Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

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Abstract

Dutch Afro-awareness today is coinciding with the development of minority subjectivities redefining themselves against dominant culture. It is in line with this moment that this thesis works towards deciphering how Dutch Afro artists carve out a space in today's Dutch artistic landscape. The main challenge for the artists is dealing with the dominance of an art narrative that is heavily informed by American, British and World Art conceptions, which aligns their Afro-ness with foreignness and (political) Blackness. This means that even though Dutch Afro-ness is constructed differently than in the rest of the Diaspora, from the early 1980s to the late 2000s, the artist had to define their practices in relation to art critique, cultural policies and curatorial strategies that were developed on the basis of the aforementioned. Coming from this background, this thesis adds to a Diaspora understanding of how Afro-ness can work differently in a particular (Dutch) context.

Through interviews, archive research, private conversations, and my personal experience as a Dutch Afro artist I work through these historical developments and their outcome today. As a result, the thesis questions the usefulness of the cultural notion of *Black* in the Dutch art world and in a broader context proposes using local concepts and words to describe the particularities of this artistic condition. A condition that harbours entitlement when it comes to being culturally native and reflection in the national self-image of non-racial equivalence. Looking at exhibition histories, curatorial approaches and Dutch Afro artistic agency, my approach is a conscious 'spiral retelling' that provokes Diaspora and Dutch understandings of Afro subjectivity in the visual arts. The research argues around the paradox of simultaneously becoming and refusing to be Black as it is understood in 20th century Diaspora.

Researched, this artistic condition complements contemporary investigations and theorization on what it means to be European. This dissertation is a harbinger of research into the visual arts that challenges the existing (internal) borders of the union in this age of migration.

This thesis represents partial submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the Royal College of Art. I confirm that the work presented here is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis. During the period of registered study in which this thesis was prepared the author has not been registered for any other academic award or qualification. The material included in this thesis has not been submitted wholly or in part for any academic award or qualification other than that for which it is now submitted.

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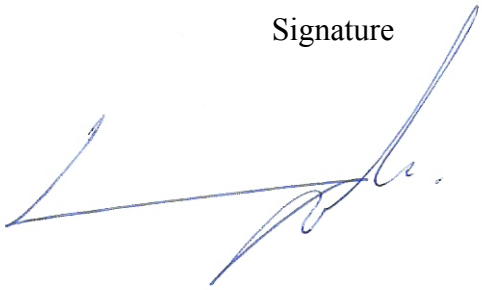

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Grantangi fu Anana Keduaman Kudampon anga alla den bentawai.

For the kids: Malaya, Sean, Xavier, Dez-Anthony, Maxim, Zesireo, Rufano, D'Angelo and Xhi'maïah.

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The groundwork for the research in this thesis was done years earlier while being part of the Wakaman group. It was my colleagues in that artistic journey that presented to me the different positions that could be taken as a Dutch Afro artist. Looking into Remy Jungerman's Wakaman archive and that of the Van Abbemuseum provided me with the information to historically contextualize this research. The invaluable contributions of these two archives have sharpened my thinking about Dutch Afro artistic subjectivity. Translating it from Dutch to English was quite the challenge and I am indebted to the proofreader Virginia Rounding for taking out the final linguistic issues.

On this 15-year journey to this moment of submission there have been some people who, at the right moment made the right remark, or gave the push that I needed. Simon O'Sullivan, who supported my doubts about contemporary philosophy. Rosalind Kraus, who supported my doubts about the definition of art. Kellie Jones, who supported my doubt about the supposed similarities in the Diaspora Afro experience.

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Illustration nr. 1 - Frederick Calmes, ‘Untitled’
mixed media on paper, made during the Krutu, 27 May 2017

Preface

Blue.

While migrating from Suriname to the Netherlands in 1974, at the tender age of three, Atlantic blues were combined with the slightly different light blue that meets the ocean at the horizon and fills the sky. Shrouded in shades of blue, a conscious recording of the environment reveals a classroom in Rotterdam with pre-schoolers, all acquiring skills that prepare them for grade school. Education in the inner city of Rotterdam meant being immersed in an environment where difference developed into the default. During the 1970s and 1980s, linguistic, sartorial and habitual variations slowly melted into a common standard with the physical being the only notable, but not commendable, difference. From my perspective as a teenager, this was what the world looked like.

It was in 1990 when someone yelled out 'Go back to your own country!' that I first consciously registered this phrase, and I remember thinking 'What does that mean?' There was an idle awareness of a Surinamese background through music, food, language and habits located in the home environment. Home, in its turn, was located in Rotterdam. Growing up as Dutch with people whose parents came from Italy, Greece, Spain, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Morocco, India, Suriname and other places, it had not occurred to me that 'your own country' could mean something other than the Netherlands. There had been comments about my skin colour or cultural background before this encounter, but these were always countered with the difference marking the person who uttered them. The difference never questioned the belonging of the person to the environment. The utterance 'Go back to your own country!' is intended to displace the recipient, based on the idea that skin colour points to something more than (just) a biological variation.

During the 1990s I came to terms with the understanding that, in certain cases, my presence evoked assumptions that had nothing to do with my self-image. Effectively, the processes that formed my Dutch identity were acknowledged as a Surinamese subjectivity.

It is in this period that the question of perceived cultural background, due to skin colour, and the presumed behaviour, expected capability and social prospects that come with it emerged. Starting to understand that equality does not mean equivalence, it would take me well into the 2000s to realise that the biological variation of skin colour is actually a thing. Unearthing how racial discrimination hides in a non-racial equivalence meritocracy of cultural difference questioned my Dutch identity and over the years turned my subjectivity and my gaze. Black.

During the 90s my life took place at night. I started out as a Vogue dancer in nightclubs and by 1993, at the age of 22, my imagination materialised through the first nightclub I realised and managed in Rotterdam. Over the years more clubs, parties and events followed, but this first Queer one possessed the quality where straight men, accompanied by their partner, would come and party in full drag all night long. The club was conceived as a space where one could forget that there was an outside. Being subject to the Afro-Dutch condition, I experimented with stereotypes at a time when it was uncommon to have white runners, black bartenders, drags, dancers and DJs of different ethnicities and genders. Unaware of the fact that what was produced resonated with what was going on in other big city clubs worldwide, a whole new social environment was facilitated in the sense of what Nicholas Bourriaud would later call relational aesthetics when he theorised this early 1990s' period in 1998.[1] The combination of club life and 'real' life made me question the sort of agency that was available to me as a club kid. Several clubs, parties and events later, I concluded that my Surinamese cultural background related to the majority group culture in the same way that my club culture identity related to common daytime society. Being embedded in all these environments created a culturally hybrid individual whose agency depended on the space in which he operated. It is in this context of Dutch nightlife that the question emerged as to whether it was possible to be permanently self-evident in all social environments. Understanding that nightlife agency did not translate outside of that context, I decided to quit nightlife and pursue an education in art.

