years ago. That's not enough. (…) Who knows Ukrainian artists? Everybody knows Russian artists, although they may well have Ukrainian roots. This is how we can create an altogether new narrative.'*

Being 'seen' is a human need, and it is painful to be reduced to a cliché, to be referred to as 'the people from behind the Iron Curtain', 'those poor Ukrainians', or 'the Syrian refugee'. (From panellist Abdullah Alkafri, who works with the Ettijahat organization in Lebanon to support art, artists and culture from Syria, we learned to instead speak of people who have fled from Syria).

Thinking in stereotypes goes hand in hand with cultural distance, lack of knowledge, time pressure and (no doubt as a consequence) simple lack of interest. Composer Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman talks about how difficult it can be to motivate organizers in Flanders for her work in East Africa. People don't have the time to learn about the context and appreciate the difference. *'Then*

*they tell me that I could have just shown three pictures. But then you would just get back the UNICEF image of Africa. It is expected that everything is realized in a very short time and is completely obvious. (…) People just want to see a confirmation of some kind of image they already have.'*

Actively combating the stereotyping of countries, regions and people is a matter of investigating, of building knowledge and sharing that knowledge. This goes beyond art theory and current political affairs. As a committed arts sector, how often and how deeply do we actually enter into discussions with people who have arrived here as refugees, about exactly what their primary needs are and what role we can play in fulfilling those needs? That would help us make our actions better focused and effective. Perhaps it would lead to more achievable ambitions, ambitions that can be repeated and systemically built in.

# How often and how deeply do we, as a committed sector, enter into discussions with people who have arrived here as refugees, about what their primary needs are and what role we can play?

After all, the status of refugee or undocumented newcomer says nothing about the knowledge that person brings with him or her, about resilience in times of crisis, about different perspectives, insights and stories, and especially about constructive – meaningful, useful, non-selective, structural and sustainable – ways to help people escaping great hardship, in addition to the work that professional NGOs and citizens' initiatives

already do. During the panel discussion, appeals were made for **more opportunities for exchange with newcomers with artistic practices**. This can avoid reinventing the wheel.

Scenographer and researcher Abdullah Alkafri, the driving force behind Ettijahat, expressed it as follows during the third Fair New World?! panel discussion: '*What kind of experience do these people [refugees in Belgium] have in responding to crisis? How do we make sure, while outlining our own initiatives, that we benefit from these unique resources? (…) How can we respond in a way that the tools, the know-how or the mechanisms employed are not repetitive, or are not creating yet more discrimination?*'

In conversation with Jumana Al-Yasiri, Nike Jonah reminded us to, '*Think about the voices of the newcomers, the refugees, the people who've come to the country in a precarious way, because then you're going to bring something very enriching. I am always interested to hear what they have to say.*'

Hani Rustom, psychologist and theatre maker from Syria, has a background in playback theatre. Someone tells a story on the spot, which is interpreted successively by a number of players so that the narrator sees the story take shape, live, as it develops. Following the invasion of Ukraine, Rustom brought people from around the world together online, in support of Ukrainian artists. Money was raised and works were performed both live and online. But what was equally important to Rustom the psychologist, was human contact. '*From a trauma perspective, what helps to calm down the nervous system is being seen and heard.*'

Visual and performance artist Samah Hijawi added that art houses do not always have to take big actions, but can connect with makers in crisis. '*Seeing people and creating a connection – there is something genuine and personal about that, which takes it outside of this state of, Oh we need to help with all this, which is also a bit abstract and overwhelming, and doesn't [always] materialize very well.*'

# 7.
# Know Your (Fair New) World #2:
# Art, International Mobility, Passport Power

In *Know Your (Fair New) World #1*, we focused on the 'import' of art to the West and to Flanders in particular. Here, we zoom in on the people, the makers. How easy is it for them to even get into our country if they do not come from the global North? And how can our art field deal with that in a *Fair New World?!*

> In the autumn of 2020, in the midst of the pandemic, Beursschouwburg published a series of statements by artists from Tunis, New Delhi, Nairobi and Bogotá, who were invited to present work but failed to do so for various reasons. They or their artistic partners did not make it to Belgium. For those of us who have the privilege of never or rarely coming into contact with problems of this kind, their stories are harrowing.

Beursschouwburg asked the same questions that many of us were asking during that period. '*With Covid-19, violent systems of exclusion are becoming more visible than ever. What frameworks determine whether we can or cannot move around? Which systems allow us to travel and which prevent us from doing so? How are measures and decisions taken, who takes them and in what circumstances?*'

> In the corona years, the answers to these questions were very different and seemingly changeable, and were consequently unclear. For those who had to enter from outside the Schengen area, different rules applied for each country. The vaccination coverage of the country of origin was a criterion, but the decision-making framework was of a political nature. The list of nationalities that Belgium denied access to during waves of infection more or less coincided with the North-South divide.
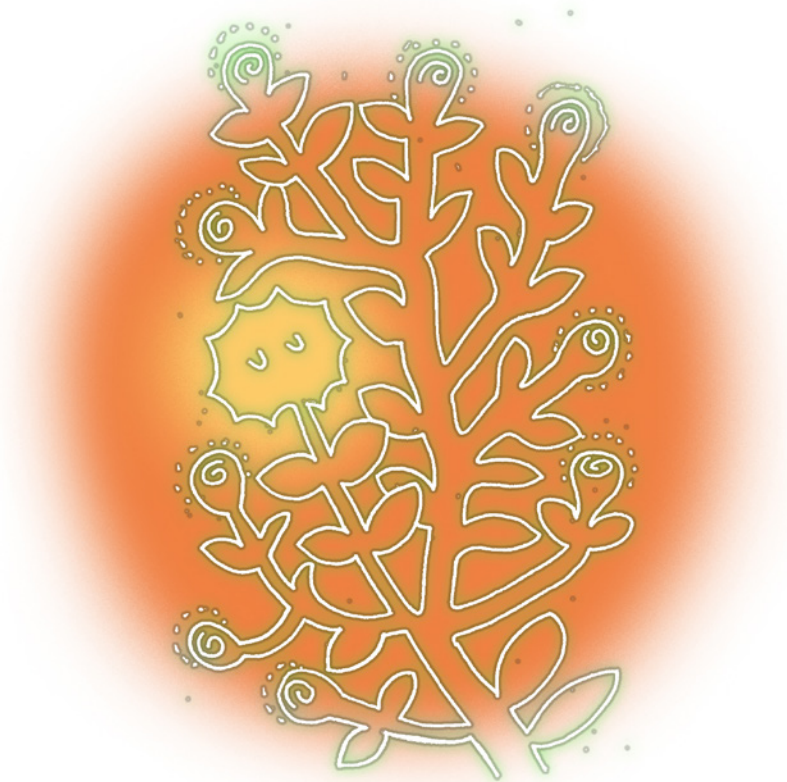
One of the statements that Beursschouwburg published was from performer and choreographer Mohamed Toukabri. At the end of October 2020, he was scheduled to present the world premiere of *The Power (of) The Fragile*, a duo with his mother Mimouna Latifa Khamessi, at Beursschouwburg. That performance did not take place because of a tightened and later generalized lockdown. It was decided to postpone the premiere to June 2021, but even then, Ms Khamessi was not given a visa.

Europe had closed its borders during that period, and only essential entry was allowed.

However, Khamessi did have a work permit and was able to present a negative corona test. The total project had cost the Flemish Community and the Flemish Community Commission 65,000 euros. The partners involved were significant: Beursschouwburg, VIERNULVIER (then Vooruit) and Needcompany. Tickets had been sold. There was an audience waiting for the performance.

As Toukabri wrote, '*I have seen privilege, I have read (about) privilege, but I have never experienced what it meant to have several privileges until the day when I obtained my Belgian nationality and became a European citizen. (…) Tunisia was the first North African country to reopen its borders after the lockdown. And yet it is clear that the corona crisis is being used by European administrations to control the movement of non-European citizens.*'

Toukabri sees the fact that he did not present his performance online, as so many makers were doing in that period, as an act of resistance: '*This is about white privilege pushing people out of borders while trying to claim them back online.*'

Kenyan maker Ogutu Muraya, who studied performing arts in Amsterdam, went a step further. In 2019, he returned to Kenya. He still refuses to participate in a system that he describes as a 'policy of discouragement'. He also published a statement for Beursschouwburg in late 2020.

As he wrote, '*Bodies that are considered "undesirable" face increasingly tough and malicious restrictions. Being "undesirable" means that your mobility is limited, unless you can constantly comply with demands to prove your existence and the value of that existence. (…) A visa on arrival should be a basic right for all, and not a privilege for a few. It is not unreasonable to ask for equal opportunity, unrestrained by artificial barriers, prejudices and preferences.*'

Mallika Tanneja is an Indian visual and performance artist. She was supposed to present her new work Allegedly in Beursschouwburg in December of 2020, but she too stayed at home. She writes, '*It was not the easiest task in the world for me to begin with, as a single Indian woman, to get visas for Europe. They are always afraid that I won't return back home. This is not new. There were always cracks in the system. There was always an artist who was not present, someone who could not get a visa, who could not catch a flight, who just couldn't make it, because the system stacked the odds against them a bit too high.*'

Mallika Tanneja is right. Even before and especially after the corona crisis, people from certain parts of the world face real difficulties in travelling to Europe and Belgium. That is true even when it concerns artists who are demonstrably invited in the context of a professional collaboration (read: visas are for those who can be assumed not to want to settle in Belgium).

# It is made difficult for people from certain parts of the world to travel to Europe and to Belgium, including artists who are demonstrably invited to come in the context of a professional collaboration.

Call it systemic – bureaucratic and official – exclusion. In *The Ultimate Cookbook for Cultural Managers – Visa for Third Country National Artists travelling to the Schengen Area* (latest update 2020), Pearle* Live Performance Europe, the European employers' association for the performing arts, describes the system as exceptionally complex. Many applications fail because paperwork is missing or due to lack of time to complete the procedures.

Yasen Vasilev (see above) created *NUTRIC-ULA* in 2015, long before Covid-19, with the Ghanaian dancer and performer Kwame Boafo. Both men were living in China at the time and received invitations to residencies in Portugal, Norway and Lithuania. Boafo did not get a visa to anywhere, so the collaboration fell apart. In the end, Vasilev created the same piece in different places in Europe with different performers for each venue. This mirrors Jérôme Bel's abovementioned decision to have his work performed by various performers in different places in the world, but the circumstances are precisely the opposite: one does not have the privilege of being able to travel, while the other chooses to avoid air travel because of its ecological impact.

KunstenfestivaldesArts has invited Boafo to Brussels in May 2024. It has been eight years since he and Vasilev saw each other. African citizens are those most often rejected by countries in the Schengen area (Reeler, 2022). It remains to be seen how Kwame Boafo will fare this time with the efforts to bring him to Belgium.

Mohamed Ikoubaân of Moussem also complains about the complicated procedures and high thresholds that go with them. An applicant, for example, must prove that he or she intends to travel back to their point of origin after their stay. This can be done by proving that they have property, dependent children, a fixed salary in the home country and sufficient funds in the bank. For younger artists from the MENA, or Middle East and North Africa region, with whom Moussem often works, this is virtually impossible. Cultuurloket has also called attention to this problem. What from one perspective might seem like a strict but reasonable question, in fact amounts to exclusion.

In recent years, we have been receiving stories that point to different interpretations of the rules by administrative services, and by airline, airport and/or border staff. Belgian operators are also mentioned. Some of these stories involve ethnic profiling ('*People picked people out, based on how they looked.*') This occurs, for example, when it is observed that people on a given flight are more likely to enter a country with forged papers of a specific nationality. At a national border – in a Schengen zone, where we basically travel freely – people with that nationality (and what is described as a certain skin colour and appearance) are stopped for no apparent reason. Airport staff, obviously not qualified or competent in this regard, also randomly stop people. Despite the fact that they have paid for their flights and even have valid papers, these people do not get in.

As an arts professional who invites artists to Belgium, you have little influence on this process. Those who often work with non-Western makers have probably been aware of these problems for a long time. Several of the creators we interviewed expressed concern that '*if this happens a number of times, an organization won't invite you back'*. In their 2019 election memorandum, the oKo umbrella organization for employers in the arts referred to this with their advice to '*Make sure that the visa and licensing procedures do not hinder touring and cooperation.*'

So what can you do? Cultuurloket advises providing the consulates concerned with all the necessary information, so they can assess the importance of the artistic achievement involved. Applicants have a greater chance of success in the context of a formal employment (a contract) and if the procedure is started well in advance, including enough time to make new attempts, if necessary. No matter how complex the procedure, in principle, the better established organizations in Flanders certainly have the framework and the planning capability for this.

Nike Jonah of the PACE Pan-African Creative Exchange (see above) takes a different

approach. She no longer organizes show-cases with African work in the UK. '*When applying for England, Africans are the most likely to be denied. It does not matter if they have been to twenty countries, have a good job and a healthy bank account. They are still likely to be rejected.*' She now organizes these showcases on the African continent. Curators and programmers come to see them from all over the world.
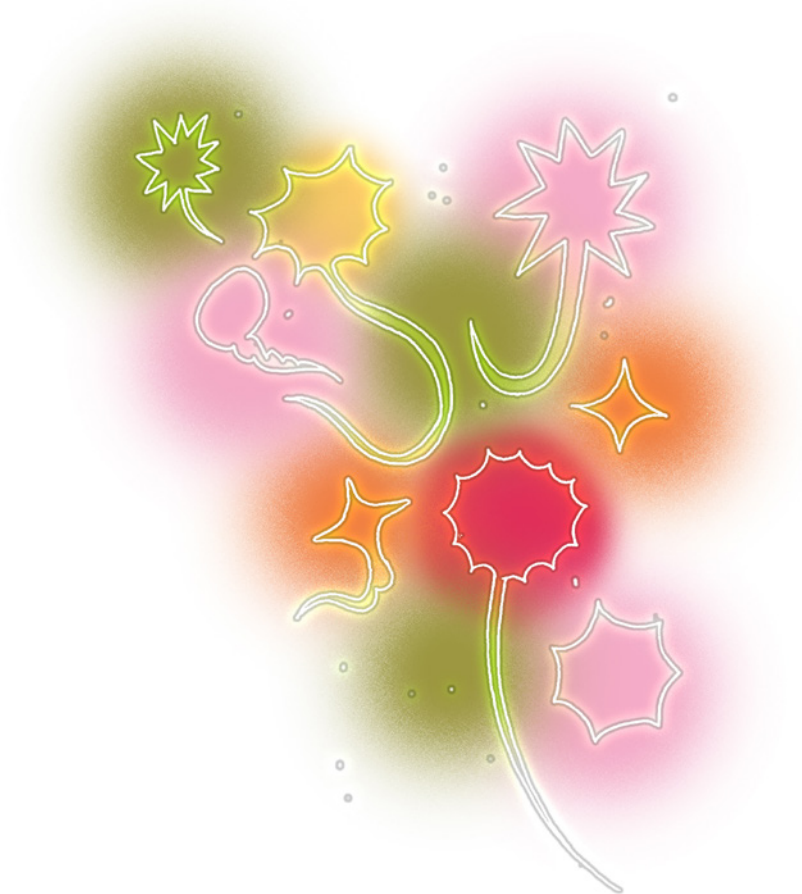
We conclude with wise words from Arundhati Ghosh of the Indian Foundation for the Arts, noted by Jumana Al-Yasiri:
'*For the past few years, we have seen a strong right-wing rise of nation states in various countries across the world. (…) Political boundaries are becoming narrower. There is a lot of suspicion of the other. (…) It is becoming harder and harder for us to connect, to reach out. We seem to be suffering the same sort of disease all across the world. To me, this is the time to build friendships. This is the time to be international. The struggles that we are taking on are very similar. We are all fighting the abuse of power by regimes, fighting against people who gather wealth only for themselves and do not care about either people or the environment.…*
*I see this as the key thing: internationalism can connect us by supporting each other in our struggles against these kinds of powers.*'

# Multiple Voices in *A Fair New World*

Since the Arts Decree of 2006, Flemish governments have had the ambition of reinforcing the multivoiced character of our arts field. In his *Strategic Vision Statement for the Arts* in 2020, minister of culture Jan Jambon announced the effort to achieve maximum diversity and inclusivity in both supply and demand. He considers this multivoiced quality as a mirror of our society that confronts us with challenging opinions.

Read our article on multi-voicedness following the Strategic Vision Statement for the Arts.

Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute also believes in the power of multiple voices. In *Bestemming: complexloos meerstemmig (Destination: True Diversity)* (2020), published in response to the Ministry of Culture's *Vision Statement*, we explain what we mean by this broad concept.

Having multiple voices is not the same as diversity. Diversity is a social fact: there are differences present in our society in terms of background and colour, education, gender, age, health, views and opinions, and much more. Having multiple voices, a kind of social polyphony, if you will, is about how the different views that diversity entails can be addressed equally, preferably while bringing them into dialogue with each other in a safe and respectable way.

# Having multiple voices is about diversity and divergent views being heard in an equitable, safe and respectful way.

That equality, in turn, has to do with the extent to which one perspective or point of view is more strongly represented, has more support and is and better heard than another. Translated into the principles of a *Fair New World*, it is about **reinforcing and strengthening what is not yet the norm, the voices that have to date been socially snowed under**.

# 1.
# What is Intersectionality?

One way to make that generic 'deviation from the norm', that 'less heard perspective' more concrete is **intersectionality, or crossroads thinking**. Intersectionality is an analytical framework that reasons from **so-called 'identity axes' and the dynamics between them**.

People have layered identities, various combinations of **gender, colour, ethnic, cultural and social origin, health, and more**. Intersectional thinking or intersectionality (the term was coined by human rights activist and researcher Kimberlé Crenshaw; see her survey work from 2017) studies the combinations of these identities – or the intersections between the axes of identity on which they are situated – and the impact of these combinations on people's social position.

Sociologist Helma Lutz has distinguished 14 such identity axes (Helma Lutz, 2002). Another, neurodiversity, was added by Judy Singer (1999), and language is also sometimes included as one of these axes (Ella vzw, 2014).

