

It is part XXX of an ensemble, and this ensemble is no longer necessarily ceremonial

Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens

Wednesday 1 June 2022, 18-21h

film  
performance  
dinner  
artist talk

Networked Collective

Bas van den Hurk &  
Jochem van Laarhoven

Suze Milius  
Marcia Liu  
Reinout Scholten van Aschat  
Naomi van der Horst  
Chrys Amaya Michailidis  
Toine van den Hurk  
Loran van de Wier  
Lotte Driessen  
Sanne Jansen  
Samieh Shahcheraghi  
Gijsje Heemskerk  
Sofie Hollander  
Rob van Kranenburg  
Mike Suijkerbuijk  
Marijn van Kreijl  
Roel Swanenberg  
Noortje de Leijl  
Mohammad Salemy  
Do Klar  
Ramon de Gier  
Benjamin Schoones

thanks to:

Antony Hudek  
Laurens Otto  
Rik Vannevel  
An-Valerie Vandromme  
Jimmy Soetaert  
Hopstreet gallery  
Dieter Lampens

Since 2018 we have collaborated in a research driven practice, working at the border between fine art and theater. Central to our practice is to reconsider one of the main modernist questions: how do we live together, how do we work together? How do we give shape and form to 'being together' in the broadest sense? To deal with the complexity of this question – and the quest for alternative modes of cooperation this entails – dialogue and collaborations that lead to experiments in collectivity are crucial for us.

In August 2021 we did a one month residency in House van Wassenhove, which is part of this museum. The architect, Juliaan Lampens, introduced the idea of 'open-plan-living' in Belgium in the 1960's; houses without separated spaces that provoke in a formal way questions about how to live together. In the residency we shot a film in which we used all sorts of textiles that we printed at the Frans Masereel Center, a center for graphic arts in Kasterlee. For the production of the film we collaborated with several members of a larger collective we initiated in 2019. We call this Networked Collective and it consists of a constantly changing group of around 30 artists, theatermakers, actors, performers, theorists, fashion designers and students. Together we do residencies and make exhibitions, plays and publications. We literally sometimes live together, we cook and eat together, we paint, print, we read and discuss texts, make music, go on hikes in the woods and along the seashore, pay visits to exhibitions, etc.

'Networked collective' is a term coined by the influential Nigerian curator Okwui Enwezor in his text *The Artist as Producer in Times of Crisis*. Enwezor defines two types of collectives. One more conventional type, which he describes as: 'a structured modus vivendi based on permanent, fixed groupings of practitioners working over a sustained period.' 'In such collectives', he continues, 'authorship represents the expression of the group rather than that of the individual artist.' Enwezor compares this to another type of collectivity that he defines as: 'a flexible, non-permanent course of affiliation, privileging collaboration on project basis than on a permanent alliance'. We feel attracted to this second, more open form of collectivity and therefore our collective refers, in name and practice, to Enwezor's notion of collaborating as a pliable configuration. For us collectivity is about 'becoming' - in the sense that it keeps on bringing up questions ranging from the philosophical to the political to the very personal. Within this transformational realm we continuously make new proposals in various media and focus on the tension between the social and the formal.

In his text Enwezor emphasizes that our current time is determined by crises. Economical, ecological, social, political crises. He claims that such crises should lead to more cooperation, collaboration, participation, interaction and (new forms of) collectivity. This development can be recognized in the international art world. In events such as the *Turner Prize* and *documenta fifteen* collectivity plays a central role. The German art magazine *Texte zur Kunst* dedicated an entire issue to collectivity in 2021 and recently *De Witte Raaf* published a questionnaire about working alone versus working together, in which the clear majority of artists stressed the collective nature of their practice or the inescapable necessity of working together.