In my Fulbright application in 2007, I argued that it was time not to speak about Dutch Afro subjects, but time for us to speak for ourselves. Starting from this principle, this thesis contributes to the wider contemporary production of continental European thought coming out of a European migrant background experience. Being part of this group makes it possible to formulate questions that are relevant for this migrant background position. The centralisation of Afro-ness is deliberate, as skin colour cannot be 'unseen'. As a consequence of this hyper-visibility, Afro artists have developed a sophisticated set of navigating skills through the Dutch art system. Ultimately, variations of these skills can be seen in other artistic minority groups and in society at large. This thesis emerges from my own history, practice and personal experience with the issues discussed. Through speaking by invitation – at conferences, seminars, public discussions – issues surrounding one's position and how it is perceived in society proved to find resonance with Afro subjects from different backgrounds in the Netherlands. Together with my work as an arts and policy advisor, writer, visual artist, educator and curator, the need to address these questions in greater depth became both apparent and urgent. What emerged is that the current theoretical and aesthetic models that are available to contextualise Dutch Afro artistic production are not adequate as a framework

[1] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les Presses du réel, 1998).
[2] J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion – Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton:

to signify its significance in the development of a contemporary Dutch subjectivity projecting into the future. This thesis begins to propose a framework in which my work and that of my colleagues should be placed

The questions that developed are relevant to identify how and where the artists locate their practices internationally, locally and personally. Where the Dutch artistic landscape locates the artists is the starting point because it strongly establishes the basic principles of the work environment. It provides insight into the Dutch relation to its colonial history and attitudes towards art coming from migrants and migrant workers' background from the 1970s onwards. With this in mind, the central question of this doctoral thesis appears: is it possible to locate the Dutch Afro artists as native to the Dutch artistic landscape? Answering this is in line with the current larger societal question of what it means to be Dutch. Being primarily informed by aesthetics and sensibilities that come along with Dutchness and the Afro-Dutch condition, art is one of the methods in rethinking ideas of belonging in the twenty-first century. From a Dutch perspective, the space that is created through this question is a meditation on a different sort of artistic environment designed around the current and future mix of people that make up the Netherlands.

My early understanding of the world was informed by Afro-Surinamese, and consequently West African, religion, metaphysics and traditions[2] that paint a philosophical picture[3] of the world, based on the idea of striving for balance. During my education in London and New York, twentieth-century French philosophy, particularly Structuralism and Poststructuralism, provided a framework from which to apply African-American and Black British theoretical frameworks emerging from cultural movements of the twentieth century. These movements were the generous aunts that cultivated an understanding of Afro-ness in the Netherlands. In the process of applying these general insights on Blackness that led to an interpretation of Afro-ness in the Dutch situation, it became clear that they were not applicable without complications. Hailing from and living in a different continent, with a distinct history and generational arrival from the African-American and Black British, it proved important to listen and learn while understanding the facts that inspired the theoretical frameworks as comparable but not the same.

Therefore, this thesis needs to be read in the wider continental context of the contemporary discourse on what it might mean to be European in the twenty-first century. Looking at the French philosopher Etienne Balibar's *We, The People of Europe?,*[4] collections such as *Do I Belong?: Reflections from Europe* [5] and *RE: Thinking Europe,*[6] a variety of disciplines are dealing with this question. Even

[2] J. Lorand Matory, *Black Atlantic Religion – Tradition, Transnationalism, and Matriarchy in the Afro-Brazilian Candomblé* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).
[3] *The African Philosophy Reader,* 2nd edition, ed. by Pieter Hendrik Coetzee and A.P.J. Roux (New York: Routledge, 2003).
[4] Etienne Balibar, *We, The People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[5] *Do I Belong? Reflections from Europe*, ed. by Antony Lerman (London: Pluto Press, 2017).

though his ideas were transformed and translated to express discontent and xenophobia,[7] the imagining through visual arts and the curatorial opens up possibilities akin to the concept of 'Leitkultur'[8] as proposed by the German political scientist Bassam Tibi in 1998. In the European context, this doctoral thesis is one of those *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe.*[9] From that broader European overview, the research is in line with national conversations such as the *Black France / France Noire*[10] discussion on what Afro-ness might mean in France. Closing in on the Netherlands and its history, the work is in conversation with British historian Simon Schama's interpretation of Dutch culture and *The Embarrassment of Riches*[11] in the Golden Age. This is the same Dutch culture that brought forth the Afro artist Gerrit Schouten (1779–1839)[12] who portrayed life in Suriname. This writing addresses the Dutch past of colonialism and is in line with investigations such as cultural anthropologist Lizzy van Leeuwen's *Ons Indisch Erfgoed (Our Indonesian Heritage)*[13] and contemporary novels such as Rihana Jamaludin's *De Zwarte Lord (The Black Lord)*[14] which is set in Suriname in the nineteenth century and Annejet van der Zijl's *Sonny Boy*[15] about the life of a black man in the Netherlands during WWII. Looking at the specifics of Afro literature in the Dutch context, the research speaks to *Wij Slaven van Suriname (We Slaves of Suriname)*[16] by Anton de Kom who said that 'Not one people that stays with a hereditary sense of inferiority can come to full maturity.'[17] The legacy of this sentence and the undoing of this sense are taken up in the literary heritage of Astrid Roemer, Edgar Cairo and Frank Martinus Arion among others, and this thesis follows suit. The cultural anthropologist Philomena Essed with her book *Understanding Everyday Racism*[18] and her colleague Gloria Wekker with *White Innocence*[19] have taken up the workings of racism and discrimination in the Dutch context and with their books support my proposition about the difference in experience with the English-speaking diaspora. By looking at where the art and the artists are located and what comes out of this, I take note of the view from the outside that

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[6] *Re: Thinking Europe: Thoughts on Europe: Past, Present and Future*, eds. Mathieu Segers M. and Yoeri Albrecht (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016).
[7] Tibi's concept of a form of multiculturalism as a guiding culture' (Leitkultur) was transformed in Germany's national debate on national identity and debates on immigration (2000) into a mono-cultural vision of society in Germany.
[8] Bassam Tibi, *Europa ohne Identität, Die Krise der multikulturellen Gesellschaft* [Europe without identity, The Crisis of the multicultural Gesellschaft] (Munich: Bertelsmann, 1998).
[9] Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others; Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
[10] *Black France / France Noire. The History and Politics of Blackness,* eds. Trica Danielle Keaton, T Denean Sharpley-Whiting and Tyler Stovall (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012).
[11] Simon Schama, *The embarrassment of riches: an interpretation of Dutch culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).
[12] Clazien Medendorp, *Gerrit Schouten (1779–1839); Botanische tekeningen en diorama's uit Suriname* [Gerrit Schouten (1779–1839; Botanic drawings and dioramas from Suriname] (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1999).
[13] Lizzy van Leeuwen, *Ons Indisch Erfgoed; Zestig jaar strijd om cultuur en identiteit* [Our Indisch heritage; Sixty years of struggle for culture and identity] (Leewarden: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2008).
[14] Rihana Jamaludin, *De Zwarte Lord* [The Black Lord] (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2012).
[15] Annejet van der Zijl, *Sonny Boy* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & van Ditmar, 2005).
[16] Anton de Kom, *Wij Slaven van Suriname* [We Slaves of Suriname] (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2017).
[17] Ibid.
[18] Philomena Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism; An Interdisciplinary Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1991).
[19] Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

might read this thesis through *World Art Studies*[20] or the important decolonisation work that is being done by people such as Alanna Lockward and Walter Mignolo. However, I have to stress that this thesis is invested in theorisation from the inside towards a model based on the lived experience of Dutch (Afro) artists with a migrant background. Therefore, this research is not a comparative study but an analysis of the Dutch situation. It attempts to shed a different light on how diaspora is understood, by investigating ideas about an Afro-Dutch condition, its art production, the language that surrounds it and curatorial practices involving this condition. This doctoral thesis aims to make intelligible the twentieth-century project of Western / non-Western power dialectic in the Dutch local arts environment from which I try to depart by means of imagination.

Because the English-language discourse does not suffice in speaking its specificities, the Dutch context needs to be specific to Dutch history, policy formulation and artistic practices and needs its own language to move forward. With that in mind, the question of this thesis – whether it is possible to locate the Dutch Afro artists as native to the Dutch artistic landscape – was best articulated during a conversation I had at Cinema Olanda: Platform in Witte de With, Rotterdam.