For each of these axes, societies have implicit norms, to which they are adapted. In sociological terms, someone has a greater or lesser chance of privilege or exclusion depending on where they are in relation to that norm. Women have a harder time in society than men do. A woman of colour has a harder time than a white woman. A person with a disability and a well-padded bank account enjoys advantages that a poor person with the same disability does not have. In socio-economic terms, dancers do not have an easy time of it. Girls in the dance

world face even more difficulties because of sexism (Madonna Lenaert, 2022). Visual artists also often find themselves in precarious socio-economic positions, and this is even more the case for young visual artists of colour.

Social exclusion is persistent, pervasive and impactful. A focus on multiple voices and establishing safer spaces is about much more than taking people's sensitivities into account. Hurt feelings are only the tip of the iceberg. That iceberg is the systematic and systemic exclusion that groups of people experience all the time.

Crossroads thinking can help us understand the extent to which certain standpoints, perspectives and voices in our society are not heard, or not heard enough, and it can make

that problem more visible and concrete. It also helps us to more critically question the norms all around us, in terms of each of these axes of identity, because it highlights how many different ways people deviate from these norms.

Applied to the arts, intersectionality offers a basis for makers, ensembles, collectives, art organizations and other art-related operations to think from their own mission and context about which perspectives are insufficiently addressed and who is excluded, and indeed, to do something about it.

# 2.
# Intersectionality in the Arts

Intersectionality has been central to *A Fair New Idea?! #4*, with multiple voices as its theme. Not just one, but three different proposals were selected for support, each working on one of the axes that distinguish intersectionality. These are **ethnic and cultural diversity** (*POC POC Who's There?*), **disability** (*Open Vizier/Open Mind*), and **neurodiversity in the arts** (*Cripping the Space*).

All three initiatives start from the lived experiences of makers and artists. And each in its own way organized safe(r) spaces (see 3: *Multivoiced and Safety*), and/or what is also referred to as 'brave spaces' (see 4: *Multivoiced and Courage*). Here below, we briefly explain each project, as well as the insights that they provided in the course of *A Fair New World?!*. We take a closer look at the three axes of identity involved in these three projects. Multiple voices and intersectionality are a core theme for Kunstenpunt/ Flanders Arts Institute for the 2023-2027

policy period for the arts. In the future, more of these axes will make up part of new research and development trajectories.

We know that embracing multiple and diverse voices can rub some people the wrong way. Achieving it requires both a safe space and a bit of bravery. A safe space means feeling welcome and comfortable, feeling free to speak out, to tell your story and make your needs known. Courage is needed to question our own assumptions, to request and receive critical inquiry. We look at all of this in this chapter.

A great deal of ink has already been dedicated to the theme of **interculturalizing the arts** (axis = ethnic and cultural diversity)*. Arts organizations, such as Globe Aroma, Moussem, TransfoCollect, De Nieuwe Spelers, Jong Gewei, Citylab, Please Add Color and others have worked towards making the multivoiced character of our field more visible. In addition, coaching trajectories and specific interventions have been set up, and consultancies and other tools have been provided, all to help 'white' institutions in their process of interculturalization.

Rather than trying to repeat or summarize the knowledge and literature on this issue here, we refer interested readers to <u>our page on interculturalization</u>. In the following

Check our content on interculturalization on kunsten.be.

text, we take a closer look at *POC Who's There?*, the initiative by Magali Elali (of The Constant Now in Antwerp) that was selected for support in our call for *A Fair New Idea?! #4*.

**Disability** and **neurodiversity** have more recently come to the fore in the arts. During the last two years, this topic has been examined in theoretical arts publications (see

---

* Terms that refer to changes in society and the way we relate to them are constantly evolving. The term 'interculturalization' is discussed in the brochure, *Macht herverdelen (Redistrubute Power)*, published by Demos and Citylab. According to the authors, redistributing power as an approach to interculturalization should evolve towards creating greater solidarity in 'we' and 'us'.

rekto:verso, the *Crip* issue, June 2021) and in panel and roundtable discussions. Together with Engagement and State of the Arts, and with the support of Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute, artist Josefien Cornette made up an anti-validist checklist (Josefien Cornette, 2021, based on work by Peggy McIntosh and Adrienne Maree Brown) and published a related text in the *Fair Arts Almanac 2023* (Josefien Cornette, 2023).

In the framework of *A Fair New Idea?! #4*, two projects were selected that connect to this work. *Open Vizier/Open Mind* offers advice to organizations and artists who want to be more accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing. *Cripping the Space* is an ongoing series of conversations in safe(r) spaces (see also: *The Multivoiced Body and Safety*) between people with neurodivergences and other handicaps in the arts. They engage in dialogue about how insufficient account is taken of them and their needs in the arts and how this can be improved.

Further on, we outline the challenges and opportunities for the arts field regarding validism and neurodiversity. We begin here with the axis of ethno-cultural diversity and the challenges of interculturalization.

## 2.1 *POC POC WHO'S THERE?*
### ETHNO-CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE (VISUAL) ARTS

'*If art wants to hold up a mirror to us, how is it possible that representation remains the great absentee for so long and so constantly?*' (Magali Elali, *POC POC who's there?*)

When a diverse society looks itself in the mirror and a normative – in this case predominantly white – image stares back, then there is something wrong with the mirror. This is the point of departure for *POC POC Who's There?*, one of the three proposals

selected for support in the framework of *A Fair New Idea?! #4*.

Despite the knowledge accumulated and sustained efforts, the interculturalization process in the arts is only progressing in fits and starts. Our field cannot afford to just let go of this process. Art in Flanders – a largely publicly supported good – should be of and for our whole society.

One of the obstacles to true interculturalization – integral, transversal and structural – is that so-called white institutions or practices (with mainly white people and networks) do not seem to reach, find or see people with migration backgrounds. As we sometimes hear, 'They are not there.' This is a painful misunderstanding that *POC POC Who's There?* wants to rectify, specifically in the visual arts.

# One obstacle to interculturalization is that white institutions or practices do not seem to reach, find or see people with migration backgrounds. You sometimes hear, 'They are not there,' a painful misunderstanding.

In concrete terms, *POC POC Who's There?* is a coaching programme, a network and an experimental platform for young makers of colour, designed by Magali Elali. 'POC' is an acronym for People of Colour, and 'Who's There' is about spotting talent, in this case visual artists of colour.

Participating makers are brought together with curators from predominantly established institutions in Flanders, including WIELS, Beursschouwburg, M Leuven and Kunsthal Extra City. They enter into con-

versation with the participants about their work, ambitions, networks and more. The ultimate goal is to help them develop the skills needed in order to find their way in the sector and expand their networks.

The programme consists of one-on-one coaching sessions, site visits, workshops, public presentations and community formation, conversations taking place in safe(r) spaces (see 3. *Multiple Voices and Safety*) between the makers about how they find their way in the sector and how they deal with systemic exclusion and barriers.

The discussions themselves remain confidential, but some of the general themes and content have been shared with Kunstenpunt/ Flanders Arts Institute. These are all old and persistent stumbling blocks. People of colour are not seen or picked up because established curators, structures and networks are predominantly white and therefore have networks of their own. This is a hallmark of institutional racism. This is in turn due to the fact that interculturalization is rarely tackled integrally. If there are more people of colour in leading artistic or strategic positions, networks will also become more diverse, and then perhaps so too will the frames of reference.

Today, detrimental prejudices about the practices of makers of colour still persist, associated with less or lower quality. There is also the issue of tokenism, in this case usually people who are called on at the last minute to add 'colour' to a rigidly white programme, and/or who are expected to create work about racism or about their identity as a person of colour.

Magali Elali has intentionally reached out to the established institutions. With some, she encountered resistance to her initiative. The focus on colour can apparently strike a resistant cord. Given the multitude of programmes and projects that focus on other

aspects of identity, such as work by young or non-male creators, this is surprising.

Reactions to the first *POC POC Who's There?* group exhibitions were in fact very positive. All the participating artists have been picked up by a gallery or cultural institution and a second call for artists was announced in January 2023.

Is this a much-needed catch-up, or is it instrumentalization? That remains to be seen. In any case, the goal is not to help organizations add colour to their programmes, but to create opportunities for sustainable careers for artists of colour. It is up to the organizations involved, and by extension to the arts field as a whole, to help ensure that they also track and support these people after *POC POC Who's There?* has ended. And, again by extension, that the interculturalization process in the arts does not come to a standstill, so that initiatives such as these can in time become redundant and unnecessary.

# Here below are the most important insights that emerged from the conversations among the participants in *POC POC Who's There?*, complemented with insights from a 'brave space' conversation that Magali Elali set up between young artists of colour and people affiliated with the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels.

**Communication!**

Be clear, complete and concrete, and avoid jargon. Do not assume that people automatically know something or that they are familiar with the terminology. Take language into consideration and do not presume that everyone is fluent in the Dutch language.

**Clear agreements!**

Not everyone is familiar with the formal and informal vicissitudes of the arts sector, and this causes misunderstandings. One example is residencies being announced without mention of potential extra expenses, or the other way around, when there is no mention of daily or other forms of payment provided.

**Role models!**

For many reasons, there are few people of colour attending formal higher art educational institutions. One of those reasons is that they see few role models amongst the faculties. Degree requirements often stand in the way of self-trained artists, despite years of experience. It is also a pleasure to not find oneself the only person of colour in an otherwise all-white team.

### Jobs!

Create space for people of colour, preferably in roles that are decisive for the strategy and content of your programme or arts practice. Is this difficult without having to fire people? Then create positions with temporary mandates. Have your vacancy advertisements screened.

### Be Fair!

Do not put responsibility for the interculturalization of your location, operation or practice exclusively in the hands of people of colour. Do not approach them unsolicited as experts on the subject. If you want people to address and mobilize their networks, be straightforward about it and offer a fee.

### Contacts!

Expand your own network, and that of your operations or practice. This helps to internalize your efforts on behalf of becoming a multivoiced entity and to make them more sustainable. You then have the opportunity to sharpen your own understanding, sensitivity and empathy for those who speak from a different perspective.

### Unlearn!

Attempt to divest yourself of those ingrained but mistaken assumptions, such as, for example, that 'makers of colour create work about racism or ethnocultural diversity'. Also, as quickly as possible, 'unlearn' the destructive assumption that makers with migrant backgrounds create work of lower standard or quality.

Validism or ableism is the **systemic exclusion of people with a disability – physical, sensory, psychic or mental – and/or chronic illness**. Both our society and our arts field suffer from it.

During her *State of the Youth* performance at the 2022 Brussels TheaterFestival, performing artist Mira Bryssinck said the following:

'*A limitation arises … in relation to the other. Wherever it is said that you weigh too heavily on the system and can contribute too little, or are not good enough to contribute. Wherever people say that you talk too much, or too little, about your disability, at the institutes that say that you do not have paper X, Y or Z with you, where teachers, journalists and all kinds of critics accentuate your limitations and not your artistry. Where you are too diverse for the conversations at the diversity table, where it is not possible to participate in social life if you do not achieve this or that attainment target, you cannot participate in rehearsals or lessons, or you cannot work on the conditions of the organization. Where it is said that we will tackle the problem of ableism later, not now. Where doors just don't open, sometimes literally.*'
Mira Bryssinck, 2022
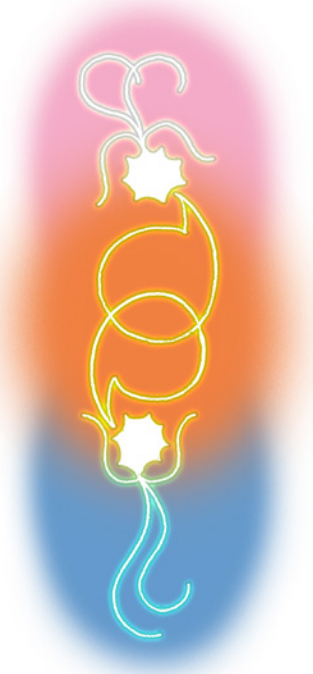
Just like racism and sexism, validism in society brings forward a certain image of humanity – a norm – that its systems are designed to accept and perpetuate. It is not the handicap of people themselves that leads to discrimination, but rather the society that is built and attuned to this rather narrowly determined, implicit norm. By implicit, we mean that it is never literally stated that people have to be in good physical, cognitive and mental health. However, the latter are the kinds of people that we see overrepresented in films, on television, on stage and in literature.

# It is not people's disabilities that lead to discrimination, but the society that is built and attuned to a rather narrowly determined, implicit norm.

The person who is deemed to be normal is in good health, has medium to high cognitive and emotional skills and a medium to high tempo in thinking, planning and acting. Those who do not fully comply with this norm deviate from that norm and cannot fully participate. The diversity among that supposedly deviant group is extensive, which means that their support needs also differ, and they sometimes even work against each other. Nonetheless, everyone has a legal right to cultural participation.

There is also stereotyping. In a panel discussion organized by VIERNULVIER, Gents Kunstenoverleg and the Urban Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities in Ghent, someone commented about a fictitious series in which the lawyer representing a murderer used the accused's diagnosis of borderline disorder as a mitigating circum-

stance. Not only is this stigmatizing, but it is utterly inconsistent with the definition of borderline disorder (a definition still in evolution), or with any of the characteristics that are ascribed to it.

Discussions about anti-validism over the past few years go much farther than making our art houses, programmes and jobs more accessible to people with disabilities. They stimulate society to rethink things, inspired by what they need. And indeed, these needs often lean very close to the needs of the majority of people.

For this reason, in this chapter, we follow two different paths. We gather tips in order to work on the **accessibility of artistic operations for people with disabilities**, and we highlight the **Crip movement, which views that disability as a cultural model**, a lens through which to critically observe and rethink our society.

## From Validism to Inclusion...

The brochure, _Toegankelijke cultuur voor mensen met een handicap_ (_Accessible Culture for People with a Handicap_, Demos 2020), can be found on the Demos website. It includes general principles and concrete tips for those wanting to work towards greater accessibility. We quote it here:

> '_Accessibility is an integrated story in which different actors play a role: organizer, manager, artist, the network around people with disabilities. Effective and sustainable cultural participation only happens when all the pieces of the puzzle fall together. But every step in the right direction helps. And also within the category of people with disabilities, there is such great diversity that no_

> *threshold applies to everyone. Each has its own set of difficulties and resources, its own drive and desires. (…) By definition, a uniform approach falls short.'*

'An integrated story', no 'uniform approach', but 'every step in the right direction helps'? For those who think this sounds overwhelming, we have a few tips to help work towards accessibility, one step at a time (see 3. *Multiple Voices and Safety/Safe(r) Spaces*).

Here we summarize what we learned from the outstanding Demos brochure _Toegankelijke cultuur voor mensen met een handicap_, from Josefien Cornette's NON Ableism checklist, from Engagement and State of the Arts, from conversations with the people behind _Cripping the Space_ and _Open Vizier/ Open Mind_, as well as from several panel and roundtable discussions.

**The basics!**

Clarity about the physical, basic accessibility of a location is important and can be easily communicated online. Can people with limited mobility move around easily, both indoors and outdoors? Can they access toilets on their own? Is there a suitable lift? If so, can it be accessed without a badge or assistance? Do you provide discounts or free entry to those assisting people with disabilities? Do you accept European Disability Cards? How easily can your location be reached by public transport? Has the tram or bus stop been adapted? Are there restaurants or cafés in the neighbourhood with easy access, and so on?

**A welcoming reception!**

Is someone available to explain the infrastructure and routes through the building? Is that person familiar with sign language, or able to make themselves understood through gestures and facial expressions? Is that person approachable and friendly, and do they have the explicit role of further assisting those with disabilities? Do you have arrangements for people or for organ-

izations wanting to visit as a group, or per-haps a buddy system? Are you prepared to present performances or tours at times that are more convenient for people with disabilities?

**Approachability!**

Given the great diversity of needs, it is recommended that a contact person be appointed to receive questions or complaints, or to signal needs in advance.

### Integral! #1

People with disabilities can and want to take on all kinds of roles, in the arts as elsewhere. As dancer Staf Vos explains, '*People can often get in as viewers, but they can't get a wheelchair onstage or backstage. Symbolically, this indicates where the greatest barriers lie.*' Researcher and policymaker Nynke Feenstra adds, '*It is often possible to get a wheelchair inside, but only through the back entrance.*' That is in fact not inclusion, not being treated equally (Leni Van Goidsenhoven and Anaïs Van Ertveld, 2021).

### Integral! #2

Art schools could bring in more people with disabilities as teachers. Josefien Cornette writes, '*When students and teachers with disabilities have a place in the curriculum, that promotes a critical way of thinking that can only benefit education and the arts.*' (Josefien Cornette, 2023)

### Representation!

Think about the bodies that you present in the narratives that they express: 'Nothing About Us Without Us.' Involve experienced experts in developing or organizing your artistic offerings. And be critical: should deaf people be played by hearing people? Can spasticity be better interpreted by a spastic dancer? (Leni Van Goidsenhoven and Anaïs Van Ertveld, 2021) Investigate the meaning of disability aesthetics.

Ultimately, accessibility is entirely about whether people feel welcome, with all their desires and needs. It is about an attitude and about a culture, about how people are welcomed and treated. If you work towards this, then you are building a safe(r) space, as we further describe below (see 3. *Multiple Voices and Safety*). According to Aïda Yancy, that is an environment where **you feel welcome with all aspects of your identity** (2021).

> This last might seem easy – that there is no doubt that people with disabilities are heartily welcome. In reality, it is a frequently heard complaint that people feel, or are made to feel, that they are a bother to others. Staff who never interact with people with disabilities are unable to build up their knowledge, cannot develop antennas or learn reflexes to make their experiences comfortable and pleasant.

## ... and from Inclusion to Crip

In recent years, the discourse about **disability as a societal issue** has been on the rise within the arts, well beyond the classical question of inclusion. The movement that has pushed this discourse forward refers to itself as 'crip'. Crip, for cripple, is an informal term for people with disabilities. Like the word 'queer', it was initially meant as an insult, and those to whom it referred adopted it and gave it a new and socially critical meaning (Sarah Ahmed, 2018). And just as with 'queering', with the intentional use of the term for something for which it was not intended, as a form of social criticism, drawingattention to exclusive norms and habits and questioning these habits, 'cripping' has also become a verb. We will talk more about this later.