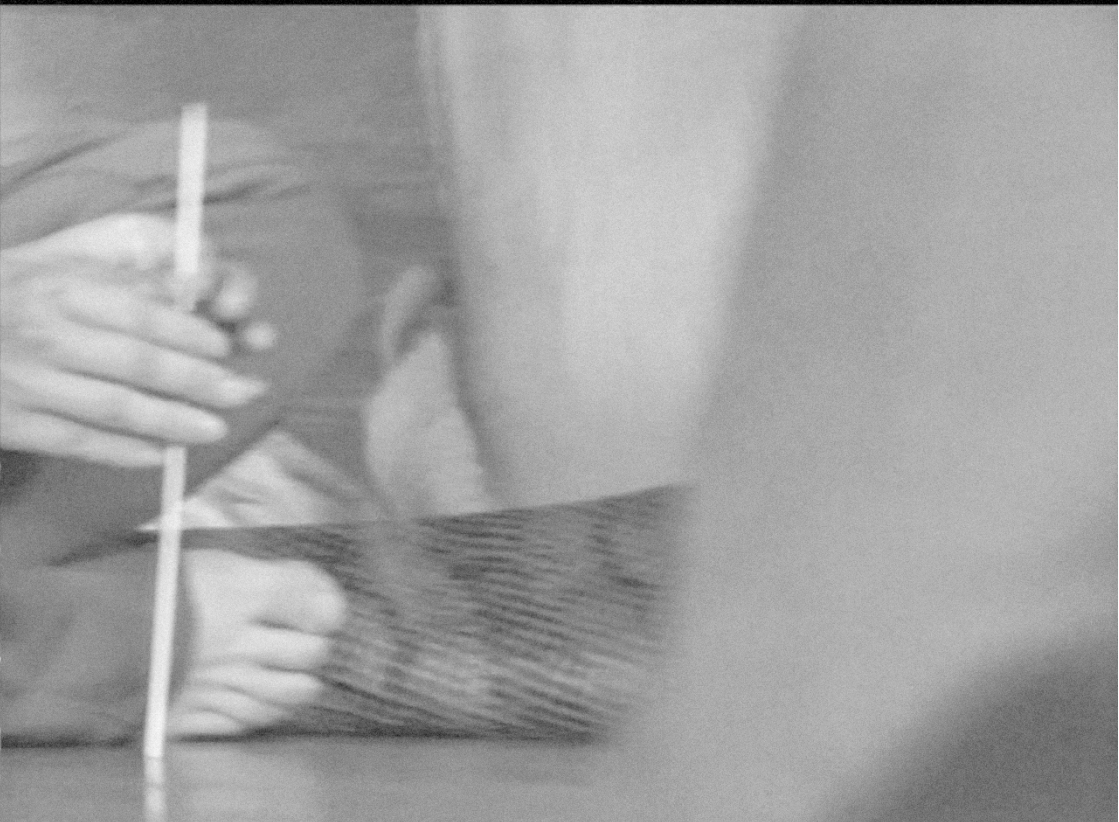
Of course this is not a new phenomenon or debate; but the extent to which collectivity is embraced in the past few years, propels us to ask 'what is the importance of collectivity in our current time'? Is it just a trend? The latest fashion? Why would or could it be a response to the crises of our historical moment? What is the role of institutions in all of this? Is there a danger of it being instrumentalized? But also, who and what are, or can be, part of such collectives? Only humans? Or can non-human animals be part of it as well? What is the role of authorship? Of the individual versus the collective? When does a collaboration become collectivity?

Bas van den Hurk & Jochem van Laarhoven for Networked Collective



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*Decisive here is the idea of an inessential commonality, a solidarity that in no way concerns an essence. Taking-place, the communication of singularities in the attribute of extension, does not unite them in essence, but scatters them in existence.*

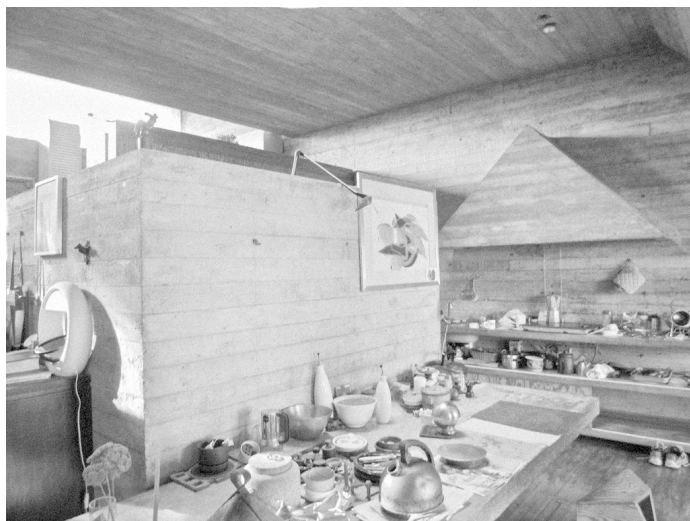
Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*

*The concept of assemblage is helpful. Ecologists turned to assemblages to get around the sometimes fixed and bounded connotations of ecological “community”. The question of the varied species in a species assemblage influence each other - if at all - is never settled: some thwart (or eat) each other; others work together to make life possible; still others just happen to find themselves in the same place. Assemblages are open-ended gatherings. They allow us to ask about communal effects without assuming them. They show us potential histories in the making.*

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*







House van Wassenhove (photo from internet)



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