> We had artists of color representing the Netherlands; Stanley Brouwn is one of them. However, they have done so under the then prevailing modernity. So, what we have not had is an artist of color representing the Netherlands, and their color, so to speak being self-evident. Now, the question that I would like to see answered, is: Could we have an artist […,] be presented at the Venice Biennale, in all their fabulous blackness, and that presented as Dutch? … We're getting there.[21]

[20] Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried Van Damme, *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008).
[21] Charl Landvreugd in Wendelien van Oldenborgh, 'Public-Platform-Open-Letter', *Blessing and Transgressing: A Live Institute (2012–2017)*, ed. Defne Ayas (Rotterdam: Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 2018), pp. 268–9 (p. 269).

Introduction

In chapter one, *Imagining: Afro-Dutch artists in the Dutch artistic landscape,* I take racial, ethnic, spatial and geographical hybridity as a departing point and show how it is misunderstood as nationally non-native in the current art-theoretical surroundings. The aim of that chapter is to demonstrate that, based on the idea that Dutch Afro-ness is differently constituted from what the African-American and Black British discourses on Afro-ness would propose, contemporary Dutch Afro-ness is in a state of pre-Blackness (becoming Black). This state of being opens up the possibility of thinking of Dutch Afro-ness along the axis of cultural belonging rather than the axis of race difference. From a Dutch perspective, this proposition opens up the possibility of exploring an artistic environment beyond the representational.

The axis of cultural belonging was touched upon as early as 1988 when the Dutch Afro-Surinamese writer Edgar Cairo (1948–2000) argued that the youngsters with a Surinamese immigrant background , '"the disco generation", see themselves as Dutch'.[22] Being part of that generation, I argue that this understanding of the self as culturally Dutch resulted in a particular Dutch subjectivity that was not transnational, as with those of migrant worker background who travelled back and forth, but distinctively national in its constitution. This particular sense of Dutchness demands an understanding in line with how it is integrated epistemologically and linguistically in the Netherlands to produce contemporary art. In the Dutch context, Dutch Afro artistic subjectivity framed as culturally other, and therefore not nationally native, is hazardous to the artist's sense of self. Accepting this Other position and coating oneself in the position society provides on the basis of ethnicity could result in conceptualising a departure like Sun Ra in *Space is the Place.*[23] Alternatively, when rejecting flight and affirming national nativeness through culture, there are issues surrounding the seemingly contradictory qualities of a hybrid cultural subjectivity in the process of 're-becoming' Dutch, meaning asserting cultural Dutchness through Afro-ness and 'becoming' Black simultaneously. Becoming Black in the Dutch context is figuring out how, or whether, to move from the specifics of the Afro-Dutch condition to Blackness as a racial category and political tool. The concern is not with the binary but with the equivalence of the qualities stemming from the so-called original cultural backgrounds.

What then is this culture that affirms cultural nativeness by taking hybridity as its departing point? Why not work with the concept of Créolité, as proposed by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant in *In Praise of Creoleness*?[24] After all, Créolité as a literary movement answered

[22] Charles H. Rowell and Edgar Cairo, 'An Interview with Cairo, Edgar (The history of Surinam in terms of slaves)', *Callaloo,* Vol. 21, No. 3, Caribbean Literature from Suriname, The Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, and The Netherlands: A Special Issue (Summer, 1989) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 693-695 (p.693).
[23] John Coney, *Sun Ra and his Intergalactic Solar Arkastra: Space is the Place*, USA, November 1974.
[24] Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, 'Éloge de la Créolité', 1989, trans. by Mohamed Bouya Taled Khyar, 'In Praise of Creoleness', *Callaloo,* no.13 (1990), pp. 886–909.

Négritude by replacing the illusion of Africa that had taken the place of the illusion of Europe. Here, Africa is replaced by Créole and 'the freedom of a bilingual who refuses absolute authority to either of his languages and who has the courage to disobey them both'.[25] The main argument of Créolité is that, with the transatlantic slave trade, people from different tribes formed a new mixed tribe. Could this not be the prototype for contemporary Dutch cultural citizenship? Here is where Créolité and the idea locating Dutch Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch environment diverge. In this environment, Dutchness blended with Creoleness is equally claimed as the source of a different reality and artistic discourse geographically located in the 'old world'. What evolves out of this is that this environment is still in a state of pre-intelligibility: that of an art 'production without a home audience, ignorant of the authors/readers interaction which is the primary condition of the development'.[26] In order to project into the future beyond an obvious postcolonial reading and to remove the misunderstanding surrounding this artistic subjectivity, it is crucial to understand it through the material that is the Afro-Dutch condition, meaning the social, political (and artistic) circumstance and how this was constituted in the Dutch art world. From the perspective of the artist, this entails understanding the biological and cultural as equal parts in the becoming of the subjectivity that takes hybridity as its departure point and moves from an understanding of fixed migrant identity to multilayered Dutch subjectivity. This approach pushes the understanding of the role the artists and their work can play in the production of contemporary and future ideas about cultural citizenship and belonging in the Netherlands. It is the basis for the idea of a new artistic environment beyond the representational, an imagined normal space. The idea of cultural nativeness in an imagined normal space, as proposed in this thesis, does not work through a reinforcing of racial difference to accommodate diversity but through a cultural and geographical move into a new native environment. As I have already argued in the peer-reviewed article *Notes on Imagining Afropea,*[27]

> Drawing new attention to the Afropea concept [this new artistic environment] may bring certain benefits: inhabiting a zone of separation from the existing art discourse on blackness, while establishing a novel category that seeks to confirms its nativeness in Dutch and diaspora cultural discourse. As a term that finds relevance on the European mainland, Afropea points toward a meaningful articulation of the Black diaspora – elaborating its own powerful vocabulary in order to imagine an alternative future for the shared continental condition.[28]

[25] Ibid.,127.
[26] Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau and Raphaël Confiant, 'Éloge de la Créolité', 1989, trans. by Mohamed Bouya Taled Khyar, 'In Praise of Creoleness', *Callaloo,* no.13 (1990), pp. 886–909.
[27] Charl Landvreugd, 'Notes on Imagining Afropea', *Open Arts Journal*, Issue 5, Summer 2016 (Milton Keynes: Open University, 2016), pp. 41–52.
[28] Ibid., 51.

This paper might suggest that I am thinking about a space exclusively for Afro people, but the imagined normal space is applicable to a broader migrant background and not solely to Afro-ness. To get there, chapter one places my personal history in the context of my peers primarily to outline what the Afro-Dutch condition entails. Unpacking the reality of the Afro-Dutch artistic condition, the chapter investigates Dutch government labelling of Afro subjects, and Afro self-naming strategies and positioning in the art landscape. Working through the Afro-Dutch condition locates this thesis at the intersection between knowledge increase, Afro awareness, agency and self-actualisation towards a specific focus where Afro-ness can be evident to itself as a point of departure occupying normal space in the Dutch artistic context. A normal space where a black subject is not specified as deviating from the current norm because in the current social and political understanding this subject seems always tied up with a reading through (dis)located whiteness. It is only when everybody can understand the subject through the specificities of their own subjectivity, and the subject has become a-specific, that occupying normal space is achieved for Afro subjects in the Dutch context. Placing this (re)becoming Dutch in the wider diaspora context that has influenced the Dutch understanding of Afro-ness, chapter one delves into the phases in African-American artistic history that go from vindication, emancipation and representation to post-representation (1910s – 1990s). Because of its similarities with the Netherlands in generational development in regard to (post)colonial subjects arriving in the metropole, the chapter discusses the development of Black art in Britain (post-WWII – 1990s). The social and cultural history of these diasporic environments come to the Dutch through digital media and in tandem with the development of a contemporary diaspora Afro sense of self influencing Afro awareness in the Netherlands (1982–2010).