> **Someone who is 'crip' poses questions about the normative image of people** referred to above, to the fact that there is a norm, a standard that every head and every

body must live up to in order to be considered normal (Josefien Cornette, 2023). It avoids an overly individualized approach to disability ('you have this disability and therefore we will look for a solution') and invites us **to think differently about diversity of bodies, senses and styles of thinking in our society**, with disability as a lens.

For the C*RIP* issue of *rekto:verso* (#91, 2021, Leni Van Goidsenhoven, Anaïs Van Ertvelde, Nadia Hadad and Josefien Cornette), a range of disability specialists and experienced specialists saw disability as an entry point in order to rethink society and the arts field. They show **how disability is a societal question, not simply a medical problem for individual people**. This is another lever for change, in how thinking about the needs of people with disabilities then becomes an exercise in making the arts more caring as a field – something that benefits everyone.

For the unindoctrinated and arts specialists without experience in this matter, that may seem strange. How can thinking about the inclusion of people with a disability lead to broader change for everyone?

# Thinking about the needs of people with a disability becomes an experience in making the art world more caring – something that benefits everyone.

There are countless examples. Some locations offer so-called relaxed performances, with dimmed lighting, a relaxed way of dealing with sounds in the audience or people who walk around during a show. This kind of presentation can have an inspiring effect,

leading to yet other adaptations. A number of our codes from the performing arts date back to the late 19th century and are very Western, such as silence, total concentration, and (very loud) applause, but only at prescribed moments. These are not only difficult for people with certain disabilities, but for others as well.

The rituals are specific and variable, between musicals and opera, between stage theatre and cinema, between traditionally classical concerts, non-classical performance and all the rich, live music and performance in between. The lack of cultural
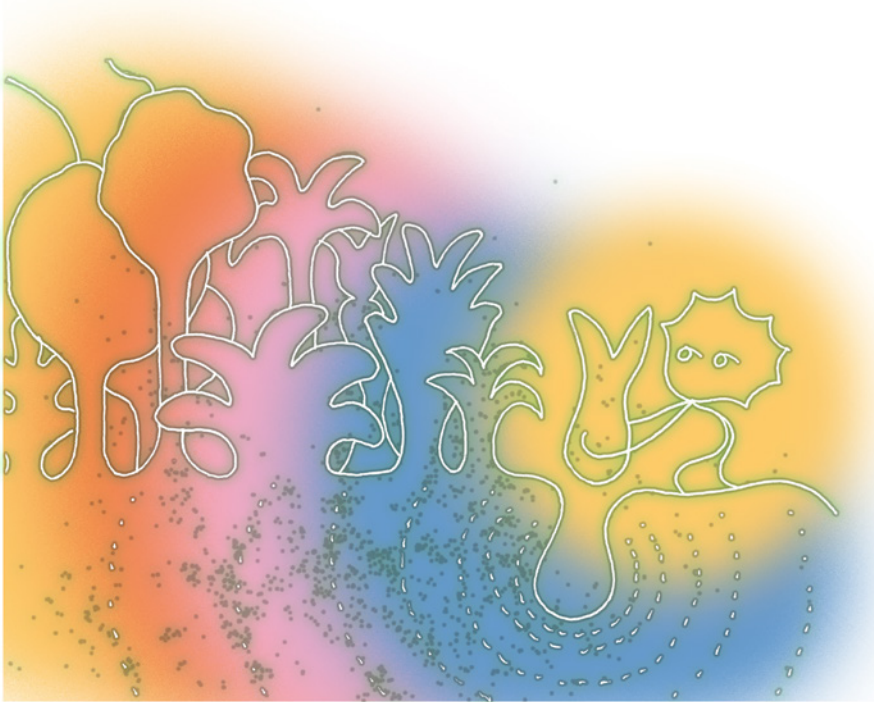
capital is consequently also a barrier. If you are relating to this as an artist or as an organizer, then you are cripping. You are adjusting things, inspired by the needs of a number of people, but it potentially benefits the whole of society.

> Another example is crip time. Our sector is suffering from a plague of burnout and is in need of a slowdown, as we see in the conversations that we have held over the last few years, as well as in research by the Sociaal Fonds Podiumkunsten (Social Fund for the Performing Arts, 2022). Art students with disabilities complained that they were not believed when they said they were absent from school because things were not going well (Josefien Cornette, 2023). **Crip time creates just enough space for the possibility of not (completely) living up to high expectations**. It invites us to be more flexible with deadlines and appointments, to be milder, more generous and to take account of when people say they can or cannot accomplish something at a given point in time. This too benefits everyone, because people with disabilities are not the only ones who wrestle with dominant productivity norms.

This does not just have to be about speed. One might think of simplified grant application procedures, because people have difficulties with official administrative language and would then have better access. Or staff who can guide them through these procedures. This would – intentionally – lower the barrier for everyone.

> '*Crip undermines the production ideology that dictates exhaustion,*' one that leads to a sector that is barely accessible for those who work differently, more slowly, more chaotically, or perhaps even more pragmatically, as they are more economical with their own energy (Leni Van Goidsenhoven and Gert-Jan Vanaken, 2021).

**2.3 'WHY CAN'T YOU BE NORMAL?'**
**SPACE FOR NEURODIVERSITY IN THE ARTS**

Neurodiversity is the wide range of neurological peculiarities that can characterize people. Usually, people speak of more or less neurotypical people (the majority, the norm) and neurodivergent people, or those who deviate from that norm. **Neurodivergence is a broad denominator under which all kinds of symptoms and/or conditions are placed**: ADHD, OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder), posttraumatic stress syndrome, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism spectrum disorder, certain phobias and even being highly gifted or less gifted.

Neurodivergence is not always a handicap. Nonetheless, neurodivergences are often placed in the same category, as a handicap. In that case, it is about deviations that form a limitation or are experienced as such, or it is about similar needs that people have. For example, when a muscle weakness in the brain gives rise to both motor and mental or intellectual phenomena, or when you need crip time for neurological or motor/physical reasons, the distinction between body and mind is a thin one.

According to sociologist Judy Singer (2017), Neurodiversity is as crucial to humanity as biodiversity is. It ensures that people have different experiences, that they process stimuli differently. This offers different views of the world. People can have very specific interests and therefore an extensive or deeper knowledge about a certain subject. The stereotypical image that people have of the 'savant', with an inexplicable super-talent, is in reality not very common. That image, however, does appeal to the imagination, so that neurodivergences sometimes come with overwrought expectations. That is annoying for anyone experiencing them as a disability, as 'normal' as they might in fact be.

---

**     The title is from Judy Singer, *Why Can't You Be Normal For Once In Your Life?*, about autism and neurodiversity (Judy Singer, 1999).

# Neurodiversity is as crucial for humanity as biodiversity. It ensures that people have different experiences, process stimuli differently. It often brings another view of the world.

In *Forbes* magazine, Judy Singer (referred to in Nancy Doyle, 2021) writes:
*'The test of real acceptance is when minorities of all kinds are allowed to be as flawed as the dominant majority without being stereotyped and 'othered'. By definition, we all have strengths and weaknesses. (…) Some people will need more time, more accommodations, more patience. And sometimes it won't work out. On the other hand, since psychopathy and narcissism are also neurodivergent traits, perhaps we need to focus … on why our culture … turns such anti-social weaknesses into 'competitive advantages'. I am more worried about what will happen to those who are tried and found wanting in the relentless quest for speed, efficiency and productivity that characterize our hyper-capitalist era. It seems that as pandemic and environmental decline cloud our economic horizons, the 'cult of positive thinking' is more desperately fervent than ever. And according to the latest research, it was always counter-productive in the first place…. We are already way too over-productive, to the detriment of the environment. Nor has 'efficiency' shortened working hours, increased wages or given families more time and leisure together.'*

Singer is critical of society, rather than approaching neurodivergence as a problem. This is consistent with the way that 'crip' looks at handicaps. Like crip, neurodiversity is not only a fact, but also a movement: a standpoint that critically questions the neurotypical norm, instead of looking at disabilities as a problem (Kristien Hens and Leni Van Goidsenhoven, 2022).

Here in Flanders, Gorges Ocloo let the cat out of the bag in an interview with Charlotte De Somville in 2022, when he openly spoke about his bipolar disorder and dyslexia. He pleaded for a better relationship with those who deviate from the neurotypical norm on a mental or cognitive level. As he tells us, '*Artists are so often presented as people who are half crazy, geniuses with a screw loose. People like it when you comply with that image. But woe betide you if you really have a neurodivergence. Then everything suddenly becomes really difficult.*'

Neurodivergent people can have specific needs. Translating that to the working context, they may require more silence, rest or solitude. It could be that they need more time to complete their tasks. Some people do not function well in groups – or not for a long period of time – while other people find it difficult to be alone. Some people require clear communication and do not like having to read between the lines.

Making space for neurodiversity means that **people are able to let their needs be known – that they prefer to be actively asked – and that those needs are taken into account**. This in turn creates a context in which everyone is better able to flourish. After all, who does not have a need for clear communications, silence or solitude, or indeed, having people around them? When it becomes clear that there is **openness to indicating what you need, it creates a caring atmosphere for everyone**.

On 9 September 2022, in the framework of *Cripping the Space*, Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute organized a neurodiversity Brave Space in the form of a roundtable discussion, in which experienced experts and specialized researchers engaged in discussions with interested people in the arts sector. The tips that follow came out of those discussions. The conversations, and consequently also the tips, primarily concern creating space for neurodiversity in the workplace.

**Question!** What do you need to be able to deliver your best work? Ask people explicitly what their needs are and ensure those needs are met.

**Quiet!** Provide low-stimulus environments and quiet spaces and avoid (excessively) loud applause in your presentation space.

**Clear!** Create clarity. Communicate clearly, so there is little room for interpretation or ambivalence.

**Safe!** Ensure that there is real trust shared by all those who work together and with those in management.

**Welcome!** Appreciate the wondrous ways in which people can differ.

**Crip time!** Create space where limitations and needs can be made known, can be given time and can fluctuate in terms of performance.

**2.4 THE MARGINS IN THE MIDDLE?**

Crossroads thinking helps promote solidarity between different groups in society. People who have experienced exclusion or underrepresentation recognize one another's struggles, support one another and exchange experiences and knowledge. Here, people who enjoy greater advantages can contribute to this in all manner of ways.

Rewatch the third *A Fair New World?!* panel discussion, read the transcript or the summary.

There are so many who deviate from the norms! In our third *Fair New World?!* panel discussion, Abdullah Alkafri expressed it as follows, speaking in the context of the operations of Ettijahat, a Lebanon-based organization that promotes independent culture in Syria and the Arab world:

'*We thought … to reconsider the position of the people most affected by the pandemic and view them together with other marginalized groups: the LGBTQI+ community, single moms, single dads, artists who are displaced or refugees. So we invested a lot in **expanding the margin** as a concept. And we say that this margin is no longer a margin in the Arab region. It is the new reality, the new centre. And our focus was on positioning … **this margin as an inspiring way of thinking**.*'

The margin as the centre? There are strong intersectional currents in today's feminist, antiracist, anti-validist and anticapitalist movements. Coalitions have also been forged in academic thought, under the headings of 'crip-of-colour' and 'queer-of-colour'. Not only do these currents find mutual inspiration and support, and not only do they all work in a way that is critical of the norm, but together, they provide proof that intersectionality is more than a theoretical framework for thought. It has true applied value because it leads to the mutual reinforcement of voices that are not heard enough and to richer knowledge building.

## 3.
## Multiple Voices and Safety

Being multivoiced goes further than diversity. It is about bringing together different voices, standpoints, perspectives and life experiences. This can cause friction, so it requires as safe a context as possible.

> With safety, we here refer to **a group, event, organization or workplace that does everything possible to avoid the possibility of anyone being the subject of physical, emotional or mental violence, or that they are denied access**, be that in a physical or in a more subtle way. To phrase it more positively, it means that they, independent of their artistic appreciations or social or

cultural experience, have a neutral or even – preferably – very good experience. This presumes a maximum of inclusivity and accessibility.

We derive this broad conception of safety from the scope and characteristics of **safe(r) spaces**, a term we have already referred to. It is a term that has also become familiar in the arts in recent years. We briefly outline its origins here, and then highlight those characteristics that can help our field in the pursuit of becoming a more multivoiced body. We will discuss a number of associated challenges and investigate **how we can make inclusive, safe, multiple voices a sustainable and achievable goal**. Where possible, we list concrete tips and measures.

### 3.1. WHAT ARE SAFE(R) SPACES AND WHAT DO THEY TEACH US ABOUT SAFETY IN *A FAIR NEW WORLD*

## What are safe(r) spaces?

The idea of the safe space attracted attention in the 1970s, in the context of LGBTQIA+ circles and radical black feminist movements (Christina B. Hanhardt, 2013). Diana Ali places that even earlier, in American citizen movements from the 1960s, when people came together to share experiences and information and find support in their experiences with racism, sexism or other forms of exclusion (Diana Ali, 2017).

In the meantime, safe spaces have also become inherent to treatment for trauma, for example in cases of abuse, loss, addiction or illness. Precisely what the 'safety' entails in discussion groups depends on the themes, the people and the agreements that they make together. Always, the issue of **confidentiality** is crucial. As a minimal rule of thumb, people are able to tell their stories without being interrupted or contradicted.

Participants agree on which themes should or should not be addressed, and how. They take collective responsibility for things running smoothly and have professional leaders present who know how to respond if things go wrong.

In the arts, the concept of safe spaces is **used much more broadly**. Any space in which people can speak openly and in confidence about sensitive subjects is quickly referred to as a safe space, whether there is someone in charge or not. An event that gives priority or even exclusive access to the needs of a certain group of people – a café with a queer public, a cultural evening for people with migrant backgrounds, a party with stewards you can approach if you feel unsafe – can all be considered safe spaces. A space is only considered 'safe' when both the organizers and the participants consider it as such and share responsibility for keeping it safe.

Sometimes cultural or artistic locations refer to themselves as 'safe' in general, without specifying exactly for or to whom or what they are referring. This is not always a good idea. In any case, avoiding all possible risk is a utopian idea, which is why people today more often refer to safer spaces – as a permanent objective – than to safe spaces.

# Avoiding all risk is a utopian idea, which is why people today speak about safer spaces – as a permanent objective – rather than safe spaces.

**A safe(r) space cannot always be referred to as inclusive**. It happens that people organize themselves in groups, exclusively on the basis of certain identity characteristics. Or that people with those identity characteristics have priority, for example when a space becomes overcrowded. This can certainly be important for groups who are not in the majority in society, or for whom it is sometimes not safe to move around in that society. They have to make extra effort to find people with whom they find recognition and deeper understanding, and with whom they can talk about shared problems and joys.

One example is the Mothers & Daughters bar, about which Marnie Slater speaks in her conversation with Olave Nduwanje (Olave Nduwanje, 2021). It is a queer, feminist safe(r) space without a door policy based on gender. They do ensure that lesbian women are in the majority and not just a tolerated minority. Here, we can also recall the series of conversations about systematic exclusion that Magali Elali organized with young makers of colour, or the kind of conversations that *Cripping the Space* establishes with people with neurodivergences or more general disabilities.

Referring to Decoratelier in Molenbeek, outside Brussels, as a safe space that could also sometimes be exclusive in nature, Jozef Wouters said the following (Charlotte De Somviele, 2020): '*For me that is scenography: designing an inner courtyard in such a way that everyone can find a place and participate in a shared programme according to their own conditions. Or not. Sometimes not everyone is allowed in. The gate that closes us off from the street is an important element here. That door changed its meaning every single day. Together with the fantastic Youssef Bouch, who understands this neighbourhood extremely well, we thought up an appropriate door policy for every event*.'

## Safe(r) Spaces in the Arts

Olave Nduwanje, jurist, activist, artist and author, in *Better Practices for Safe(r) Spaces*, her series of podcasts commissioned by Kaaitheater, with the support of Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute, investigated how people can bring the spirit of safe(r) spaces into their cultural or artistic practice, event or location (Olave Nduwanje, 2021).

Listen to the podcast series *Better Practices for Safer Spaces* by Olave Nduwanje.

In line with the idea that safety cannot be measured according to a dominant societal

norm, she engaged in conversations with people who identify themselves as, and/or are working with LGBTQIA+ people and/or people of colour. These are people who have knowledge and expertise in diverse forms of safe(r) spaces. Their conversations are richer, more layered and more multivoiced than we are able to represent in these pages. They can be found at kunsten.be, in audio recordings, in transcription and in translation, so that whoever wishes is able to delve into them more deeply. For those in search of a more concrete or concise summary, we list a number of the basic principles below.

One of Olave's interlocutors, the diversity and inclusivity facilitator Aïda Yancy, describes safe(r) spaces as '**places that give you the feeling that you are at home and welcome in all aspects of your identity**'. These spaces are not characterized by a fixed design or format, and they cannot simply be replicated. Yancy does, however, list three important characteristics, pillars upon which a safe(r) space is founded, in the sense of a broader Fair New World.

### (1) Introspection

The first characteristic is **introspection**. For yourself, make it as explicit as possible what exactly you mean by making a space, event or workspace safer. 'Generic' and 'safe' are not concepts that mix well. Who is it that you want to change things for, and how far do you want to, or are you able to go? Have you allocated time and budget? You need to establish your priorities and/or establish steps or phases. These in turn depend on your own practice, stakeholders and target groups.

An important factor here is **involving the people this is about**. For whom do you want to make your space safer and what are their own ideas about achieving this? 'Nothing About Us Without Us' is a familiar slogan for associations of people with disabilities. This principle also applies to others. Ask

for feedback and input, provide remuner-
ation for that input, let people know what
will be done with their suggestions, and, if
they want to be kept up to date, keep them
informed of your progress.

In this context, Olave Nduwanje speaks about a **deep invest-
ment in relationships** (in conversation with Jenebah Kamara,
Olave Nduwanje, 2021). You learn to understand in real depth
what safety looks like for various groups of people, and to give
that as concrete a translation as possible in your work, opera-
tion or practice. This can later be expanded, one step at a time,
in consultation with other groups, thus setting up a process of
transformation for the longer term.

### (2) Accountability

A second characteristic here is **accountability**. You communicate to others what you have already done and what you are planning to do, in a way that means that they are able to approach you. You ensure that there is a contact person and make yourself available to receive comments, questions or, if need be, calls in or out (see below).

> In her conversation with Olave, Marnie Slater of Mothers & Daughters noted: '*So many institutional spaces in Brussels suddenly started feminist, queer, anti-racist programming online during the pandemic. What is the effect of an institution running such an important programme without being able to see their audience? (…) So they're reaching broader audiences…. But what does it mean when regular programming starts? The regular programming is not queer, not antiracist, not feminist. They don't know if the same audiences are coming back to hold them accountable.*' Olave Nduwanje, 2021

We have already indicated that there is a **link between being multivoiced, safety, accountability and inclusivity**.

Aïda Yancy developed a toolbox for creating safe(r) spaces (Aïda Yancy, 2021). One of the insights here is that 'It is important to remember that spaces that are not (perceived as) safe are spaces that tend to be naturally

Check out the toolbox Aïda Yancy developed for creating safe(r) spaces.

avoided and [are] thus rendered de facto inaccessible. The perception of a space is of importance, as reputation is often the only indicator one has.'

> The more clearly you communicate and the more accountable you are, the better others are able to form an image of the efforts that you are making on behalf of their safety. This in turn makes your location or activity more accessible.

### (3) Follow-up

A third pillar is the **follow-up**. This means ensuring procedures and protocols that make what will be done with possible complaints or incidents explicit to others.

> The principles behind these safe(r) spaces have **the effect of redistributing power**. They force attention to be paid to people who were previously overlooked. This can bring important change in your operations or practice. That is not always evident to others, with whom or for whom you are working. They might feel themselves being pushed aside or criticized. (See 4. *Multiple Voices and Courage*). Because people have never had personal experience of this, questions that can today lead to adaptations sometimes seem to be exaggerated.

Once again, it benefits everyone when safety, seen in broad terms, is taken seriously. It contributes to an atmosphere of caring, of interest and curiosity about the other, and genuine empathy.

# We here translate what we have learned from the conversations with Olave Nduwanje and Aïda Yancy's toolbox about safe spaces in the arts into the following concrete tips:

**Ask!** Ask for input from a number of people with the profiles for which you want to make extra effort. Organize conversations and try to listen, rather than reacting automatically or instinctively. Keep them informed about what you are ultimately going to do.

**Communicate!** Draw up an announcement that makes it clear that no exclusion will be tolerated in your location, and formulate clear and easy-to-find **codes of conduct** and procedures online. Identify which forms of exclusion this might concern. Do this only when you are sure that your statements will be well understood and supported by the people who visit and work there. Actively monitor and ensure that the communication does not become a dead letter and that your operation makes progress in terms of inclusivity and accountability.

**Be consistent!** Do not be safe(r) for just a single time, for example for a single discussion about exclusion or unacceptable behaviour in the arts. You would then run the risk that people come back to you and find themselves in a completely different atmosphere and context.

**Embrace!** Codes and regulations are not public relations exercises. They mean nothing at all if they are not embraced, embodied and applied. Many informal, smaller arts practices do not have codes and regulations, but are nonetheless experienced as safer than larger institutions directed at larger audiences. Provide training at your place of work about relating to and respecting differences between people.

**3.2 SAFETY IN THE DIGITAL SPACE**

During the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, we in the arts began to think more deeply about safety in the digital space, and then in particular about those aspects that go beyond familiar issues about public data, privacy and malware. Who can be hurt online, and why? What about topics that are triggers, trolling behaviour or automatic exclusion due to opaque algorithms?

> Some presentation locations replaced their live programmes with **online conversations, sometimes about sensitive subjects**. They began to experiment with new forms of moderation, such as filtering out hurtful comments or using trigger warnings when a sensitive theme came up, or when it was dropped.

Globe Aroma organized *Zoom calls* for people for whom loneliness became too much of a burden. In that same period, Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute launched our Morning Coffees. The sessions were originally set up to provide a listening ear for makers and art workers during the long lockdowns, but they have since grown to become an online locket for all things concerning information and advice.

> Digital tools have opened a door to greater inclusivity by way of **online screenings, exhibitions and concerts**. In the meantime, this practice – which requires extra time, money and experiment – has largely died a quiet death. Nor has it succeeded in filling the digital divide. Experiments have taken place, however, with new forms and formats. A selection from the many examples of this can be found in our report on *Kunsten na Corona* (The Arts after Corona, 2021) and in our *Re/set series* (in Dutch).

<u>On launching *A Fair New World?!*</u> in September of 2020, we became acquainted with the artist Jivan van der Ende, who had set up an exhibition channel on YouTube for his creator friends. They spoke about it during one of the panel discussions. If people could no longer physically get together, they could at least still follow and discuss each other's work online. From a distance, they could lift their glasses at exhibition openings and provide moral support for one another. Looking back at the loneliness and isolation that this period brought with it, for young people in particular, this sort of small-scale initiative had great social and emotional value.

Rewatch the kick-off event of *A Fair New World?!* or read the summary.

At the technological level, this initiative is **inside the box**, as it were, in the sense that it works with the digital tools that are readily available, including large social media platforms and videoconferencing software. The question is **how safe it is to work in spaces** that are managed and controlled by private multinational corporations. There is no insight into their algorithms, which raises questions about visibility (linked to numerical popularity by way of numbers of clicks), control over the context in which the work appears, how representative it is, and the prevention – or stimulation – of polarization. Their data protection policies are unclear. Anyone who works with artists who are critical of governments in their countries of origin knows that this is not without danger. There are times when privacy is an absolute necessity.

# Digital tools have opened the door to greater inclusivity by way of online screenings, but how safe is working in spaces that are managed and controlled by private multinationals?

The third segment in our *A Fair New Idea?!* series was aimed at artists, collectives and organizations that want to critically question their use of digital tools. Ideas for different uses of existing tools were welcome, as were avenues for completely new and different software.

This latter option is followed by A Feminist Server, and was selected for support. A Feminist Server is building **an international online and offline community for sharing knowledge about software**. The group focuses a priori on **queer and trans people who identify as women and work in the arts and/or activism**. In the world of online technology, which is strongly dominated by (cisgender) men and regularly has to cope with incidents of male toxicity, this should be no surprise.

> '*We … educate ourselves about web-related technologies, nourish our fringed community of* queer*, trans and women-identified persons by creating a space where we feel safe to share our art and activism, express our minds with no fear of being trolled, censored, or patronized by the* privileged *male majority that runs most of the Internet's infrastructure.*' A Feminist Server, for *A Fair New Idea?! #3*

In contrast to profiling, competition and lust for profit, A Feminist Server recognizes such values as sustainability, inclusivity and collectivism. In practical terms, they do this by managing servers and custom developing technologies in accordance with the needs of their community, and by way of bringing people together to exchange knowledge in the right – the safest – framework.

> A Feminist Server developed their own video streaming and archiving platform on which residencies for artists could be offered, including space for exhibitions and playlists, documentaries and tutorials, support for hybrid – live and online – events, and safe sharing of censure-sensitive content. Artists were selected on the basis of their plans, as well as on the basis of who they are and what access and visibility they wanted to develop on a nonmainstream platform.

The international community within which A Feminist Server works defines itself as an online and offline space that operates with safety and trust in as holistic a way as possible. It is focused on support, on sharing knowledge and consequently also on emancipation, more than on speed or efficiency. People who are attracted to the world of technology, but intimidated by the hard atmosphere that can prevail there, or who are censured or trolled because of the contents with which they are involved, can find recognition and acknowledgment, new information, skills and support. They themselves speak of 'affective infrastructures'.

Care for the community happens collectively, by way of debugging and optimizing software, providing mailing lists and communications, to the self-organization of hybrid events, such as the Eclectic Tech Carnival (ECT is an annual get-together of feminist hackers), to documenting these events and preserving all knowledge acquired on their own servers. They are not aiming for large or broad-scale visibility, but for the right connections between people ('Critical Connections', Grace Lee Boggs, 1974).

'*It is not about "it has to work, and it has to do this," but rather "how are we developing it together so that it can do it in a way we want?"*'(ooooo – pseudonym for a member of A Feminist Server – in an interview with Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute).

One of the dreams that is cherished by the people in A Feminist Server is that in time, more artist and designer collectives will manage their own servers. Together, they can maintain autonomous digital infrastructures that tell a non-normative narrative and support vulnerable groups who suffer from gender-based violence, such as sex workers, anti-abortion activists and post-porn creators.

### 3.3 NEGOTIATED SAFETY: ART AND AUDIENCES

We above described safety in the arts as an environment in which people, independent of their artistic appreciations or their social or cultural experiences, have a neutral or preferably pleasurable experience. We have spoken at length about inclusivity and accountability. But what if that substantive experience is itself the problem? In that case, we are not talking about a work, a concert, performance or exhibition that is unable to appeal to people, but about things that **unintentionally (re)traumatize**.

> In our society, the agreement between art or artist and the arts audience is perceived as a kind of social contract, such as also exists between politics and citizens. As the celebrated actor Josse De Pauw phrased it, '*The arts are the arena in which it must be possible to say and do everything, precisely because that is what has been agreed. And from there, others are able to react and get angry. That is not a bad thing. On the contrary, but the arts exist precisely in order to put your freedoms to the test*.' (Yannick Dangre, 2022)

The public informs itself (or not) about that which it is considering participating in, and in turn decides: I will reserve a place and go (or, I will look and/or listen online). They subsequently set about working with whatever they are confronted with, with the way that they receive it, what they find beautiful, fine, confusing, sad, irritating or interesting, and what associations that evokes. For many, this is an honest, often even exciting and surprising process.

> Art is seen as both a forum for multiple voices and as a free space. De Pauw is speaking from the perspective of a broadly supported, modern Western artistic vision (see Wouter Hillaert, 2022): the art and the artist are autonomous, and that autonomy must be protected against being instrumentalized, censorship, oversensitivity, coercive social desirability or considerations of a social nature. Art can be dangerous (even preferably so), and it may offend or shock. The artist is free.

Today, that lofty artistic freedom could use a bit of nuance. People with disabilities are often expected to create work about those disabilities. People of colour are expected to make work about racism, or at the very least about their racial or cultural identity. This means that the archetypical 'free' artist is far more likely to be white, more likely to be free of disabilities, more likely to be male.

> And indeed, the agreement that De Pauw refers to seems to have been made with an archetypical audience. That would be an audience that is not too prudish (or that likes to be shocked in the safe context of red velvet seats or the white or black gallery space), perhaps not too religious, doubtless not traumatized by racism, relativism, sexism, sexual or other kind of violence, sickness or other themes that we see in the arts. This audience has no need to be pandered to, and certainly not when this would impede the freedom of the artist.

Given the diversity in our society and the effort that it takes to see this reflected in our art spaces, we might well ask if that agreement might in fact be in need of some revision. Aren't our audiences to heterogeneous to find themselves as one and indivisible in that basic agreement – that the artist creates and presents and the audience allows itself to be surprised?

> Furthermore, what exactly is patronizing and who is hypersensitive, if one considers the mechanisms of exclusion that often underlie artistic subject matter, humour or imagery? It is precisely through these mechanisms that the single voice, the single frame of reference, enjoys a larger platform than any alternative voice. This way, you just keep on going in the same direction.

In a double interview with Raven Ruëll in Etcetera (#153, Wouter Hillaert, 2018) about racist elements in *Het leven en de werken Leopold II* (The Life and Work of Leopold II, 2003), reprised in 2018, Heleen Debeuckelaere states, '*If you reduce everything to hurt, you simply dismiss valid criticism as a one-off emotion. This way, there will never be a dialogue. (…) What grates is that Leopold II's satire is actually hyper-realistic, if you look at society today. Pukkelpop [music festival] recently gave us living, breathing proof of that.*' [Heleen Debeuckelaere is referring to an incident in which white boys sang racist colonial songs to a black girl. Pukkelpop 2018].

Wouter Hillaert, in *rekto:verso #97* (Wouter Hillaert, 2022) suggests that during their creative process, artists should be more conscientious about questioning how different audiences – at different locations, with different socio-demographic backgrounds – react to the same work. As he asked himself, can we, alongside freedom as a central concept in artistic choices, also make responsibility a more central consideration?

# How do different audiences react to the same work? Can we, alongside freedom as a central concept in artistic choices, also make responsibility more central?

As a creator, and certainly as someone who works with audiences, it is certainly possible to think about this. And there is something to be said for letting an audience, if it desires, be better informed about any given programme. 'If it desires' can in this case be 'on request '.

On the Meg-John Barker blog, the author presented a nuanced view of the potential advantages and disadvantages of trigger or content warnings, primarily in the context of education. (Meg-John Barker, 2014; see also Meg-John Barker, 2018). The suggestion is that warnings are not intended to discourage people, but to help them make more informed choices. This reminds us that it is impossible to predict every trigger – the human spirit is far too complex for that – and suggests taking into consideration what should be done if something goes wrong.

Barker also again reminds us of intersectionality: we all have certain forms of trauma and it is clear that one kind of trauma

cannot be compared with another – and consequently nor can the impact of being exposed to triggers. This reminds us not to fall into standpoints that are for or against (something can be said for both), but to stop and think about how and when trigger or content warnings can be used. Most of all, Barker places these warnings in a much broader, yet-to-be-developed culture of consent.

> This also resonates with an essay that Madonna Lenaert wrote for Kunstenpunt/ Flanders Arts Institute in 2023, referring back to *The Ethics of Consent*, the 2009 reference work by Franklin Miller and Alan Wertheimer.

**Consent is as good and as informed a form of agreement as possible** about dealing with the situation. Among others, the concept is commonly found in law, philosophy, sexuality, politics and medicine (Madonna Lenaert, 2023).

> That informed consent has its conditions. All parties involved have to be in a position to have access to sufficient relevant information in order to give their consent.

**In a position to** means that you have to be mature enough, have the cognitive and intellectual capacities in order to estimate what it is about and make your decision **without pressure**. In a work situation, that could be in the form of group pressure, the fear of losing a job, a commission, or a source of income, the fear of compromising your own career. For the audience, it may be that you are sitting in the audience, the lights have been dimmed and the performance has begun. You can in fact still leave, but it is difficult.

> **Being well-informed** presupposes concrete, clear and explicit facts about what is going to happen – in the context of an arts audience, we can add, when and if they wish to be informed.

Consent must be **unambiguous** (purchasing a ticket is unambiguous). It must be given at the appropriate moment (for example, not after a ticket has already been purchased), and people need to be able to change their minds ('This feels less OK than I had expected').

When do audiences have enough information to be able to decide to participate or not? And what dynamic can live art generate in an audience? Does every audience, for example, interpret irony in the same way, and what effect does that have on different people in an audience when that is not the case? Does everyone react in the same way to representations of violence, rape, racism or even simple nudity? Of course they don't. Lenaert writes:

'*How much agency does an audience have in choosing what they see? Does someone who has actually experienced sexual violence want to see that violence represented on stage…? Does someone want to see racism represented when they accompany their class to a performance? Does such representation actually stop violence or does it in fact encouraged more violence? (…) What do you say to the person with an eating disorder who is forced to watch a clichéd depiction of anorexia? What do you say to an autistic person who has to watch how someone else very badly depicts autism?*' (Madonna Lenaert, 2022)

If we allow the generic statement referred to by Josse De Pauw to evolve into a form of mature negotiation, then we might make the experience of art somewhat safer for more people – without questioning the criticism inherent to the arts, or the friction and the danger that people also seek in art (Pascal Gielen, 2014). Along with creative freedom, creators can also take our responsibility to heart, as Wouter Hillaert advocates, and this can contribute to a more caring arts field. Hillaert concludes, '*It is not the supposed hypersensitivity of the contemporary viewer that seems to be the problem, but the nostalgic belief that a restoration of absolute freedom of creation is the solution.*' (Wouter Hillaert, 2022)

# 4.
## Multiple Voices and Courage

In his 2020 *Vision Statement*, minister of culture Jan Jambon defended freedom of expression, including the risk '*that people can feel offended, institutes can be insulted and social conventions ridiculed*' (*Strategische Visienota Kunsten*, 2020). Looking back to crossroads thinking, some would venture to say that there is a difference between insulting someone who enjoys the privileges and benefits of a society as opposed to someone who has a more difficult time of it. To put it differently, if you need to kick someone, do not kick those who are already down.

In any case, having multiple voices requires courage, and it can go hand-in-hand with tension and reproach – or suggestions for adjustments that might be interpreted as reproach. When deep convictions are critically questioned, emotions can escalate and relationships between people can become strained.

# Being multivoiced requires courage and can go hand-in-hand with tension and reproach, but that does not mean we must avoid difficult conversations.

Indeed, this certainly does not mean that difficult conversations should be avoided – on the contrary. They can take place in the setting of a safe(r) space, where people set out from a certain shared understanding and frame of reference. Olave Nduwanje's *Better Practices for Safer Spaces* podcast is an example of this. Participants start out from a

shared basis and together develop a wealth of insights and opinions, sometimes disagreeing, but always generating enrichment.
One could also prefer a 'brave space', in which people have less of a shared frame of reference, or indeed none at all, but still engage in respectful, critical dialogue. One example of this is the conversation that Magali Elali organized with the participants in *POC POC Who's There?* and the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels.
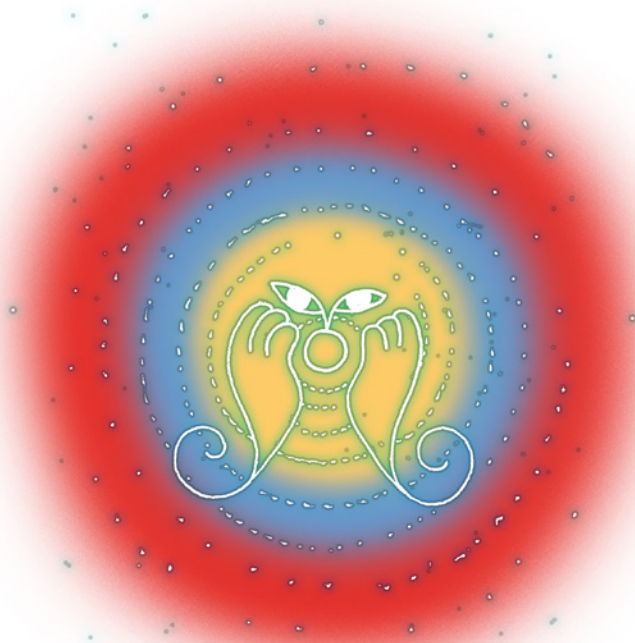
We round off this chapter on multiple voices with a number of concepts that can contribute to achieving that multivoiced body in the arts, but which require courage on the part of all those involved: calling out and calling in, fragility, and the power to recognize and de-mine it within yourself.