In the course of this imagining towards a new artistic environment beyond the representational, I take all of this history as a given and I appropriate Roland Barthes' *Writing Degree Zero*[29] not only as an idea about expressing a projection, but also literally as a degree zero: a departure point that takes (global and local) cultural hybridity as a given. Embracing the status quo as the inherent quality of 'the now' makes it possible to speak from a physical, cultural and linguistic hybridity as a self-evident point of departure, rather than as a contested space. The Dutch Afro position in the artistic landscape is a minor one but, as Simon O'Sullivan notes about Deleuze and Guattari's take on Kafka,[30] 'The minor, as we shall see, also names the production of a specifically collective enunciation; the calling forth of a people-yet-to-come who in some senses were already here, albeit masked by typical representational models (precisely the major).'[31] To actually articulate this people-yet-to-come that are actually a people-already-there, it is

[29] Roland Barthes, *Writing Degree Zero*, trans. by Annette Lavers and Colin Smith (New York: Beacon Press, 1977).
[30] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986).
[31] Simon O'Sullivan, 'Notes Towards a Minor Art Practice', *Drain: Journal of Contemporary Art and Culture*, *'Syncretism'*, 2(2) (2005) www.drainmag.com, acc. 18-09-2018.

important to understand how this presence is lived and moulded as a practice of everyday life.[32] It was during an introductory class by Rosalind Krauss on Structuralism and Poststructuralism that the environment of the everyday in which this people-yet-to-come (the self-evidently hybrid subjectivity) already occupied normal space emerged. Krauss' reading of the poem *Un coup de dés jamais n'abolira le hasard*[33] by Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–98) was most concerned with the 'hyphen' or folds between the pages that is part of the structure that holds the text. It is here where the idea emerged that the fold can be the source of an ephemeral existence and experience (the everyday) before the page is turned.

As a whole, chapter one argues corporal, geographical and cultural hybridity as a given from which to start imagining from the location of the Netherlands. Looking at cultural and artistic history, it substantiates that American, British and Caribbean language and concepts are not always sufficient to speak or support the Dutch Afro context as we are in a state of 'becoming' Black, meaning possibly moving from the Afro-Dutch condition to Blackness as a racial category and political tool. However, through Edouard Glissant's idea of spiral retelling,[34] these (race-based theoretical) languages and concepts move into the Dutch context and become tools to unpack the Dutch artistic environment with its focus on culture. In order to move towards the end of an essentialised culture where this subject is culturally native, it is imperative to imagine a space of inherent hybridity where difference is the default. In this imagined normal space, the artistic subject is invested in the paradox of simultaneously becoming and refusing to be 'black'.

What this blackness has meant thus far is explored in chapter two, *Tracing: Dutch art critique, exhibitions and cultural policy; from exotic to diversity.* For this chapter I drew from the *Kunstbeeld* contemporary art magazine, exhibition catalogues, cultural policy papers and interviews to construct a view of the developments over the past 40 years. The aim of this chapter is to map the changes in views on, and interaction with, non-Western visual culture from transcultural (1970s) to diversity (1990s) that led up to this moment of the imagined normal space in the Dutch context that is proposed in this doctoral thesis. The understanding by the government of the Dutch Afro subjectivity as non-Western, on socio-economic grounds determined by the (postcolonial) country of origin, dictates how it is talked about. This chapter brings together the views that had consequences for how the artistic production is received in the Dutch art world and how the artists see themselves.

Dealing with this gaze as a Dutch Afro artist pushed me towards writing and this PhD. Quoting Homi Bhabha, 'I have chosen […] the importance of the space of writing, and the problematic of address,

[32] See; Michel de Certeau, *The practice of everyday Life* (Los Angeles, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).
[33] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Un Coup de Dés Jamais N'Abolira Le Hasard* (Bruges: Imprimerie Sainte Catherine, 1914).
[34] Max Hantel,'Rhizomes and the Space of Translation: On Edouard Glissat's Spiral Retelling', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism,* Vol. 17, No. 3 (42) (Durham: Duke University Press, November 2013), pp. 100–12 (p. 111).

at the very heart of the liberal tradition because it is here that the myth of the "transparency" of the human agent and the reasonableness of political action is most forcefully asserted.'[35] Writing encourages factual research into the question of where the Dutch landscape located the artists and their work. At the same time, considering W.E.B. Du Bois' conceptualisation of double-consciousness,[36] the Afro artist cannot be oblivious to their own gaze on the work produced and also has a role to play in the process. This artist cannot be unaware of the role the minority position plays in the reading of the work. To combat their own gaze, the artist must grapple with Gayatri Spivak's notion of the internally colonised[37] and possibly undo, or embrace, this figure to regain an emancipated form of autonomous agency. This needs to be done without falling into the trap of Afro-supremacy as opposed to the Euro-supremacy of the internally colonised. In doing so, the Dutch Afro artist's work has the potential to elevate itself from standardised postcolonial readings put upon it by the reader, critic or the self.

Holland no abi tifi ma a e beti \ Holland has no teeth yet it bites.
(Surinamese proverb)

To understand these readings, chapter two reviews Dutch art critique on Black and Brown artists as it appeared in *Kunstbeeld* (1976–2012) where the celebrated scholars, curators and art critics Wouter Welling, Paul Faber and Rob Perrée wrote extensively. Over the years these authors discussed the emergence of world art and contextualised Dutch exhibitions dealing with Afro artists in a global non-Western art context. Furthermore, the chapter provides insights into Dutch cultural policies around the well-being of, and art made by, people with a migrant background in the Netherlands that shaped Afro artistic self-understanding. The chapter concludes with the Dutch Afro artistic voices speaking of the way they were framed and how they framed themselves.

Except for the artists, these voices understood Dutch Afro subjectivity not as an integral part of Dutch culture but, through comparison with the same racial group in the USA and UK, as a different culture that needed to be integrated. Myth plays a key role in this process when it comes to Dutchness and how this translates to Dutch Afro artists and non-Western exhibitions. It is the colonial myth of cultural superiority buried deep in the collective unconscious that translates to the cultural archive of the West and specifically the Netherlands. As Edward Said points out in *Culture and Imperialism,*[38] its relationship with the 'peripheral' world heavily influences this cultural archive. How this specific cultural archive and its inherent mythology come into play and influenced Dutch Afro artists' work in the Netherlands is

[35] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 55.
[36] William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, Avenel, NJ: Gramercy Books, 1994).
[37] Gayatri Spivak, *The Spivak Reader: Selected Works of Gayati Chakravorty Spivak* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) p. 24.
[38] Edward Said, *Culture & Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994) p. 59.

dissected by Gloria Wekker in her book *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*.[39] Her book is 'dedicated to an exploration of a strong paradox that is operative in the Netherlands and that is […] at the heart of the nation: the passion, forcefulness and even aggression that race, in its intersection with gender, sexuality and class, elicits among the white population, while at the same time the reactions of denial, disavowal and elusiveness reign supreme'.[40] Wekker is 'intrigued by the way race pops up in unexpected places and moments […] while a dominant discourse [the myth] stubbornly maintains that the Netherlands is and always has been color-blind and antiracist, a place of extraordinary hospitality and tolerance towards the racialized/ethnicized other'.[41] By covering Dutch art critique, exhibitions and cultural policy, **t**his paradox and how the investment in the myth of non-racial equivalence works become clear for the non-Dutch reader.