<br>

**4.1 CALL TO ORDER: CALLING OUT AND CALLING IN**

**A calling out is a public communication – on social media, in the news or at an event – in which critical attention is drawn to a person or organization about a statement, action or behaviour**. Most of the time, it is about things that seem to show little awareness about systemic exclusion or even suppression mechanisms, and their consequences.

We can think here of viral hashtags, such as #oscarssowhite or #timesup. Closer to home, we might think of a museum that speaks about the need for diversity while posting photographs of their all-white team (with the caption, 'the most beautiful team') and is critically reminded of that online. Or we can think of criticism of an important visual art prize whose finalists consist exclusively of white males, or an open letter in which dancers and former employees describe the unacceptable behaviour of an important choreographer.

It is obvious that there are enormous differences in the seriousness of cases that a calling out is referring to. But they do always aim towards achieving some kind of correction, using the public pillory as a kind of leverage. This is an approach that encounters a lot of resistance, but it can often achieve quick effects.

A calling out can be polarizing or even crippling. According to actor and activist Adrienne Maree Brown, it is only useful when attempts at discussion or reconciliation have

already failed, or when the alleged behaviour is so harmful that it must be stopped as quickly as possible. Power and hierarchy also play a role. If people do not have the authority to call someone or an organization to account, or they do not find a listening ear for their critical questions, calling them out publicly is sometimes the only option (Adrienne Maree Brown, 2020).

**Calling in** is a softer option and often more effective in the long term. Here, someone does not address you publicly, but rather individually, inviting you to talk. That may seem an obvious thing to do, but it's not. There may be a power differential – it is not easy to critically approach your superior – or people may be concerned about damaging a friendship or professional relationship, for example, because a comment about racism or sexism gives rise to fragility. (See below, and also Layla F. Saad, 2020).

Both calling out and calling in requires courage. But calling in aims more towards exchange, depth and opportunities for learning. Calling in looks beyond a possible mistake made by a single individual or organization, in order to seek more durable change, and asks, 'How can we change the organization's culture or group dynamics in which such an incident is possible, in order to prevent it being repeated in the future?'

In the past, Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute has been critically reminded about our language policy by performers who are based in Flanders but are not (yet) fluent in Dutch. Since then, we have been organizing information sessions in English, and wherever possible, we ensure the availability of translations. This was a calling in to us that has helped us do things better.

MATRIX Centre for New Music approached Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute for support for the publication of a book of interviews with Flemish composers. When it turned out that only two of those 47 compos-

ers were women, Kunstenpunt did not support the project, but as a calling in to them, we proposed a substantive addition to the project. We invited a musicologist to write an essay about women composers in Flanders and, together with MATRIX, offered this work as an appendix to the original publication. The author then independently added two interviews with women composers to the book.

Once again, we see here **how safety, inclusivity, accessibility and representation are all extensions of one another**. The fact that there are no women, or just cisgender men, nor people of colour, included in overviews and shortlists cannot directly be called unsafe. But the Caucasian patriarchal system of which that is a symptom is indeed all the more so.

### 4.2 'BUT I MEAN WELL!' FRAGILITY AND POWER

It is a deep human need to feel that you are a good person, someone who does not intentionally hurt others. In order to estimate what can be hurtful – insulting, (re)traumatizing, humiliating, transgressive or inappropriate – we tend to refer back to our own experiences. We know that something can be painful because we have already experienced it as such ourselves. In addition, we take what other people say to us in their own words, facial expressions or body language into account. We are social beings and **we mean well**.

The arts sector often speaks about its social awareness and its human and social values. Nonetheless, things do go wrong. We only need to think about transgressive behaviour, unfair practices and – we are part of a broader society – various forms of exclusion. **These problems do not go away of their own accord. They can and must be addressed**. They have to be put on the agenda and combatted, repeatedly. That takes time, and it brings tensions, but in time, it leads to change.

The same kind of tension is also present at the individual level, whenever you, as a person or ensemble or organization, are spoken to about having done something wrong, saying or doing something that another experiences as transgressive, racist, sexist or validist. Conversely, you yourself can feel that tension rising when you read, hear or see something that feels unfair or exaggerated to you. How about a quiet reflection or prayer room in your workspace, or rescheduling meetings so that (single) parents can be home on time? What about a text about the underrepresentation of women and people of colour, who are trans or binary, or people with disabilities in the higher echelons of organizations, and in the art canon?

These might in general be questions, comments or initiatives that do no particular harm to anyone. Yet they can sometimes be experienced as something to which people feel forced to submit. As our society changes, our perspectives, life experiences and frames of reference also become different. This goes hand in hand with greater sensitivity to the needs of groups that had previously not been taken into consideration. Or indeed, for some, their antennae become more sensitive to exclusion, aware of the annoyance of others who feel constrained by it.

What this means is that it is not always enough to take yourself or someone who looks like you as a reference. Changing your references here is called **decentring** yourself, in order to make space for the perspectives of others. You increase, as it were, your empathic potential. It helps you to get a more complete image and to avoid blank spots. It does require courage. You sometimes have to question deeply-rooted convictions, and even your own behaviour, or, as the times change, question the convictions of your entire generation. You sometimes have to discover painful insights about societal problems that you had previously been less or entirely not aware of.
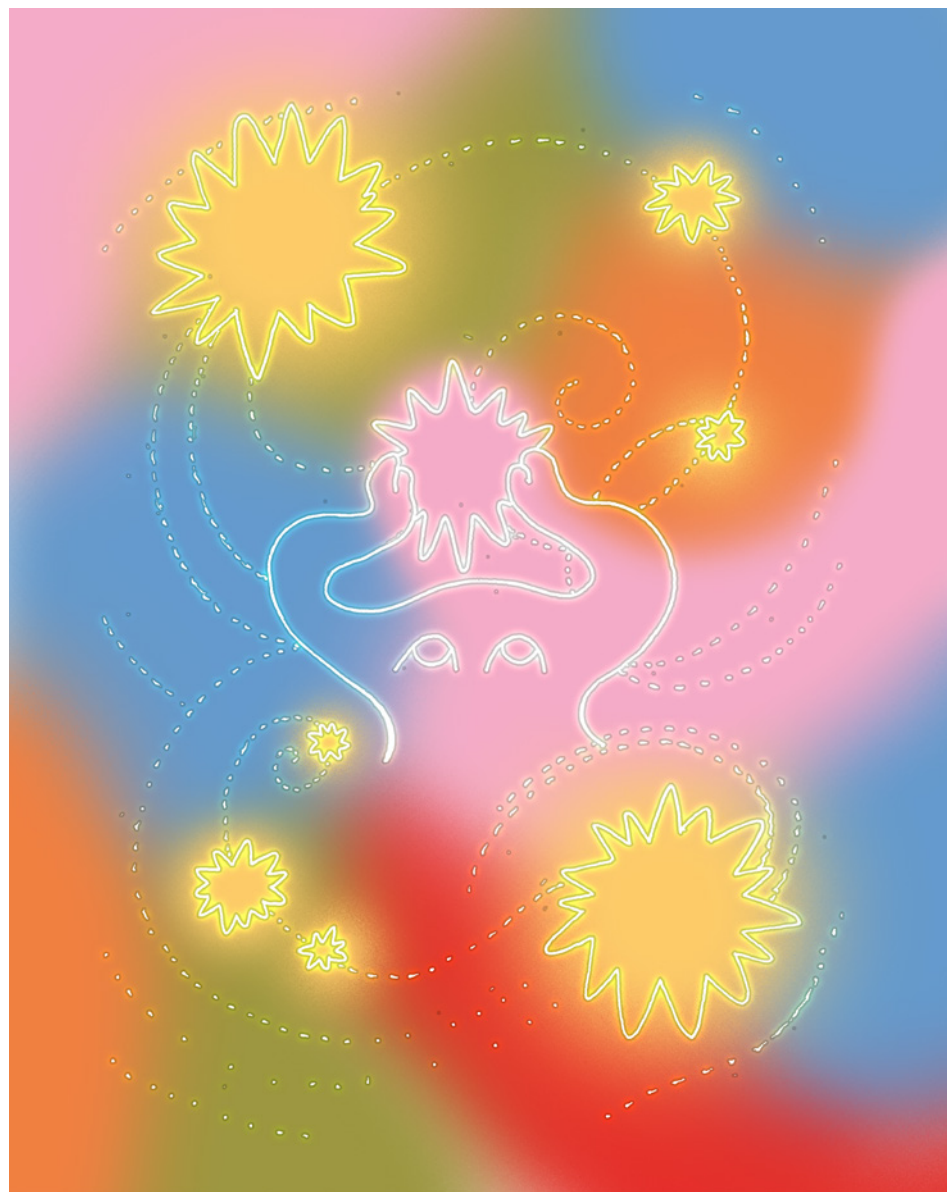
> This makes the option of putting the theme of safety on a back burner and moving on to the more comfortable order of the day very attractive, at least for people who have no direct interest in change, because they do not personally feel the need. But this would mean missing important opportunities to evolve, to change along with the spirit and the society of the time. For those who come into contact with a diversity of people in their professional lives, this can be problematic. They bear a responsibility for the well-being of their audiences, partners and employees.

One of the reactions that frequently arises involves **fragility**. Because someone feels under attack – sometimes justifiably, as in the case of being called out for something they did, but often imagined – they instinctively react defensively. They find the commentary 'exaggerated', 'badly informed', 'mistaken', 'misunderstood', or that 'nothing is allowed anymore', 'it is complicated'…. All of these responses are a distraction, away from the heart of the matter, achieving precisely the opposite of decentring. They accentuate your own (good) intentions, (indignant) feelings or (individual) opinions. White fragility and male fragility are already familiar, established terms (Robin DiAngelo, 2018; Raymond Buscemi, 2020), but the term can be better recognized and applied more broadly.

> In most cases, criticism is not as dramatic as it is initially perceived to be. Being spoken to or called out also implicitly implies that people trust you and have faith in you, that you can adapt. If that were not true, you would not be receiving this kind of commentary – unless, in more extreme cases, in the form of a calling out.

*If you have someone of colour who told you [that] you were racist, thank them. Because most of the time, when something racist happens, we don't say it. Because we are not invested in the person. If you take the time to say it, it is because you value them. (…) That is me saying I believe you can change and I want to do this with you.* Olave Nduwanje, 2021

Anyone who is alert to fragility can easily recognize it, in others and in themselves. We see it in our own initial reactions – even if these are just temporary. It can have an empowering effect to first stop and think, to be introspective, rather than just seeing the question itself. Is that question or comment really so exaggerated? How fair are we to reject it? Is it a theme that we have already been thinking about? Does it give us an opportunity to learn? Often, the answer to this last question is yes. Sometimes it just takes a bit of time before we realize it.

# Art, Crisis and Transition

## Conclusion

'Maybe this succession of radical shifts is not a crisis, but the new normal.
    If so, what do we need to adjust in our practices and how do we do that, in order to deal with that new normal?'

Milica Ilic, *A Fair New World?!* panel discussion #3, 24 May 2022, S.M.A.K., Ghent

During the third and last *A Fair New World?!* panel discussion, speakers described the new normal as a state of permanent crisis, not something to temporarily sit out, but something that we as a field must learn to relate to. This resonated with what artist Myriam Van Imschoot had already urged us to do during the first panel discussion: do not pretend that you can ever continue as before, but embrace crisis as a push towards change.

This insight broadened the scope of our research and development process. *A Fair New World?!* was launched in 2020, in response to the question of what would be 'different after corona', what is fairer, more sustainable, more <mark>inclusive</mark>, and what this should look like in the arts. Successive crises added a new layer: how do we apply the lessons of two years of exchange and experiment in such a way that we develop the cohesion and resilience we need to cope with new shocks in the future?

So this turned out to be less 'post-corona' and more 'new normal'. With this in mind, we here bring together the most important insights gained from two years of *A Fair New World?!* in a final summary of eight overarching insights.

# 1 *A Fair New World* is Built on Trust

From the work done by the *Common Income* project, selected for completion after our open call for *A Fair New Idea?! #1* (caring in the arts), we have practical examples, as well as new models for mutual solidarity. These are all based on a radical form of

trust, including trusting what people say they need, without regulations or restrictions that raise the threshold. These models require faith in the good intentions and commitment of those who participate.

> Trust comes more easily when people know each other, or indeed, know each other well. It grows out of real interest and patient understanding of someone else's point of view. We have learned that this is also what is required for a sustainable, multivoiced arts world. The ambition to represent multiple voices, which many recognized institutions say they want to achieve, cannot be realized until those voices are really listened to. We explain a number of tools to help achieve this in chapter 3.

Trust also means postponing judgment when you do not (yet) fully understand something, for example when people organize themselves in meetings where you are not welcome, or when someone says they can't keep an appointment because they are not physically or mentally up to it.

> This same significance of trust achieved through deep interest in one another can be seen reflected in the work for *A Fair New Idea?! #2* (sustainable and International in the Arts), and #3 (working Digitally in the Arts), with *A Feminist Server*. Facilitated by online developments, new kinds of international communities are being formed. They seek equality in an international system that is currently set up for just the opposite. They spend time and energy on understanding each other's contexts and perspectives, on exchanging knowledge, and on mutual support. It gives rise to richer, more multivoiced insights and greater togetherness.

## 2 *A Fair New World* is Steeped in Caring

'Care' was the first of the terms we chose to work with, and a factor that underpinned *A Fair New World?!*. A caring context means that account is taken of people's individual needs: What do you need to feel welcome and comfortable here? How are you doing financially this month? How are you physically, mentally, or in terms of your energy levels?

> We think back to something Miriam Van Imschoot said during the initial panel discussion for *A Fair New World?!*: during the pandemic, it was sometimes even more important for an artist to be asked by an organization whether everything was still okay, than whether they even managed to finish their performance.

The idea that An Vandermeulen of Globe Aroma had for a database listing physical spaces that could be available for people looking for a roof over their heads also belongs in this category. So too does the insight that giving and sharing can involve more

than just money, an idea that *Triangle of Support* will be putting to the text in 2023 (see chapter 1). People sometimes simply need a bit of company or a helping hand.

> Caring also means actively resisting stereotyping. We have to unlearn a great many presumptions about work created by people of colour, people with a handicap and/or a neurodivergence, to mention just three possible axes of identity.

From the crip movement, we learn that caring can have a far deeper impact than a mostly anecdotal 'provision for the individual needs of people'. If we can make it an instinctive reflex to permanently refine ourselves, it can lead to an increasingly caring context for everyone, and thus systemic improvement in the long term.

# 3   In *A Fair New World* Delay is Not a Dirty Word

The tempo at which people in the arts are working today is very high. For many, it is too high, if we are to believe the results of research conducted by the Sociaal Fonds Podiumkunsten ('SENSOR Report', 2022). We have been struggling with this problem for a while. Artists are not cut-out paper dolls that can be shifted around and hung up just anywhere, as we are reminded by artist Sarah Vanhee, and by the hypermobility phenomenon. This high speed is one of the obstacles standing in the way of being able to work with care and trust. If you have no time or energy in reserve, then you cannot generate interest in what or whom you do not yet know.

> Composer Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman calls time one of the most important things that is missing in our sector. Doing field research in the strongly divergent contexts

of Rwanda and Tanzania, for example, demands more than just a couple of weeks: you have just arrived in one place when you already have to leave again. She prefers to stay longer in one place, or to make several visits.

There was also a plea for slowing down on the parts of residencies, made by artist and playwright Yasen Vasilev. He recommends longer periods of repeated collaboration for artists, instead of constantly introducing new names (chapter 2).

# 4    *A Fair New World*
Requires Courage

Working towards *A Fair New World* is not for the fainthearted. Activists in our field have known that for a long time. Seen from an intersectional perspective, people who do not belong to the cultural norm know that best of all. They are the ones who bear the brunt of systemic exclusion on an everyday basis. They are also the ones who are most often asked what it is that we could do differently, and how.

Compared to their situation, it is not so bad to be held accountable for your privileges, your possibly mistaken ideas or beliefs, or your possible problematic behaviour. Do not be discouraged by a critical remark or by being called out for something you did. Hearing a different perspective is also a learning opportunity. Brave spaces are designed for this kind of conversation. People contribute with different opinions, different references, or even different value frameworks and life experiences. They know

these conversations can become tense. *Cripping the Space* and *POC Who's There?*, selected as the results of our call for *A Fair New Idea?! #4* (multiple voices in the arts), both organized discussions of this kind in order to be able to identify specific factors relevant to white-dominated art education and to people in various artist organizations.
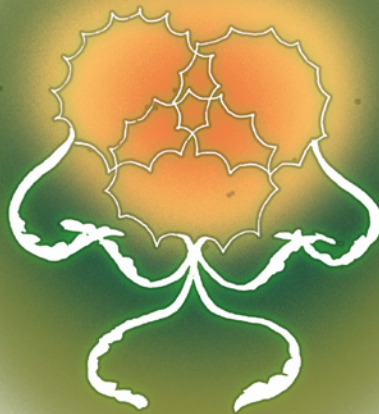
# 5    In *A Fair New World*, No Wall Separates Art and the World

Those who want to work on cohesion and resilience must be able to work outside the limits of the arts sector. We clearly saw this in the new models for giving and sharing, in which artists form alliances with other groups in society. These are not new, as we see when we delve into systems for collective savings and interest-free borrowing from diaspora communities and in the global South. The more interest you have in what you do not yet know, the more it inspires.

We also see this in chapter 2, where it is argued that we must think outside familiar Western frameworks and be open to other voices. This requires interest in the different histories and contexts in which art is created. For example, do not organize another 'exhibition by Ukrainian artists', unless you also include nuanced information about the Ukrainian art scene and its political history.

We have a great deal to learn from people with different experiences. Consider the appeal of the speakers in our last *A Fair New Idea?!* conversation, on behalf of organizing the meeting and exchange of knowledge between people working in our sector and refugee arts professionals, in order to learn from their experiences with crisis and indeed, and from their resilience.

Art is social, and it is often deeply political. Some speakers at our last *A Fair New World?!* panel discussion agreed. To the question of whether it is the task of the arts to engage with social problems, An Vandermeulen (Globe Aroma) said the following:

*'[Contributing to social work] strikes me as a job for the arts, because it is not just education that needs to concern itself with empty bread boxes, not just the social services sector that needs to*

*ensure the well-being of people, and it is not just the arts as a field that works with art. (…) I think that at a given moment, we have to come out of our self-reflection, because that self-reflection is crippling us. It is preventing us from doing things in solidarity.'*

# 6 Deliciously Clear in *A Fair New World*

In *A Fair New World*, people should not have to read between the lines … except perhaps when they are engaging with art. Everything else should be wonderfully clear, explicit and concrete. There should be concrete information about how a location fights racism, validism, sexism and other forms of exclusion. Concrete information should exist about how it ensures accessibility to questions, feedback or complaints, and what is done with them.

There should be information about possible extra costs that people may have when participating in a residency. There should be clear agreements about what we understand to be a fair division of resources, maybe even information about topics, images or sounds that can be trigger factors that can upset people. We should try to ensure that everyone can understand what is being written, said or intended, and ensure that the choices of language, translation and interpreting are consistent with this.

# 7 In *A Fair New World*, Digital Technology is a Silent Friend, or Not Quite

Digital technology proved to be a supportive friend in *A Fair New World?!*. *SOS RELIEF*, a platform established for the financial support of people in need during the pandemic, could not have existed without digital technology (chapter 1).

Artist Jivan van der Ende made use of You-Tube to help combat the social and artistic isolation of her peers during the crisis. Online technology, including video conferencing and applications for sharing information, turned out to have a facilitating effect for international communities to which people had previously not had access due to limited finances or visa-related difficulties (chapter 2).

But digital technology can also be a silent enemy. Enough Room for Space and Picha use online applications in order to stay in touch, as well as to criticize the origins of the hardware (chapter 2). Other people resolutely prefer technology that they can develop and control themselves, with an eye to the safety and the privacy of those they are serving. Considerations of this kind were well informed and consciously made in *A Fair New World?!*.

Working digitally in the arts was the theme of the third call for proposals for *A Fair New World?!*. The applications proved to be surprisingly committed and intersectional. *A Feminist Server*, the collective that was selected, focusses on queer and trans people who identify as women, who work with the arts and/or activism, and who, in a safe, international context, want to exchange information about technology (chapter 3). By safe, we here refer to a space that is protected from non-transparent algorithms, from online hate or trolling, and by extension, from the male toxicity that is sometimes found in technology circles.

# 8 *A Fair New World* dares to aim higher

Those who assume that we face an unpredictable new normal are at peace with the fact that working toward *A Fair New World?!* is never finished. A caring attitude, interest in other points of view, sustainable, multiple voices, weighing choices in terms of digital tools and international mobility, building, exchanging and refining knowledge: these are all processes and attitudes, rather than individual projects with a beginning and an end.

As a specific research and development trajectory, we here take our leave of this look at *A Fair New World?!*. Needless to say, our intentions of continuing to build on it are ongoing. We hope that the knowledge and ideas that have been brought together here are able to help contribute to that end.

# *A Fair New Idea?!*

New Ideas for
a Fairer, more Sustainable
and more Inclusive Arts Field

In 2020, Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute launched *A Fair New World?!*, a research and development trajectory to investigate and support building blocks towards achieving a fairer, more sustainable and more inclusive arts sector in Flanders.

At Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute, research and development always happens in close collaboration with the arts sector. For this reason, under the title *A Fair New Idea?!*, we put out four open calls for ideas and proposals to be further developed, which can contribute to a strong, fair and sustainable arts sector. Different juries, all comprised of people in the arts, were selected to determine the themes, decide how they should be formulated and establish the procedures to be followed in supporting them.

# *A Fair New Idea?!* includes the following four themes:

**Call #1:**
**Caring**
**in the Arts**

**Call #3:**
**Working Digitally**
**in the Arts**

**Call #2:**
**Sustainable and International**
**in the Arts**

**Call #4:**
**Multiple Voices**
**in the Arts**

Each of the proposals finally selected received 12,000 euros for further development. From the entries for the first and third calls, a single proposal was selected for each. From among the candidates who submitted proposals for the second call, an international group of participants was set up. From there, three final trajectories evolved. For our fourth call, three proposals were selected, each of which also received 12,000 euros in support.

In order for *A Fair New Idea?!* to be free of any sense of competition, candidates were able to submit their proposals on a digital platform. The ideas were immediately visible to anyone who was interested. Applicants were also able to contact one another.

See all info about and results of the selected projects at kunsten.be.

# *A Fair New Idea?! #1*: Caring in the Arts

**Jury:**
**Helga Baert, Dries Douibi, Philippine Hoegen, Tine Holvoet, Maryam Kamal Hedayat, Kobe Van Cauwenberghe**

Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute had initially proposed the theme of 'The Artist As Centre'. At the jury's suggestion, we expanded this into a broader idea, incorporating the idea of caring. In the first round, the jury members selected seven proposals, whose ideas would be further worked out in exchange for a fee of €400 and two hours of support from a Kunstenpunt staff member. From among those more developed projects, a final proposal was selected: *Common Income*.

**Common Income** is a research project by artists and cultural workers concerning sharing incomes in precarious times. It consisted of three parts:
· Assembling information about inspiring practices in Belgium and other countries (see the results on the Kunstenpunt website),
· A series of group discussions about the taboos concerning money, entitled *Money Moments*, to gain deeper insight into the situations and circumstances of artists and art workers in Flanders, and),
· Three pilot projects that will be tested in 2023.

These three pilot projects are:

**01. Lotto Lokal/Triangle of Support** Over the course of a year, residents in a single street in Brussels are asked to contribute a monthly sum into a street fund, according to a pay-what-you-can or pay-what-you-want system. Half of the collected amount will be distributed by lottery among the residents during an

open, live lottery evening. The other half will be set aside and saved, to be used annually for a local initiative selected by the residents. The conversations that take place at the participants' front doors generate the – sometimes difficult – discussion about money and assets. In addition, and as an extension of *Lotto Lokal*, there is also the *Triangle of Support* project, promoting exchange between residents who make their incomes, time and/ or skills available to others who also want to share or exchange.

> **02. Toolbox for Asymmetrical Pay** stimulates an open conversation about how a budget can be divided among different parties involved in the project. In addition to official pay scales and the principle of equal pay, other parameters are also discussed, including specific individual needs or advantages. The resulting unequal income can compensate for structural inequalities.

**03. Reaching out to the Rich** is interested in the perspectives of people with greater financial surplus. What would their motivation, conditions and needs be in order to share their income with others?

> The ideas about *Common Income* were shared with larger audiences during two workshops at the *Culture Talks Commons* conference held by the Flemish Community's Department of Culture, Youth and Media, or CJM, together with the University of Antwerp.

*Common Income* evolved as the brain child of Leontien Allemeersch, Thomas Decreus, Wouter Hillaert, Justine Maxelon and Anna Rispoli, subsequently reinforced by Roger Fähndrich, Kopano Maroga, Laura Oriol, Sandra Sara Raes Oklobdzija, Elien Ronse, Leonore Spee, Camille Soual and Nele Vereecken, with additional input from Lou Mechraoui, Martina Petrovic, Katrien Reist and Joan Somers Donnelly. In addition to support in the framework of *A Fair New Idea?!*, the project is also supported by State of The Arts.

# *A Fair New Idea?! #2*: Sustainable and International in the Arts

**Jury:**
**Sachli Gholamalizad, Antony Hudek,**
**Aurélie Nyirabikali Lierman, Charlotte Vandevyver,**
**Elli Vassalou, Mathilde Villeneuve**

From the start, the jury focused considerable attention to the mechanisms of privilege and exclusion that are associated with or inherent to working at the international level. They suggested that the call for proposals should also be international, in order to enrich the Flemish perspective. The call was then widely circulated through various international channels, in Dutch and in English, French and Arabic.

The jury was also critical of the initially proposed selection procedure, which they saw as a kind of elimination race. Instead, they suggested seeking participants who wanted to work together in an international working group. Candidates submitted statements of motivation and the jury then assembled a group of artists, cultural workers and collectives who seemed complementary in terms of interests, expertise and living or working space.

Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute invited researcher and cultural manager Rana Yazaji to serve as a facilitator for this working group. Indeed, each of the group's members set out from the perspective of their own histories, beliefs and practices. They did not yet know each other and had to look together to find a common basis and select one or more specific, relevant questions. In addition, with the exception of the final meeting, all the meetings took place digitally, due to travel restrictions.

It was a complex process, which Rana Yazaji describes in her essay, 'An Acknowledge-

ment of Complexity (Complexiteit erkennen)'. She summarizes that complexity as follows: '*How can open-ended processes be carefully designed to thoroughly explore the transformation processes of the system within which and with which we work? And how can we navigate through uncertainty and endorse a certain level of not exactly knowing where we are going in a process that is often dealing with new encounters, geographic distance, and different models of functioning and working conditions?*'

After a number of exploratory meetings, the participants decided to form **three groups, each focused on a specific sub-theme**.

*01.* Artist Benjamin Verdonck, Kris Nelson of LIFT (London International Festival of Theatre), various participants from ART HAPPENS, and curator Castillo began discussions about **sustainability in their practices**. What do they understand that to be, how do they work towards achieving it, and how do they incorporate privileges, or the lack thereof, in their reasoning? Eva Peeters wrote an essay about the various steps to this end that LIFT, ART HAPPENS and Benjamin Verdonck took during 2021 and 2022. Castillo eventually decided to retract himself from the group, because he wanted to examine sustainability from a different, more specific perspective: a queer, anti-capitalistic and political standpoint, aware of postcolonial imbalances. He wrote an essay on this, entitled *How Do We Quit?*.

*02.* The working group also included the two collectives, Cross Commons Curatorial Collective and Beyond the Now. They tested the possibilities and challenges involved with international collaborations during a live session on 'Thinking, Writing and Sharing'. Among other things, their themes included the politics of **translation and language, the power dynamics** of

organizations, transgressing **organizational boundaries**, and the impact of **transnational connections** on the working environment. The film, *Two Collectives In Conversation*, is the result.

> ***03.*** As well as sharing their experiences and good practices, under the title *A Letter For Transnational* Fair Practice, Pieternel Vermoortel, Anna Manubens and Yasen Vasilev made an appeal to the international art community to **vigorously combat inequalities of cultural, political or financial nature in their international collaborations**.

Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute invited independent arts manager and author Jumana Al-Yasiri to conduct discussions with five arts professionals and makers from different, non-Western contexts. They are Yasen Vasilev (Bulgaria), Nike Jonah (United Kingdom, African diaspora), Arundhati Ghosh (India), Mohamed Abusal (Gaza) and Golrokh Nafisi (Iran). The result is a five-part series of podcasts.

> The participants in the *Fair New Idea?! #2* working group are:

Beth Thyrion, Sarah De Ganck and Lynn Marcoen (ART HAPPENS); Benjamin Verdonck and Leen Hammenecker (artist); Kris Nelson (LIFT); Castillo (curator); Yasen Vasilev (artist); Pieternel Vermoortel (Netwerk Aalst, Steirischer Herbst) and Anna Manubens (Hangar); Abhishek Thapar (artist); artists and curators Alexia Alexandropoulou, Sara Mari Blom, Samira Bouabana, Kenza Jemmali, Elham Khattab, Daniela Nofal of the *Cross Commons Curatorial Collective*; and researchers and curators Khaled Barakeh, Kim Charnley, Stephen Felmingham, Ailbhe Murphy and Áine O'Brien of the *Beyond the Now collective*.

# *A Fair New Idea?! #3*: Working Digitally in the Arts

**Jury:**
**Miriyam Aouragh, Cristina Cochior, Tim De Paepe,**
**Jara Rocha, Kristien Van den Brande**

The Kunstenpunt jury sought entries that wanted to tackle the issue of working digitally in the arts in a more sustainable, transparent and solidary way. They asked petitioners to pay attention to societal issues, such as digital literacy, the environmental, social and political implications of using digital technology, and/or codes of conduct for a fair digital world.

The submission process was in two steps. With a first, simple application, candidates could explain their interest in the theme and indicate what they wanted to focus on. From among that first group, the jury chose 16 entries to then prepare a more extensive proposal. For this, they each received a fee of €400. Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute screened the applications for shared interests and affinities, and shared their findings with the candidates, so that those who wanted to work together could do so. Ultimately, a single entry was selected: *A Feminist Server*, which among other things, has been offering online residencies to several of the other initial initiatives.

Between September 2021 and the end of 2022, *A Feminist Server* organized a series of workshops about installing and using digital tools, took part in a panel discussion about privacy in an online context, set up residencies related to accessibility and streaming (more specifically combining coded video and streamed sign language interpreters) and gave (limited) visibility to a censure-sensitive film about post-porn.

A consistent factor throughout all of these activities is that *A Feminist Server* does not see the use of digital infrastructure as a service that you just buy into. Selecting, managing and using any digital infrastructure is an integral part of the endeavour and practice. As a consequence, awareness of the possibilities, as well as of the risks and limitations of digital tools, can be improved. *A Feminist Server* invests strongly in the sharing of knowledge, in order to create trust, but not a dependent relationship. The key word here is emancipation.

The collective behind *A Feminist Server* is a loose, yet fixed connection among many. During this trajectory, a number of people or groups took on more visible roles. They include Mara Karayanni, ooooo (bolwerK), Vo Ezn (Lever Burns), Nate Wessalowski (researcher at Leuphana University in Lüneburg), Mallory Knodel (Chief Technology Officer at the Center for Democracy and Technology), Andrea Zappa (web developer, freelancer), Maddalena Falzoni (MaadiX ISP), Anaïs Berck (artist), Systerserver.net, Anarchaserver.org, Vedetas.org, Futuretic.fr and Autistici.org.

The residencies were filled by MELT (Ren Loren Britton & Isabel Paehr) and Golubjevaite. The conference was entitles *TransHackFeminist 2022*. The panel discussion took place during PrivacyCamp 2022, hosted by Vrije Universiteit in Brussels. The censure-sensitive film was by the Berlin Broken House collective. Workshops physically took place at Varia in Rotterdam and during the *Feminist Hack Meetings*, in Athens, or online during the Computer Chaos Congress and other feminist servers.

# *A Fair New Idea?! #4*:
# Multiple Voices
# in the Arts

**Jury:**
**Robin Brettar, Mira Bryssinck, Hans Dewitte, Zahra Eljadid, Malique Fye, Melih Gençboyacı, Herlinde Raeman**

For this fourth call for proposals, the jury was aiming to find those voices that challenge the norm within the arts. Proposals with potential sustainable impact had an advantage. The call was distributed in Dutch, English, French and Arabic. Those who preferred not to express themselves in written language could submit their proposals by audio or video recording. In a preliminary round, the jury first selected six applicants, who further developed their ideas for a fee of €400 each.

To call attention to various intersectional issues, the jury ultimately selected not one, but three proposals. Each of these received €12,000. These projects are *Cripping The Space*, by Marijn Prakke, *Open Vizier*, by Silence Radio, and Magali Elali's *POC POC Who's There?*.

**(1) Cripping the space: How to have a conversation about disability and exclusion in the performing arts**

With *Cripping the Space*, Marijn Prakke investigates **how the conversation about neuro- diversity, handicap and exclusion in the performing arts** should progress. His initiative quickly found resonance in the crip community. The working group for *Cripping the Space* included Marijn Prakke, Mira Bryssinck, Josefien Cornette, Fien Criel, Anna Püschel and Joyce Vuylsteke. Mira Bryssinck had also been a Kunstenpunt jury member for *A Fair New Idea?! #2*, but had at that point no vested interest or part in Marijn Prakke's ideas.

Surrounding this basic working group, a broader network grew up to include about 50 people, who were also invited to open monthly meetings. All of the information that came out of these meetings was digitally conserved, with the intention it later being worked into a series of podcasts.

The rhythm and dynamics of the process were dictated by the physical and mental health of the members of the core group. Flexibility and adaptability are key skills. By working with a wider crip community, tasks or roles can be taken over from each other in solidarity when needed. It is often a balancing act between the need for safe(r) spaces in which the crip community engages in shared dialogue with each other and safe(r) or brave spaces with external, interested people and possible allies.

## (2) Open Vizier/Open Mind: Nothing About Us Without Us

*Open Vizier* is an initiative of the Silence Radio art collective, which has set itself up in a development site in Villa De Vis, in Asse, Belgium, for **research and artistic creation between the hearing and the deaf world**.

With this pilot project, Silence Radio wanted to facilitate the discourse between a multivoiced test audience and organizations that want to work more inclusively. After an initial exploratory conversation, Silence Radio put together a pool of five artists (deaf, hearing, non-native speakers, with physical disabilities and from different generations) to visit artistic activities together and afterwards discuss accessibility with the makers and/or organizers. The five artists give suggestions for improvement, based on their lived experiences and expertise. All the feedback is collected in a digital toolbox that includes concrete suggestions and tips on inclusivity relevant to the entire arts field.

In May and August 2022, an open call was launched for organizations to subscribe to the proposition. Despite a clear sense of urgency and broad interest, almost all the interested parties soon found themselves impeded by the amount of time needed to take part in the project.

> Was this just bad timing in a busy year of grant deadlines, too noncommittal, or was there a financial threshold? Or was there more to it? Dahlia Pessemiers and Max Greyson of Silence Radio concluded that there is work still to be done on raising awareness in the arts sector. There is indeed an awareness that something has to be done, but shortage of time and resources means that concrete action is still not forthcoming.

Silence Radio will continue its dialogue with interested parties. They are currently developing an installation in which the audience can experience what it means when one or more of your senses fails. In this way, they want to make people more aware of their own (privileged) position as a person without a disability, and to make a case for a more inclusive approach to artistic creation and programming.