The idea of national identity that is projected through art raises a few points that I would like to touch on. From another country's perspective, writing about art from a region suggests research and meditation and assumes a reflection on perceived truths about the country and its inhabitants.[42] The national identity of both parties is constructed through this cultural representation where the invented nature of nationality and the role of culture define the nations in relation to each other.[43] According to Edward Said, 'Journalism only clarifies and fixes what is normally implied in the very existence of […] a national identity.'[44] With this I mean the identity of the writing party, which has its own set of 'implied and shared characteristics, prejudices and fixed habits of thoughts'.[45] Effectively, national culture can only exist with a social construct. In that sense, Africa, for instance, can only be defined by a specific political circumstance.[46] For example, by using the idea of 'the African artist', articles seem to suggest not only one national / continental culture, but a specific (political) mindset.[47] More specifically, they construct a context in which modern art from all parts of Africa can be placed. By only reviewing specific contemporary art from the African continent the critics construct a national / continental African identity for their audiences. They articulate a discourse of African nationality, which is presented for acceptance through the chosen art objects.[48] The purpose seems to be to consolidate stereotypes by overproducing images that are read through the previously mentioned constructed context. In this way, the critics

[39] Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016) p. 16.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Edward Said, *Representation of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.21.
[43] Brian Wallis, 'Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy' in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles,* ed. by Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (London: Routledge, 1994) pp. 265-82 (p. 265).
[44] Edward Said, *Representation of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.22.
[45] Bill Ashcroft and Hussein Kadhim, *Edward Said and the Post-colonial* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2001), p.12.
[46] Brian Wallis, 'Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy' in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles,* ed. by Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (London: *Routledge*, *1994*) pp. 265-82 (p. 266).
[47] Edward Said, *Representation of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.23.
[48] Brian Wallis, 'Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy' in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles,* ed. by Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (London: *Routledge*, *1994*) pp. 265-82 (p. 267).

maintain the ideological dominance of the West over the rest. When self-representation comes into play, the curator Brian Wallis claims that there is 'a central paradox common in national exhibitions: in order to establish their status within international community, individualized nations are compelled to dramatize conventionalized versions of their national images, asserting past glories and amplifying stereotypical differences'.[49] Dealing with the 'other' and the 'other' inside the artistic borders of the Dutch environment, it is useful to look at Edward Said's description of Orientalism. He comes up with three kinds of which the third applies to this situation.[50] He defines Orientalism as 'the corporate institution for dealing with it […] by making statements about it, authorising views of it, describing it, teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient'. [51] Effectively, this means that, according to Said, the one written about is not a free subject for thought and action for either side.[52] He argues that the critic on and curator of the 'other' art are unfortunately challenged by loyalty. Belonging to the majority group in society, they (regardless of ethnicity) are not above the ties that bind to that community.[53] This also goes for the 'other' artist when criticising or trying to come to terms with the past. They are often looked at to represent and speak out for their community and can bear the disgrace of their community when associated with the 'wrong' side or bear witness to the collective symbolic guilt.

Chapter two conclusively argues that, in the Dutch context, the reading of works made by artists with a migrant background has been heavily informed through notions from and about Black and Brown arts elsewhere. This happened through colonial notions going into the postcolonial such as the exotic and mystic producing the contrast between traditional and Western art practices. Within that construction, a pre-colonial visual language that is recognised as art can be the basis for a cultural identity, as in the case of Latin America. This also goes for appreciation for the visual language coming from the Eastern regions which is regarded as more valuable in the eyes of the Dutch than art coming from the West (new world) or South (Africa). With the false binary between ethnicity and the quality of the work, or the difference between ethnography and art, the so-called quality argument comes into play. With the development of the idea of world art, the problematic of displaying, locating and interpreting non-Western art came into full view in the Netherlands. Synchronous with this development, the Dutch government created policy specifically to accommodate the 'difference' and consequently influenced curatorial decisions and strategies in museums. The chapter evidences that, with the move from a transcultural approach to one of

[49] Ibid., 270.
[50] Edward Said, 'from *Orientalism'*, in *Art in Theory 1900–2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul J. Woods (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), pp. 1005–9 (pp. 1006–7).
[51] Ibid., 1007.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Edward Said, *Representation of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994) p.30.

diversity, the artists who were participating in the general art discourse became racialised, which made their work secondary to their ethnicity (effectively reaffirming the quality argument).

This chapter brings together the development from transcultural via world art to 'diversity' as an idea that did not result in locating Dutch Afro art production as native to the Netherlands (in the imagined normal space) but rather affirmed its geographical location as outside of the West. The next chapter builds on these developments and the consequent outcome of consecutive policies and turns of events in the arts that resulted in the pivotal moment when the Mondriaan Fund initiated the *Intendant Culturele Diversiteit* (Cultural Diversity Administrator) (2005–08).[54]

The aim of chapter three, *Experiencing: Cultural Diversity Price and Be(com)ing Dutch* is to explore this 2005–08 Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit (Development prize for Cultural Diversity) moment through the institutional lens that is the Van Abbemuseum. The Van Abbemuseum is selected because of the role played by the director Charles Esche and curator Annie Fletcher in transforming a Dutch public museum, grounded in Western art, into the leading Dutch institute with an 'experimental approach towards art's role in society'[55] today. By looking at this moment through the optics of those involved, their experience of this process and being an agent in and of this assignment towards 'cultural diversity' in the museum displays how thinking about this question along the axis of culture worked in the Dutch institutional context.

The problem of cultural diversity was embedded in the larger societal angst and integration issues post 9/11 (2001) and the murder of Pim Fortuyn (2002) resulting in a focus on people with a Muslim background. The executed curatorial programme was concerned with the idea of a European cultural citizenship conceptualised through the impracticable idea of the nation state in a future Europe and what that implies. This was postulated in the idea of what it means to be and become Dutch. With the *Be(com)ing Dutch* programme (2006–08), the museum foregrounded the question of national identity and whether nationality was imposed by birth or something that we can become.[56] The international director Charles Esche and curator Annie Fletcher were responding to their own European question of 'what it was to try and take on this identity of being Dutch as a non-Dutch European'.[57] While putting together the programme, they looked out for Afro-ness in the Dutch artistic scene but were using concepts and language constructed and

[54] Mondriaanfonds, http://www.intendant.nl/intendant/english/index.php , acc. 08-05-15.
[55] Van Abbemuseum, 'Who are We', https://vanabbemuseum.nl/en/about-the-museum/organisation/who-we-are/, acc. 05-11-2018.
[56] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19 April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 3.
[57] Charles Esche, interview with Charles Esche at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 21-11-2016.

framed through the American and British Black histories. As a consequence, the programme failed to identify the Afro-Dutch condition and the specific Dutch Afro artistic problem space that came with it. Their blind spots towards particular Dutch sensibilities, and their Eurocentric cultural modality of diversity, did not include Afro-ness and effectively did not incorporate the colonial legacy of the Netherlands. With a strong focus on the then prevailing public conversation about the relation between Islamic and Dutch culture, Afro-ness and Afro self-representation disappeared into the background. Their museum-wide approach corresponded with the artist Stuart Davis' idea that art is not a practice disassociated from other human activities.[58] This view went against the then ruling idea among directors and art critics that art and museum are autonomous and yielded enormous negative response in the press.

Through interviews with the director and curators, chapter three uncovers the museum's recent history and the reasoning behind the programme ten years after *Be(com)ing Dutch*. The Van Abbemuseum's exhibition archive on paper and online, which includes all the reviews in magazines and other media, provides insight into the situation and atmosphere at the time. What the reviewed material shows is that the appointment of a foreign director, Charles Esche, and curator, Annie Fletcher, brought a critical international discourse to the museum. They were able to interrogate the role of this institute and pursue a reinvention of it by examining the supposed Western axis of art autonomy in Dutch museums. Despite their efforts, ten years after *Be(com)ing Dutch* the Van Abbemuseum has not yet produced a curator of colour. The whole chapter demonstrates how diversity is a problem of the majority group grappling with a changing definition of art. The public assessment of the *Be(com)ing Dutch* project in the press evidences that Dutch art critique was measuring artistic diversity along the lines of the quality argument. In this post 9/11 artistic environment, where the focus was not on Afro-ness, because the larger art system was focusing on Islam, the Afro subjects and artists found the space to think constructively about their position in the landscape. This chapter brings together the developments in the museum as the backdrop for the Afro artists working on their Dutchness in the arts, which is discussed in the next chapter.

[58] Stuart Davis, 'The Artist Today', in Herschel B. Chipp, *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), pp. 466–70 (p. 468).

Thinking about the position of the Dutch Afro artists in the early 2000s through David Scott's idea of the 'problem space' locates these artists with a migrant background at the same juncture of imagining a normal space as this doctoral thesis. As I discuss in chapter one, Scott's idea of the problem space is in summary 'a conjunctural space, a historically constituted discursive space. This discursive conjuncture is defined by a complex of questions and answers – or better, a complex of statements, propositions, resolutions and arguments offered in answer to largely implicit questions or problems.'[59]

Chapter four, *Inhabiting: Alakondre Wakaman (he who moves in all spaces)*, is an analysis of the 2005–08 *Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit* (Development prize for Cultural Diversity) moment from the perspective of the Dutch Afro artists. The aim of this is to demonstrate the efforts that were made by the artists to create a space beyond the confining discourse of natives and immigrants.

Instead of fighting, you take it out on the dancefloor.[60]

Being singled out as an exception to the rule is a position that needs to be carefully navigated. Surrounded by presumptions concerning its biography, the artist then becomes like Jorge Luis Borges, 'the one that things happen to'.[61] However, if, as discussed in the Chomsky-Foucault debate on human nature, a solid critical framework can be created through a 'collective and complex transformation',[62] it may be that views about the artist can change and a new *grille*[63] [grid] can be applied. By coming together as young Dutch Afro artistic subjects, the artists Remy Jungerman, Gillion Grantsaan and Michael Tedja established the 'Wakaman*'* group (2005–08) at the beginning of the century and intended to do exactly that. They aimed to create a new grid with 'its own rules, decisions and limitations, […] its own inner logic, its parameters and its blind alleys, all of which lead to the modification of the point of origin'[64] which was the diversity question in the Dutch arts. Through curatorial practices, the artists expected to formulate an active counter-power political position that would enable them, as Deleuze and Guattari say, to

[59] 'David Scott by Stuart Hall', in *Bomb,* No. 90, (New York City: New Arts Publication, winter 2004/5), https://bombmagazine.org/articles/david-scott/, acc. 18-09-2018
The concept of 'problem space' is more fully developed in David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: the Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).
[60] Malcolm McLaren and the Bootzilla Orchestra feauturing Lourdes and Willie Ninja, 'Deep in Vogue', *Waltz Darling* (New York City: Epic, 1989).
[61] Jorge Luis Borges, 'Borges and I', *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), (pp. 282–3).
[62] Noam Chomsky and Michel Foucault, 'Human Nature: Justice VS Power', in John Rajchman, *The Chomsky-Foucault Debate: On Human Nature* (New York, London: The New Press, 2006), pp. 1–67 (p. 18).
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ibid.

'take flight'.[65] The chapter investigates how, by coming together as artist in a collective, the Wakaman group examined two different ways of curating exhibitions with, or including, (Dutch) Afro artists. One way was to explicitly become Afro and locate the art production in the diaspora discourse while the other was by proposing to *Eat the Frame!* Both methods were simultaneously grappling with becoming and refusing to be Black as it was understood in the context of Dutch diversity thinking. As I argued in *Spirited Gestures: Notes on Life masquerading as Art* (2012), the process of finding a voice as a minor group results in performing a particular form of masquerade that takes the form of 'reiterating desirable social behavior [sic]'[66] where the actions are 'spirited by normative desires',[67] and where 'membership of the performing group guarantees a level of escape, liberation, protection and prestige'.[68] For the artists, collectively taking their critique and the way they saw themselves out of the symbolic realm, through active investment in, and being authorised by, those in power had the potential to lead to it functioning as a decisive 'community and opinion-forming device'.[69] As the interviews and the reviewed material centred on the development of the Wakaman group showed, both curatorial models produced artists who exhibited 'normative behaviour with exceptional talents'[70] or, differently said, passed for culturally knowable in the context of Dutch diversity thinking in the arts.

Going through the private and public archives, desktop research, Dutch Afro exhibition histories, and the books coming out of the Wakaman project testifies to how the question of diversity formed the mechanisms of passing as a cultural practice in the visual arts. To understand this in the Dutch frame of reference I would like to turn your attention to the queer writer, columnist and (mytho)poet Edgar Cairo who had a slightly different approach from that of Frantz Fanon when it comes to Afro-ness in the continental European situation. 'Cairo, whose major works were produced in the 70s and 80s, was less concerned with the psychological effects of whiteness on the black body than with how to remain black within a white society […] It is a small nuance but I believe it to be a different approach to the same problem. Where Fanon

[65] Charl Landvreugd, 'Fight the Power: Notes on Sound Track Stage April 2008', in *Amateur – Wendelien van Oldenborgh,* ed. by Emily Pethick and Wendelien van Oldenborgh with David Morris (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), pp. 85–99 (p. 97).
[66] Charl Landvreugd, 'Spirited Gestures: Notes on Life masquerading as Art', in Robert R. Roos, *Who More Sci-Fi Than Us: Contemporary Art from the Caribbean*, ed. by Nancy Hoffmann and Frank Verputten (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2012), pp. 14–19 (p.16).
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 17-18.
[70] Ibid.

is very important but belongs to a more anti-colonial or postcolonial struggle, Cairo's work can be drawn into the contemporary as a negotiation of the self-evidence of blackness, at least in the Netherlands.'[71]

Edgar Cairo's first book *Temekoe*[72] (1969, 36 pages) dealt with generational trauma. It was written in what he called 'the black man's Creole' (Sranang Tongo) that developed from West African languages mixed with English, Portuguese and Dutch. Due to the fact that the enslaved were not allowed to speak Dutch, Sranang Tongo developed in Suriname as a lingua franca, a pidgin language, with a strong African influence.[73] This first version of the book, that is driven by the absence of the response in the call-and-response way of storytelling, should be understood as a Senghorian-style Négritude book that is militant in rejecting white aesthetics and conforming only to the formal tool of transmission. Cairo felt obliged to defend this way of storytelling by saying: 'Why couldn't a bush Negro make a clear narrative in his tradition? Not extensive in terms of Dante and Petrarch, but as deep.'[74] The second version *Temekoe/Kopzorg*[75] (1979, 109 pages) moves the story from the sphere of being knowledgeable about the narrating culture and being able to imagine the response to the text to the more public sphere of using Dutch in the way it is spoken in the streets of Suriname. By now the story is accessible to Dutch speakers who do not understand Sranang, but one still needs knowledge of Suriname society to fully appreciate the nuances. According to historian Ineke Phaf-Rheinberger, the double title indicates a juxtaposition of Sranan Tongo with Dutch.[76] This juxtaposition takes place on the level of language: Sranang and Dutch; of meaning: Curse and Mindworry; and in metaphysics: Generational and Personal. These differences point to the issues involved in translation and address. The third version *Kopzorg* (1988, 195 pages) is written in standard Dutch with Surinamese Dutch expressions. It explains all the intricacies of the story, thus making it completely understandable and transparent for the Dutch-speaking world. Along the way it looks like Edgar Cairo lost the opacity in his work, but I argue that, due to his linguistic influence and

[71] Wayne Modest, 'On the Self-Evidence of Blackness: An Interview with Charl Landvreugd', *Small Axe*, Volume 18, No. 3 (Durham: Duke University Press, November 2014, (No. 45)), pp. 133–4.
[72] Edgar Cairo, *Temekoe* (Paramaribo: Bureau Volkslectuur, 1969).
[73] Charles H. Rowell and Edgar Cairo, 'An Interview with Cairo, Edgar (The history of Surinam in terms of slaves)', *Callaloo,* Vol. 21, No. 3, Caribbean Literature from Suriname, The Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, and The Netherlands: A Special Issue (Summer, 1989) (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins university press, 1989) pp. 693-695 (p.693).
[74] Ibid., 694.
[75] Edgar Cairo, *Temekoe / Kopzorg* (Haarlem: In de Knipscheer, 1979).
[76] Michiel van Kempen, 'Surinamese Short Narrative', in *A History of Literature in the Caribbean: English- and Dutch-speaking countries*, ed. by Albert James Arnold, Julio Rodriguez-Luis and J. Michael Dash (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1994), pp. 543–62 (p. 553).