> Silence Radio is made up of Sandra Delgadillo, Elena Evstratova, Max Greyson, Sibren Hanssens, Lieve Peeters, Dahlia Pessemiers, Tomas Pevenage and Serge Vlerick. The *Open Vizier* project was drawn up by Dahlia Pessemiers and Max Greyson.

## (3) POC POC who's there?

*POC POC Who's There?* is a **coaching programme, network and experimental platform for young makers of colour**, conceived by Magali Elali.

> Following an open call for proposals, a group of young visual artists was selected to receive both individual and joint guidance over the course of a year, towards shaping their careers in the arts. Curators from established art organizations speak with them about their work, ambi-

tions, networks and more. In this way, they can develop or sharpen their skills to find their own way in the sector, as well as broadening their network.

The participating visual artists for the first edition of *POC POC Who's There?* are Sadrie Alves, Gladys Bukolo, Lou Cocody-Valentino, Marie Diaby, Maria E André, Awa Gaye, Gaëlle Mwamba, Subin Son, Rose-Myrtha Vercammen en Noam Youngrak Son. They receive guidance from curators from established institutions in Flanders and beyond: Sofia Dati, Helena Kritis, Marie Gomis-Trezise and Karen Van Godtsenhoven.

The programme for the first edition consisted of one-to-one coaching sessions, site visits, workshops, public presentations and community-forming sessions over the course of a year. In May of 2022, Frenchman Ndayé Kouagou was invited to Antwerp to take part in a conversation about his experiences in working internationally as an artist of colour. As part of the community-forming sessions, difficult conversations were also engaged with the established institutions. In December of 2022, under the title, *School of Equals*, a discussion was held with the participants of *POC POC Who's There?* and students and faculty at the LUCA School of Arts in Brussels. The failure of policies of inclusion in higher art education was addressed, and together, the participants sought solutions.

*POC POC Who's There?* presented itself for the first time as an artistic community in October 2022, with the group exhibition, Freetown. The title refers to this new community of artists and is about seeking affinity and connection between cultures, individuals and artistic practices.

In January 2023, a new call was launched for a second edition, which will be led by Hélène Dumenil (Ballon Rouge), Magali Elali (The Constant Now), Sorana Munsya (independent curator), Joachim Naudts (Extra City) and Danielle van Zuijlen (Kunsthal Ghent).

# Bibliography

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Sarah Ahmed**, 2018.
Queer use. Feminist Killjoys.

**Diana Ali**, 2017.
Safe Spaces and Brave
Spaces. Historical Context
and Recommendations for
Student Affairs Professionals.
In: NASPA Policy and
practice series.

**Meg-John Barker**, 2014.
Trigger warning: Trigger
warnings (towards a different
approach).

**Meg-John Barker**, 2018.
Rewriting the Rules.
An Anti Self-Help Guide to
Love, Sex and Relationships.

**Beursschouwburg**,
oktober 2020. 'The artist is
not present. This is not new.'

**Mira Bryssinck**, 2022.
State of the Youth
Theaterfestival 2022.

**Raymond Buscemi**, 2020.
Shifting the Conversation:
From Toxic Masculinity to
Male Fragility.

**Josefien Cornette**, 2021.
NON/Ableism.

**Josefien Cornette**, 2023.
Validisme in de
onderwijsfabriek. In: Fair
Arts Almanac 2023.

**Kimberlé Crenshaw**, 2017.
On Intersectionality:
The Essential Writings of
Kimberlé Crenshaw.

**Yannick Dangre**, oktober
2022. Josse De Pauw, een
speelvogel van zeventig.
In: Zout magazine.

**Charlotte De Somviele**, 2020.
'Autonomie is nooit een doel
op zich' Het Decoratelier
van Jozef Wouters als
kunstencentrum van de
toekomst. In: Etcetera #162.

**Charlotte De Somviele
en Dries Douibi**, 2022.
'Waarom vergeten we zo vaak
dat kunst een onderdeel is van
welzijn?' In: Etcetera #186.

**Demos**, juni 2020.
Toegankelijke cultuur voor
mensen met een handicap.

**Robin DiAngelo**, 2018.
White Fragility.

**Nancy Doyle**, 2021. Neurodiversity Is Not A Pollyanna Concept: Judy Singer Says Get Realistic. In: Forbes.

**Ella vzw**, 2014. Intersectioneel Denken. Handleiding voor professionelen die intersectionaliteit of kruispuntdenken in de eigen organisatie willen toepassen.

**Adalbert Evers en Jean-Louis Laville**, 2004. Defining the third sector in Europe. In: The Third Sector In Europe.

**Jan Ferwerda, Mart Willekens, Jessy Siongers, Matilde Willemyns, John Lievens**, 2021. Loont passie? Meting 2.

**Lázaro Gabino Rodríguez**, 10 maart 2021. Open Letter to Jérôme Bel. In: Etcetera #162.

**Pascal Gielen, Sophie Elkhuizen, Quirijn van den Hoogen, Thijs Lijster, Hanka Otte**, 2014. De Waarde van Cultuur.

**Aimi Hamraie**, 2017. Building Access: Universal Design and the Politics of Disability.

**Christina B.Hanhardt**, 2013. Safe Space. Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence.

**Kristien Hens en Leni Van Goidsenhoven**, 2022. Developmental diversity: Putting the development back into research about developmental conditions. In: Frontiers in Psychiatry #13.

**Tine Hens**, 23 augustus 2022. Muzikante Sofie Vanden Eynde: 'Ik heb het idee van leegte, van braakliggende grond nodig' In: Knack.

**Wouter Hillaert**, 2018. Dialoog na Leopold II. In: Etcetera #153.

**Wouter Hillaert**, 15 april 2020. Tussen de mazen van het vangnet. In: rekto:verso online.

**Wouter Hillaert**, 2022. Van kampkunst naar zaalzorg. In: rekto:verso #97.

**Jan Jambon**, 2020.
Strategische Visienota
Kunsten.

**Fiona Kumari Campbell**, 2009.
Contours of Ableism. The
Production of Disability and
Abledness.

**Grace Lee Boggs**, 1974.
Revolution and Evolution in
the Twentieth Century.

**Madonna Lenaert**, 2023.
Consent. In: Fair Arts
Almanac 2023.

**Helma Lutz**, 2002.
Zonder blikken of blozen.
Het standpunt van de (nieuw-)
realisten. In: Tijdschrift voor
Genderstudies #3.

**adrienne maree brown**,
2020. We Will Not Cancel
Us. And Other Dreams of
Transformative Justice.

**Franklin Miller en Alan
Wertheimer**, 2009.
The Ethics of Consent.

**Peggy McIntosh**, juli/augustus
1989.
White Privilege: Unpacking
the Invisible Knapsack. In:
Peace and Freedom.

**Olave Nduwanje
(in gesprek met
Sirah Foighel Brutmann,
Jacopo Buccini,
Jenebah Kamara,
Aïda Yancy, Claire Gilder
en Marnie Slater)**, 2021.
Podcast: Better Practices for
Safe(r) Spaces.

**oKo**, 2019.
Investeren in kunst is
investeren in ons allemaal.

**OpenDoek**, 2021.
Het waarom van de relaxed
performance. Theater voor
iedereen met en zonder
functiebeperking.
In: OpenDoek Magazine #3.

**Pearle\***, 2020.
The Ultimate Cookbook for
Cultural Managers - Visa
for Third Country National
Artists travelling to the
Schengen Area.

**Shannon Reeler**, 2022.
Revealed: These Schengen
Countries Have The Highest
Visa Rejection Rates

**ruangrupa**, 7 mei 2022.
Anti-Semitism Accusations
against documenta: A Scandal
about a Rumor. In: e-flux.

**ruangrupa,** 27 juli 2022. Censorship Must Be Refused: Letter from lumbung community In: e-flux Notes.

**Layla F. Saad,** 2020. Witte suprematie & ik.

**Ellen Samuels,** 2014. Fantasies of Identification. Disability, Gender, Race. In: Cultural Front.

**Judy Singer,** 1999. Why can't you be normal for once in your life? From a 'Problem with No Name' to a new category of disability. In: Disability Discourse.

**Judy Singer,** 2017. NeuroDiversity: The Birth of an Idea.

**Sociaal Fonds Podiumkunsten,** 2022. Resultaten bevraging werkbeleving 2022 (SENSOR).

**Roslyn Sulcas,** 23 september 2019. When the Choreographer Won't Fly, the Dancers Rehearse by Skype. In: New York Times.

**Angela Tillieu Olodo, Hajar Ibnouthen, Hari Prasad Adhikari Sacré en Samra Hmoud,** 2018. Macht herverdelen.

**Leni Van Goidsenhoven en Anaïs Van Ertveld,** 2021. Interview: hoe handicap het kunstenveld kan oprekken. In: rekto:verso #91.

**Leni Van Goidsenhoven en Gert-Jan Vanaken,** 2021. CRIP. Over de aantrekkelijkheid van kreupele lichamen. In: rekto:verso #91.

**Leni Van Goidsenhoven, Anaïs Van Ertvelde, Nadia Hadad en Josefien Cornette,** 2021. Niets over ons zonder ons. In: rekto:verso #91.

**Aïda Yancy (Equalcity, Rainbow House, Brussels Capital Region),** 2021. LGBTQI+ TOOLBOX.

**Kunstenpunt**

Kunstenpocket #2 |
(Re)framing the international.
December 2018.

Kunstenpocket #3 | D.I.T.
(Do It Together). Maart 2019.

Landschapstekening Kunsten.
September 2019.

Hoe krijgen we
landschapsversterking in
werking? September 2021.

Bestemming: complexloos
meerstemmig. April 2020.

Interculturaliseren: een
integrale, transversale en
structurele aanpak. December
2020.

Dossier *A Fair New World?!*
2020-2022.

Re/set: het beste maken van
lockdown en relance. 2020-
2021.

Kunsten na corona. Oktober
2021.

# Glossary

Words matter. They evolve, fall into disuse or are altered in response to social development. They can confirm or question a norm, or set it in motion. Words are not only important in the pragmatic sense – we need to understand each other – but they also carry symbolic and social weight.

If you do not understand a term, then you are shut out of a conversation. If you do not adapt the way you use words, you might hurt people more than you realize. Words represent power structures. They can be banned or dismissed as new-fangled or exaggerated. At the same time, they are powerful instruments in imagining and representing the future, certainly in *A Fair New World*.

These terms can also be found in the glossary at kunsten.be

In this glossary of terms, we explain, as clearly as we can, new or less commonly used words that appear in this publication. We describe how they are used in this context, referring to sources with the relevant expertise. If you have any feedback for us about these or any other terms, please let us know.

Relevant to this publication are also the glossaries published by Çavaria, Transgender Infopunt and Gelijke Kansen (Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur), as well as language tips available at Taaladvies.net, Unia and Waarden voor een nieuwe taal (Code Diversiteit en Inclusie).

We here include references to other glossaries and language tips in our online *Fair New World?!* files. Again, we always appreciate your letting us know what tips about words and terms you think might be useful, or that are missing here. You can contact us at *advies@kunsten.be*.

**Ableism, (in Dutch: ableïsme)**
*> see: validism (in Dutch: validisme)*

**Alliance, allies**
**(in Dutch: bondgenootschap, bondgenoten)**
As it is used here, an alliance includes individuals from non-marginalized groups who are committed to the struggles of marginalized groups. For example, men who fight against sexism toward women are seen as allies, as are heterosexuals fighting queer-phobia, and so on.
We speak of an 'optical alliance' if a person or organization creates the illusion of being an ally, but only does so to keep up appearances – without having to do the work.
*Sources: Cargo Confetti, Labo vzw, MO\* Magazine*

**Brave space**
*> see: safe(r) space, brave space*

**Broodfonds**
The Broodfonds ('bread fund') is a collective provision for incapacity for work, developed by and for entrepreneurs. A group of entrepreneurs (usually 20 or more) who know and trust each other set aside a monthly amount. Those who are ill for extended periods of time receive income to live on from the fund. People can receive these funds for up to two consecutive years.
*Source: broodfonds.nl*

### Calling out, calling in

Calling someone or an organization out about something is calling them to account, a bit of a reprimand. Today, it means doing this by way of a public communication – on social media or in the news media, or even at an event. Here, a person or organization is critically spoken to about something they said, a behaviour or something they did. It usually is about things that people find offensive, or that at least seem to show little affinity with sensibilities in today's society. It is an explicit way to highlight a different perspective. Calling a person or an institution out in this way can be helpful when the behaviour is absolutely unacceptable and urgently needs to be curtailed to prevent further damage. It also sends a signal to a wider community.

A call in is more gentle and often more effective in the long term. Someone speaks to a possible offender not in public, but personally, inviting them to a conversation. This may seem a self-evident step, but is often not so simple. There can be a power differential (it is difficult to critically address a superior), or people may be worried about damaging a friendship or professional relationship (for example, because a comment about racism or sexism can give rise to fragility and defensiveness). A 'call in' to a person or organization only works if you feel the energy, motivation and courage to engage in a deeper discussion, with mutual understanding and reflection.

Making a decision between calling in or calling out must be done very conscientiously. Hopefully this description can be helpful in making such a decision.

*Sources: Creative Equity Toolkit, Calling In and Calling Out Guide (Harvard University). See also: Chapter 3.*

**Cisgender**
Cisgender is a term that refers to the fact that the gender someone was assigned at birth (based on sex characteristics) corresponds to their gender identity, how they feel internally. If you are assigned to the female sex at birth and also feel like a woman, this is called cisgender. If this does not or not completely match how you feel, then it is called transgender.
*Source: Transgender Infopunt Woordenlijst*

**Code of conduct (in Dutch: gedragscode)**
A code of conduct is an internal agreement on shared values and norms within an organization, put into operation by concrete guidelines and procedures. This goes beyond a list of undesirable behaviours, such as bullying at work or sexually transgressive behaviour.
It is a constructive instrument, intended to create a positive working atmosphere with room for mutual trust. It is therefore always tailor made, because the code builds on the culture that lives or is pursued within any given organization.
*Source: Mensura*

**Consent (in Dutch: instemming)**
Consent is the approval that one person gives to another, agreeing to a particular action. That consent is explicit and expressed, is unambiguous, and is based on the most accurate information possible. All those involved are competent to give their individual consent, free of pressure or coercion (including implicit pressure). Finally, consent is contextual and retractable. Shared consent is a means of dealing with actions in a very thoughtful and calculated way, increasing the sense of agency, self-determination and well-being on the part of those who

give their consent. The concept of consent is often used in regards to sexual intimacy. It can also be applied more widely. It then goes hand-in-hand with the use of trigger and content warnings.
*Source: seksuelevorming.nl.*
*See also Chapter 3.*
*> see: trigger warning*

**Content warning**
*> see: trigger warning*

**Crip, cripping (in Dutch: crippen)**
'Crip' is a shortened, informal term for 'cripple'. It was initially meant as an insult, used against people with visible physical handicaps. Since the 1970s, people with disabilities themselves have picked up the term to refer to themselves. Crip no longer refers to a clearly defined, fixed identity, but has grown to become primarily a critical position and attitude that people can take in regards to dominant norms. Central to this position is the fact that it explicitly embraces the body with a disability, and is consequently a clear protest against systems that try to exclude such bodies.

Crip can also be used as a verb, 'to crip'. To crip a practice, philosophy or a text then comes down to a critical and contrarian interpretation or reading of it. The aim here is to reveal and deconstruct illusionary effects and prejudices. Cripping ensures that the original practice or text is given a new twist, and therefore comes to mean the opposite of what was initially intended.
*Source: rekto:verso #91, CRIP*

**Crossroads thinking**
**(in Dutch: kruispuntdenken)**
*> see: intersectionality*

**Crowdfunding**
Crowdfunding is a way to raise funds by approaching a large group of people and asking them to contribute. It usually concerns small amounts that can together yield a significant result, due to the number of contributors. If a project resonates, there will be people who believe in it. These believers invest (small) sums of money in the project. If a predetermined amount is raised within the specified period of time, the crowdfunding is successful, and the money is transferred to the entrepreneur by the crowdfunding platform.
*Source: Cultuurloket, Vlaams Agentschap Innoveren en Ondernemen*

**Cultural appropriation**
**(in Dutch: culturele toe-eigening)**
Cultural appropriation is about appropriating for yourself, as your own, sometimes including financial exploitation, cultural practices, spiritual traditions, hair or clothing styles, language and other elements from a culture that is not your own. Note that cultural appropriation is generally only referred to in situations with imbalances in power and privilege: a dominant and privileged culture appropriates elements of a nondominant or marginalized culture.
*Source: Layla F. Saad, 2020. Witte suprematie & ik.*

**Decentre (US English: decenter; in Dutch: de-centreren)**
When someone is spoken to about their expressing or representing a privilege, advantage or their dominant position, they can sometimes experience it as something they simply have to submit to. In fact, this can be positive feedback in the form of a request to not take yourself or whoever might look like you, or be like you, as your (only) reference. This expanding of your frame of reference is referred to as decentring.
You decentre yourself by broadening your own personal perspective to make room for that of others, putting your familiar perspectives less at the centre. You expand your ability to empathize, as it were. It helps you to get a more complete picture. It can take some courage. We sometimes have to question deep-seated beliefs and our own behaviour, or the habits and convictions of a whole generation, as society and the times evolve.
*Source: Baylor University, 2022. 'How to Decenter Yourself in Conversations With Members of Marginalized Communities'.*
*See also: Chapter 3.*
*> see: calling in*
*> see: calling out*
*> see: fragility*

**Disability culture & aesthetics**
Disability aesthetics emphasize that disability has always been present in the arts and refuses to accept the healthy body as the one and only aesthetic. This is not about possible exclusion of disabled bodies in the history of art. Disability aesthetics wants to show the influence of the handicapped body in art, because once accepted, it can only lead to enrichment for everyone.
*Source: Tobin Siebers, 2010, 'Disability Aesthetics'*

**Discrimination**

Discrimination occurs when a distinction is made in the treatment of people on the basis of a certain characteristic (or characteristics) when that distinction is not justified. This is direct discrimination. Conversely, discrimination can also be not distinguishing between the treatment of persons when it is appropriate and necessary to obtain more equal outcomes because of certain characteristics (indirect discrimination). Examples include racism, validism, sexism, and so on.

Structural, institutional or systemic discrimination also occurs at the level of society, institutions and the state. It is more difficult to put your finger on this form of (institutional) discrimination. The mechanisms are often invisible, but the consequences are expressed in the strongly layered inequalities that result.
*Source: Çavaria*

**Diversity (in Dutch: diversiteit)**

Diversity encompasses the differences between individuals in a group in, among other things, values, attitudes, culture, convictions, ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientation, knowledge, skills and life experiences.
*Sources: Gelijke Kansen in Vlaanderen, 'Woordenlijst';*
*and Demos, 'Ruimte maken voor verschil'.*
*> see: identity, axes of identity*

**Exclusion (in Dutch: exclusie, uitsluiting)**
*> see: discrimination*

**Fair practice**

Fair practice embraces a set of principles for working together in a just and balanced way. In the arts sector in Flanders, the principles delineated in the publication *Juist is Juist* ('What's Right is Right') have been endorsed by makers and organizations. This is about solidarity, transparency, sustainability and responsibility. The implementation of these principles is a precondition for receiving grants or subsidies through the Arts Decree. In other contexts as well, following fair practice principles brings advantages to all collaborations.
*Source: Juist Is Juist*

**Fragility (in Dutch: fragiliteit)**

Fragility here refers to the discomfort of people who are held accountable for some form of social privilege or advantage that they enjoy. They may find it difficult to acknowledge that privilege, so this provokes defensive reactions. People often talk about white or male fragility because these identities enjoy very strong privileges.
*Source: Layla F. Saad, 2020, Witte suprematie en ik*

**Handicap, disability (in Dutch: handicap, beperking)**

The Vlaams Agentschap voor Personen met een Handicap (Flanders Agency for Persons with a Handicap) describes a handicap – or disability – as any long-term and important participation problem of a person, which can be ascribed to the interplay between functional disorders of a mental, psychic, physical or sensory nature, limitations in carrying out activities and personal and external factors. This definition, translated here from the Dutch, is based on the socio-ecological vision adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO), in International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF).

People may prefer not to be referred to as someone with a disability or a handicap. This may be because they do not feel it

hinders their ability to take part in society. Another reason is that they do not see it as a handicap, or impediment, although they may experience restrictions. Instead, they attribute the blame for their so-called disability or handicap to the inaccessible way in which a validist society is organized. Others do find it important to be recognized as people with disabilities, in order to receive sufficient support from that society.
*Sources: Vlaams Agentschap voor Personen met een Handicap; Çavaria*
*> see: validism*

**Hypermobility (in Dutch: hypermobiliteit)**
Hypermobility refers to the state of artists or art workers having to travel a great deal, often too much, in order to take advantage of opportunities in the international arts circuit, sometimes more than their practice actually needs or than can actually benefit their work.
*Source: Kunstenpunt, 2019, (Re)framing the International, Kunstenpocket #2*

**Identity, axes of identity**
**(in Dutch: identiteit, identiteitsassen)**
Someone's sense of identity can have to do with, among other things, their level of education, income, employment, social class, gender and ethnicity. These (partial) identities are social constructs, but they do have concrete consequences for one's social position. Intersectionality describes these identities according to specific axes, which can also intersect. In this way, a person's (partial) identity can interact in terms of gender and social class. The importance of making these identities or sub-identities explicit

174

is that it can make exclusion, deprivation, privileges and power in society negotiable. This can also reveal how many different ways people can deviate from any given dominant social norm.
*Sources: Vlaams Instituut Gezond Leven, Rosa vzw, Demos*

**Inclusion (in Dutch: inclusie)**
Inclusion refers to (the right to) full participation in society, on an equal footing with other people, an independent life with equal opportunities and respect for individual choices.
In the arts sector, inclusion means that everyone – regardless of class, gender, race or ethnicity, age or mental or physical health and so on – is included in the different aspects of art, from creation and participation to reflection.
*Source: Grip vzw*

**Intersectionality (in Dutch: intersectionaliteit)**
Intersectionality or crossroads thinking (in Dutch: *kruispuntdenken*) is about how different aspects of someone's identity (background, age, body, gender and so on) influence one another and determine someone's position in society. The crossroads where someone finds themself has an influence on the opportunities that they have, the violence they may experience, or the prejudices that others have about their existence.
These advantages or disadvantages can be experienced at a personal level, or at the societal level, through institutions and the state. In this last case, they are institutional. This means that a white heterosexual cisgender female will have different experiences, opportunities and suffer less discrimination than a black homosexual, transgender man.
*Source: Çavaria Woordenlijst*
*> see: identity, axes of identity*

**LGBTQIA+**

This is an acronym for sexual and gender diversity. It can also be written as LGB, LGBTQI of LGBTQI, sometimes LGBTQIAP+.

Each of these letters represents a sexual or gender orientation, such as lesbian, gay, bi (indicating that one is also attracted to people with multiple gender identities), trans, queer, questioning or romantic, pansexual, and all other identities that are not explicitly identified by the acronym, which is what the + refers to.

*Sources: Çavaria, Transgender Infopunt Woordenlijst*

**Microaggression**

Microaggressions are interpersonal, brief, more or less subtle, intentional or unintentional commonplace interactions and behaviour that communicate bias towards historically marginalized groups. They can take the form of inappropriate jokes, exclusion, dismissing or ignoring people, not learning people's names, misgendering, stereotyping and so on.

*Source: Aïda Yancy, 2021, 'LGBTQI+ Toolbox'*

**Multivoiced, having multiple voices**
**(in Dutch: meerstemmig, meerstemmigheid)**

Multivoiced refers to a body or entity that expresses itself through multiple voices. True diversity is based on the realization that one's own frames of reference are not universal or absolute. The dominance of one frame of reference over another is related to several things, such as numerical predominance, (institutionalized) power relations, historical context, and zeitgeist. Out of a concern for diversity, space is made for less-heard perspectives.

Recognizing/understanding these perspectives in turn requires the broadest possible context: diversity concerning origin, cultural identity, social status, ideological leaning, aesthetic taste, gender identity, age and more. Making room for a multiplicity of voices is more than 'different voices alongside each other, each singing their own tune'. They should hear each other, learn from each other, follow and meet each other on the basis of a genuine willingness to listen.
*Source: Kunstenpunt, 2020, Bestemming: complexloos meerstemmig*

**Need for recovery (in Dutch: herstelnood)**
*Herstelnood* is a Dutch term that means 'need for recovery time', referring to work-related strain or exhaustion. It is a measure of mental fatigue and is, among other things, a predictor of clinical burnout. Mental fatigue can be caused by a number of factors related to motivation. In the arts sector, disillusionment with career opportunities, wages or work-life flexibility can have a negative impact on the motivation of employees. Additional points of attention include work organization, lack of autonomy, feeling that your skills are not being fully utilized, work pace and conflict about who plays what role within an organization.

At the same time, there are many sources of motivation for which the arts sector scores extremely well and which therefore keep motivation high. These include transformational leadership, a climate of well-being, varying tasks and social support from colleagues. It is striking that people in the arts indicate that they experience few problems with change or job insecurity.
*Source: Sociaal Fonds Podiumkunsten, 2022. Resultaten bevraging werkbeleving 2022*
*(SENSOR)*

**Neurodivergence, neurodiversity, neurotypical**
**(in Dutch: neurodiversiteit, neurodivergent, neurotypisch)**
Neurodivergence is a broad denominator under which various symptoms and/or conditions are placed, including ADHD, OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder), posttraumatic stress syndrome, anxiety disorders, bipolar disorders, dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism spectrum disorder, certain phobia or even being more or less gifted.

Neorodiversity refers to the variety of ways in which people can differ from each other neurologically, and the extent to which they can deviate from a so-called neurotypical norm. We situate ourselves on a spectrum of possible variations on a (more or less neurotypical) common denominator. Depending on where you are in that spectrum, you may have certain needs that your environment is able to meet.

Neurodiversity is also characterized as a movement, an objective, with the aim of changing dominant perceptions of marginalized neuro-minorities, replacing stereotypical ideas about the limitations of neuro-minorities with a more balanced appreciation of their gifts and needs, finding valued roles and positions for neurologically marginalized people, and showing society that everyone can benefit from the inclusion of neuro-minorities.
*Source: NeuroDiversity Hub*
*see also: Chapter 3*

**To Other (in Dutch: other-en)**
One speaks of 'othering' people when distinction is made between one's own group and a different, or 'other' group, on the basis of generalized characteristics that one attributes to the other. This can be based on gender, ethnic or cultural background, social class, ideology and more. Usually less favourable characteristics are attributed to this 'other' group than to one's own group.
*Source: KifKif, Astride Velho & Oscar Thomas-Olalde, 2011, 'Othering and its Effects: Exploring the Concept', in Writing Postcolonial Histories of Intercultural Education*

**Pay what you can; Pay what you want**
A pricing system according to 'Pay What You Can' or 'Pay What You Want' aims to make entrance tickets as accessible as possible to as many people as possible. In this system, people can determine how much they can or want to pay for their ticket. There are sometimes different entry amounts provided, and you can choose from these yourself. Sometimes an amount is suggested, but you still remain free to choose a lower price. Those who can afford the higher price do so, therefore ensuring that others are able to pay less and still attend.
*Source: Kaaitheater*

**Post-porn**
De term post-porn evolved in the 1980s and 1990s as a response to mainstream pornography, to answer a need for new perspectives about representations of the human body and sexuality. Post-porn is also an intersectional, queer and feminist movement – embraced by artists, academics and activists – which questions societal norms and stereotypes about sexuality and gender

179

identities, in the form of essays, videos, performances, digital work and conceptual art. Among other things, post-porn is about critical enjoyment, identity, ethics, the relation between culture and repression, and the decentring of (the enjoyment of) the viewer.
*Source: Post-porn Film Festival Warsaw, Tim Gregory & Astrid Lorange, 2018; 'Teaching Post-Pornography' in Cultural Studies Review 24 (1)*

**Privilege**

Privilege refers to advantages one person has over others. In our society, certain standards are set for different aspects of our identities. The more someone complies with these, the greater their advantage and their lead over others, hence their privilege. Although we cannot always influence the privileges that we enjoy, it is important that they are recognized, along with the positions of power that are associated with them. Your privileges determine your place in society and influence the opportunities you have.

White privilege refers to the fact that white skin colour is seen as the norm in our society. That brings a number of benefits for a white person, simply thanks to their skin colour. This may not mean that that person leads an easy or carefree life, but that the colour of their skin will not have a negative influence and lead to disadvantages.
*Source: diversiteitspraktijk.be, Atlas, Integratie en Inburgering Antwerpen*

**Psychosocial well-being (in the workplace)**
**(in Dutch: psychosociaal welzijn (op het werk))**
In Flanders, the Welfare Act, enacted in 1966, prescribes some basic obligations that employers must adhere to, to ensure basic well-being in the workplace. These concern the prevention of violence, harassment, unwanted sexual behaviour and other psychosocial risks. Lack of psychosocial well-being can lead to burnout, depression, and so on. Psychosocial well-being is also important outside the work context. In cases of threatened well-being, people should consult their general medical practitioner or telephone 1712.
*Source: 1712, Wettelijk kader psychosocial welzijn van de Vlaamse Overheid*

**Queer**
Today, queer has become an umbrella term for gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, intersex and non-binary or gender or people, among others. The term is usually used to indicate that someone does not feel at home with standard heterosexual and gender norms or 'boxes'. Queer can also refer to a political movement, which fights racism, sexism, heteronormativity and capitalism. It is also an academic research field.
*Source: Transgender Infopunt Woordenlijst*
*> see: LGBTQIA+*
*> see: cisgender*
*> see: transgender*

**Racism (in Dutch: racisme)**
Racism is a form of discrimination – systemic or otherwise – that intentionally or unintentionally excludes other people or extends them fewer opportunities, purely on the basis of the colour of their skin, nationality, background or culture. Racism presumes that white people are more important than black people or other people of colour.
*Source: Çavaria*
*> see: discrimination*

### Safe(r) space, brave space

A safe or safer space offers a safe environment where people can be at ease and be themselves, without being condemned, discriminated against or becoming victims of (physical or psychological) violence. Safe(r) places may close their doors to people who might undermine this objective, but not always. Such doors need to swing open, admit more people. A true safe(r) space is also a springboard where people gain self-confidence and build courage to take a leap forward. In this case, a safe(r) space also becomes a 'brave space', a place of courage.

People use this bravery to reveal, share and denounce experiences, for example of sexism or racism. Space can thus be created to push forward a political objective. By way of brave spaces, voices that have not yet been heard can now be heard.

*Sources: Better Practices for Safe(r) Spaces, podcast, Olave Nduwanju, 2021; 'Transgender Infopunt Woordenlijst', Artevelde University of Applied Sciences; 'Van Safe naar Brave Spaces', in Get Up Stand Up: Praktijkboek vol voorbeelden van politisering door jongeren.*

### Sexism (in Dutch: seksisme)

Sexism refers to the set of prejudicial beliefs and stereotypes about men and women, and about relationships between men and women. Sexism refers to a belief in a hierarchical relationship between men and women, in which one group is considered more important or competent than the other, within a certain context.

Also, sexism includes the belief in the desirability, or even the naturalness, of such an unequal relationship, and of so-called differences between men and women. Finally, sexism includes all statements and actions that result from this conviction, not only distinguishing between men and women, but also putting

one group at a disadvantage compared to the other. Although sexism indirectly has negative effects on everyone, in a patriarchal society, it is mainly women and marginalized gender identities that are disadvantaged by sexism.
*Based on: Gelijke Kansen (Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur), Rosa vzw*
*> see: discrimination*

**Sexually transgressive behaviour (in Dutch: seksueel grensoverschrijdend gedrag)**
*> see: transgressive behaviour*

**Tokenism**
One refers to tokenism when someone from an underrepresented group is involved or used to compensate for the lack of representation and to portray a setting of apparent diversity. In this way, one refers to a token woman, or a token Black, in order for a group to be seen as represented.
*Source: Cargo Confetti*

**Toxic masculinity**
**(in Dutch: toxische mannelijkheid)**
The term toxic masculinity refers to a set of harmful societal views about how men should supposedly be or what men should do. They are socially destructive norms that support such phenomena as misogyny, homophobia, physical or mental violence, or male dominance, and keep them in place. Toxic masculinity plays a role in strongly male-dominated contexts, such as leadership positions or in the technology sector.
*Source: Title-mag.com*

**Transgender**

Transgender is a collective term that describes people whose gender identity (how they feel inside) does not fully match the gender assigned to them at birth. The term covers a wide range of different binary and non-binary gender identifications and experiences.

> The opposite of transgender is cisgender. When we speak or write about people, transgender, or trans, is used as an adjective. This is to show that the person as a whole is far more than just a trans person. We then speak or write about transgender or trans people.
> *Source: Transgender Infopunt Woordenlijst*
> *> see: cisgender*

**Transgressive behaviour**
**(in Dutch: grensoverschrijdend gedrag (op het werk))**

The phrase 'undesirable transgressive behaviour at work' covers three different charges, including violence, harassment and unwanted sexual behaviour.

> Violence at work is 'any factuality in which an employee is psychologically or physically harassed, threatened or attacked in the performance of the work'.

Harassment at work refers to 'any unlawful and recurrent conduct, outside or within the company or institution, that occurs [and which] may express behaviour, words, threats, acts, gestures or one-sided writings and which has the object or effect of affecting the personality, dignity or physical or psychological integrity of workers in the performance of the work, endangering their employment or creating a threatening, hostile, insulting, humiliating or offensive environment'.

> Finally, unwanted sexual behaviour in the workplace includes 'any form of verbal, nonverbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature which the guilty person knows or should know is prejudicial to the dignity of people at work'.

Transgressive behaviour can of course occur outside the work context. These boundaries have therefore been legally defined, because there are some (legal) boundaries that must not be crossed (e.g. rape, assault). Boundaries are often negotiated implicitly, not explicitly, and this can pose a risk to security. Shared consent offers a means of speaking about boundaries in an explicit way and reaching agreements to respect those boundaries.
*Source: 'Ongewenst grensoverschrijdend gedrag op het werk', in Algemene Directie Humanisering van de Arbeid van de Federale Overheidsdienst Werkgelegenheid, Arbeid en Sociaal Overleg*
*> see: consent*

### Trigger warning, content warning

Trigger warnings (frequently abbreviated as TW) or content warnings tell an audience that there can be themes or images present in a programme, text or presentation, that may upset them. These might include racism, violence, suicide, and so on. This can certainly happen when people associate such images with traumatizing events from their past. On the basis of these warnings, people can themselves decide whether they want to continue reading, watching or listening. Everyone is free to consult or to request such trigger or content warnings.
*Source: 'An Introduction to Content Warnings and Trigger Warnings', Meg-John Barker, Michigan University, 2014; Trigger Warnings (Towards a Different Approach), OpenDemocracy.net.*

### Unlearn (in Dutch: ontleren)

To unlearn something means that you divest yourself of a number of mistaken, but deeply ingrained assumptions or reflexes, such as the idea that 'creators of colour make work about racism or about ethnocultural diversity'. As quickly as possible, for example, we must unlearn the damaging and mistaken association of art made by people

with migrant backgrounds with lower quali-
ty or standards.
*see also: Chapter 3*

**Validism, ableism**
**(in Dutch: validisme, ableïsme)**
Validism or ableism is the discrimination, marginalization, and stigmatization of people with a physical or mental handicap.
*Sources: Çavaria, MO\* Magazine*
*> see: discrimination*

**White saviour (in Dutch: witte redder)**
The white saviour, or the white saviour complex, refers to a tendency of white people to want to, or think they can, help or rescue people of colour, presuming that as white people, they are better able to do so. It originally referred to white missionaries, but is still seen today in many contexts. It strokes someone's own ego to think this way, but it often involves rather superficial actions, such as someone helping someone else or a group of people with an individual problem (and feeling good about doing it), without having any depth of interest for the structural reasons that lie at the root of the problem, let alone wanting to do something to correct it.
*Source: Layla F. Saad, 2020, Witte Suprematie en ik*

**COLOPHON**

FLANDERS
ARTS INSTITUTE

with the support of

Flanders
State of the Art

**kunsten.be**