apparent transparency, he created what Edouard Glissant called 'widespread consent [for] specific opacities'[77] in the Dutch language. According to Michiel van Kempen, 'It is a language teeming with syntactic borrowings from Sranan, with old sayings and proverbs, with onomatopoeic inventions and idioms of startling ingenuity. Cairo stretched his linguistic virtuosity so far as to arrive at a new, original literary language, a new "Black Dutch".'[78]

When looking at the three versions, it is clear that Cairo moves from the position of Gayatiri Spivak's native informant[79] to the position of a (post)colonial subject editing the occurrence from a privileged, distanced position.[80] The evolution of *Temekoe* from 1969 to 1988 gives us an insight into the development of Dutch Afro artistic subjectivity in the Netherlands and serves as a clue to the intellectual labour and reinvention of self that is necessary to acquire a place in Dutch cultural life. In that sense, the three books together function as a memory document and manual for a whole generation who were brought up to culturally pass as knowable in the Dutch environment. Edgar Cairo produced a minor literature that only eventually influenced the Dutch language. To write from this point, in my third-language English, from the specific local sensibilities of a Dutch person with a Surinamese background effectively produces something similarly hybrid. Combined, the three forms of knowledge result in a sense of opacity in relation to 'normative' cultural conditions of writing in dominant discourse. With visual art as their third language, the *Wakaman* group came across these same issues when they attempted to translate their multiple cultural backgrounds into an understandable visual language that could support their re-becoming Dutch. It was a venture that was necessary to tackle the strong Dutch paradox of race that is discussed by Gloria Wekker in her book *White Innocence*.[81]

Through examination of the Afro-Dutch condition that produced artistic curatorial and linguistic agency before and during the *Wakaman* period, it becomes clear why these artists thought the new space was necessary. Chapter four demonstrates that Wakaman tried to carve out a new space by establishing a distinct presence in the Dutch art world. From this effort two ways of curating emerged. One followed the logic of the existing model that geographically located artists outside of the Western canon but with the understanding that the authority on cultural and artistic relevance was not rooted in the Dutch art world but in the diaspora. The other followed the logic of 'diversity' into 'super-diversity' and proposed to *Eat the Frame!* altogether. This chapter brings together how, born out of necessity, the first group developed

[77] Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2010), p. 194.
[78] Michiel van Kempen et al., *Vernacular Literature in Suriname*, *Callaloo,* Vol. 21, No. 3, Caribbean Literature from Suriname, The Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, and The Netherlands: A Special Issue (Summer, 1989) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 630–44 (p.640).
[79] Gayatri C. Spivak, 'Philosophy', *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a history of the Vanishing present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 4–9.
[80] Charles H. Rowell and Edgar Cairo, 'An Interview with Cairo, Edgar (The history of Surinam in terms of slaves)', *Callaloo,* Vol. 21, No. 3, Caribbean Literature from Suriname, The Netherlands Antilles, Aruba, and The Netherlands: A Special Issue (Summer, 1989) (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins university press, 1989) pp. 693-695 (p.639).
[81] Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence; Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

action research as a curatorial practice with the specific aim of changing the status quo, which I call action curating. With the aim of changing not only their own position in the landscape but also the institutional approach towards their work, these Dutch Afro artists produced a discourse on contemporary arts in the Netherlands. The instance of the different Wakaman approaches are used for the action curating that I developed for the last leg of the research that was carried out at the Van Abbemuseum in 2017 and is discussed in the next chapter.

The Van Abbemuseum's engagement with my research and critique on the *Be(com)ing Dutch* moment led to an invitation to participate in their *Be(com)ing More* (2017) programme. This provided me with an opportunity to test my ideas on action curating. To that end, I authored a day called *Krutu* with 26 participants consisting of artists, curators, artist-curators, critics and directors who are all active in the debates about diversity in the Netherlands. The intention was to discover the status of diversity in the visual arts in 2017. The questions were based on the research and tested my proposition to depart from 'the prevailing British and Americo-centric discourse'.[82]

Taking the idea of action research as a curatorial practice resulting in action curating as the point of departure, chapter five is invested in the practical side of this idea within the larger institutional framework. In the moment this method projects into the future from the shared lived experience that embraces its inner multiplicity as the default. This approach allowed for an exploration along the edges of the imagined normal space's ephemeral quality. It is as a way to imagine beyond the structure, and existing spaces that hinder going beyond the representational. Herein, the idea of the imagined normal space is more central than actually labelling it. Therefore, to stay true to the specificities and sensitivities of the Dutch location, throughout this moment, there is a focus on language. The ambition is to highlight aesthetic articulations and sensibilities that enable what emerges from the edges of the imagined normal space without being primarily steered by the English-language race discourse. What surfaces from approaching the subject from this point of view is the agency that is obtained from artistic production while being subject to the social and political structure, or what I call the Afro-Dutch condition. Perception of the Afro-Dutch condition from inside and outside of the community is heavily influenced by racial comparison with the United States and Great Britain. This comparison shows a difference in generational arrival and development in time (spiral retelling) and links to a broader diaspora history through digital media. A one-on-one comparison with these other Black spaces is flawed and incomplete

[82] Paul Gilroy,' Foreword: Migrancy, culture, and a new map of Europe', in H. Raphael-Hernández (ed.) *Blackening Europe; The African American Presence* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp.xi–xxii (p. xvi).

as the development of Dutch Afro awareness is in a state of becoming Black where the roles of race and culture on that becoming are still being debated.

The role of Dutch Afro-ness in the imagined normal space is predicated on its ability to move beyond the end of essential black subject without ever having to be post-black. In this 'constructive paradox of embracing Afro-ness while not speaking of it as race or ethnicity but as culture', the question then is whether moving from Afro to black is a useful tool. Within the current political climate, this is a Utopian proposition of mythological proportions. As Benjamin Buchloch argues when speaking about Joseph Beuys, the 'conditions that determine the reality of an individual's being and work in historical time' are disregarded to present a myth to people who lack comprehension of historic actuality.[83] Be that as it may, it is possible to be aware of historic actuality, acknowledge its importance in the production of subjectivity, embrace it, while choosing not to centralise it in one's existence. To reiterate, the imagining and the action curating which I employ departs from degree zero and is aimed at altering the gazes while supporting a sense of common (cultural) identity. This, according to Edward Said when quoting the cultural critic Matthew Arnold, is the role of intellectuals.[84]

The naming of this imagined normal space and the subjects that occupy it is a daunting task filled with linguistic traps. In a sense, it is the conjuring of a myth and a language for the future that is conceived from the specificity of the contemporary Dutch environment – an environment that, through the words that are used, shapes a specific social and political space from which to operate. These words have a history and, as Roland Barthes argues, 'language needs special conditions to become myth'.[85] However, he also notes that mythical concepts are not fixed: 'they can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely'.[86] The concept is a constituting element of myth, so in order to decipher myth one must be able to name the concept in historical context. This is the work many Black artists have done and some of my fellow Dutch Afro artists do right now. Alternatively, I propose embracing the troublesome marriage between the subject, society and historical context as degree zero from which to project into the future.

By concentrating on the production of language that considers the specifics of local Dutch sensibilities, and speaking only Dutch, the participants had to step out of their comfort zone and embrace the inconvenience of producing new ways of speaking. This strategy proved to be a successful way of

[83] Benjamin H.D. Buchloch, 'Beuys: The twilight of the idol – Prelimenary Notes for a Critique', in *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry: Essays on European and American art from 1955 to 1975* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), pp. 41–64 (p. 42).
[84] Edward Said, *Representation of the Intellectual* (London: Vintage, 1994) p.22.
[85] Roland Barthes, 'Myth Today', in *Mythologies*, translation by Annette Lavers (New York: The Noonday Press, 1991), pp. 107–46 (p. 107).
[86] Ibid., 119.

subverting the concepts that are used when English is allowed. It undid the advance in language and jargon through which participants such as myself could pass as more knowledgeable than the other. This was an important aspect, as passing for knowledgeable by throwing around English language-based concepts is reinforcing the hegemony of this discourse on the Dutch debate. By doing so, I do not disavow this sort of passing as 'a viable survival strategy, which has the potential to disrupt'.[87]

The action curating in the form of a 'Krutu' confirmed that, even though in the discussion subjects are placed in racial categories, our Dutch upbringing of presumed non-racial equivalence requires us to look at passing not in terms of skin pigmentation but in terms of subject behaviour in relation to the argument of passing. Lived experience evidences that people identify with categories that are seen (or would be seen) as belonging to the other racial group. In doing so, ideas surrounding whiteness and blackness as race norms in Dutch inner-city society are more stereotypically ethnically diversified. Consequently, the idea of race performativity generally does not hold up in this context and should be read as a particular norm performativity belonging to a multi-ethnic cultural group. To position this argument in the international discourse, it is useful to look at Richard Dyer's discussion on how this norm is usually seen in his essay *White*.

Dyer notes that, in contemporary society, 'power […] passes itself off as embodied in the normal as opposed to the superior'.[88] White domination is reproduced by the way the definition of 'normal' is colonised by white people.[89] In the Dutch language I work with Dyer to undo the notion of *blankness*, the identifier of whiteness, and through translation appropriate it as a concept that will reappear through the chapters as a reference to occupying normal space without a mark or relevant identification. When, in contrast to *blankness*, Blackness is produced as abnormal, race identification can be experienced as something imposed because of the compulsory choice between normal and abnormal. In contemporary society, and from a Dutch Afro perspective imbued with the particularities of Dutch entitlement, norm identification can then become a conscious choice without denouncing one's Afro-ness.

Speaking only for myself: within the diaspora, this specificity of the Dutch Afro artistic class consistently triggers the question of how internally colonised I might be. Is the sense of instilled social class entitlement, which was shared in the Krutu, part of how white supremacy works? Am I a *Black Skin White Mask*[90] as Frantz Fanon discussed? But more importantly, supposing that all Fanon said is true, what does it mean for the future when, as an artist, I accept being part of Okwui Enwezor's postcolonial

[87] Catherine Rottenberg, *Performing Americanness; Race, Class and Gender in modern African-American and Jewish-American Literature* (New Hampshire: Dartmouth College Press, 2008), p. 42.
[88] Richard Dyer, 'White', *Screen* vol. 29, no. 4, 1988, pp. 44–66 (p. 45).
[89] Ibid.
[90] Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (Sidmouth: Pluto Press, 2008).

constellation? Does the imagining not begin with acknowledging that not only contemporary art, but also the subject, 'is refracted, not just from the specific site of culture and history but in a more critical sense, from the standpoint of a complex geopolitical configuration that defines all systems of production and relations of exchange as a consequence of globalization after imperialism'.[91] Even though I argue for an artistic subjectivity that is evident to itself as an Afro subject in an imagined normal space, the Krutu only hinted at a different sort of environment where Dutch Afro cultural class entitlement and sense of self can function without Du Bois' 'double-consciousness'.[92]

As a whole, chapter five affirms that, by taking hybridity as a starting point, different cultural practices can be merged into action curating such that the edges of the imagined normal space become visible. Geographically locating this subjectivity in the Netherlands means considering the specifics of sensibilities that are hidden in the Dutch language. Because of the lack of local language to speak about our issues, the Dutch language as a method is considered exhausting, but so is translation to and from English. What is important in the discussion towards the imagined normal space is the cultural entitlement felt by those with a migrant background. This understanding of the self vis-à-vis Dutch culture is not widely shared with art institutes. To make this happen, a different language has to be invented and how to arrive there is one of the responsibilities of action curating. In the process the normal space is altered in such a way that artists' work is considered native to the artistic landscape and does not have to culturally pass to be appreciated. Action curating thus is a curatorial development where the artists and cultural makers that were the topic of investigation shape the normal space through active engagement on their own terms.

In the process of this doctoral research, action curating developed as a / my method of creating the imagined normal space within the larger institutional framework that includes the museum and presentation establishments. Alternatively, this method can be used outside of the official institutes while making use of the art infrastructure and funding possibilities that are already in place in the Netherlands. On the downside, when action curating is done outside of this framework it runs the risk of falling into the stigmatising category of social and well-being work that has plagued art made by cultural minorities in the past.

[91] Okwui Enwezor, 'The Postcolonial Constellation; Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition', *Research in African Literatures*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), pp. 57–82.
[92] William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York, Avenel, NJ: Gramercy Books, 1994).

1. Imagining: Afro Dutch artists in the Dutch artistic landscape.

Introduction

I was born in the Amazon, on the northern edge of the forest in Paramaribo, Suriname. My birth is the result of centuries of forced and voluntary migration from Iberia, West Africa, India and China to South America. Working as an artist, curator, writer and policy advisor today dictates the conditions that inform how I, as a researcher, understand this history. As a result, it is this history of migration, and my understanding of it through these lenses, that function as the starting point from which I locate Afro-ness in the Dutch artistic landscape.

Modernity gave birth to the new world and to the Creole. In Suriname, Creole is understood as African diaspora people with ethnic backgrounds from different parts of the world. The racial and cultural mix first happened during the times of slavery between Europeans, Africans and Native Americans. After the abolition of slavery in 1863, labourers were imported to Suriname from China, India and Indonesia. Some of these male labourers had children, or started families with the local non-European females. Like other countries in the Caribbean, over the centuries, Suriname developed as a society where different ethnic groups and mixes thereof created a communal existence. Not without any reciprocal discrimination the various groups had to adapt and relate to each other on the basis of cultural differences and similarities. Together they formed a society that in traditions, customs and social relations derived from the areas of ethnic origin.

The Creole practice of naming ancestry other than African evolved from this ethnic, social and cultural mixing. In Suriname, it is a way of explaining the specifics of one's physique and can be used as a lever when indicating a person's or a family's (historical) social position in a (post)colonial society that is infused with colourism (discrimination based on skin colour). On a more positive note, in the context of the family, it was and is a tool to orally remember genealogy, family history, traditions and the reason for certain practices and rituals in a social and religious context. This second usage, which establishes physical, social, religious and specifically cultural hybridity that emerges from a history of (forced) migration, became my starting point for thinking through how the Afro-Dutch artists fit into the Dutch artistic landscape. Inspired by this Creole hybrid subjectivity mainly being racially categorised by its African appearance, my search for an African cultural identity began around 2005 while studying at Goldsmiths.

With an aimed search, a wealth of information was found on the internet that was never taught in Dutch schools. Uncovering history that stretched further back than slavery revealed ancient African

kingdoms and empires beyond the trope of illiterate savages to whom civilisation was brought. Over the years the stories, including that of the Malian king Mansa Musa and the premise that ancient Egypt was Black,[93] even exceeded those notions. The enormous continent of Africa with all its different cultures was a voyage through time and space crossing the Atlantic from Europe to South America to (West) Africa over a time span of at least 200 years. This indigenous African cultural identity that I fantasised about could only exist and be materialised through the obvious corporal presence and blurred cultural remains that are inherited from ancestors who lived in an imagined empire and about whom there existed no record.[94]

It occurred to me that to find a truly original cultural identity I had to go to Suriname. Going to the most reliable source of my racial, ethnic and cultural hybrid origin, my roots, evoked high expectations in me. After arrival, the first thing that struck me was that everybody was brown. I observed a sense of belonging. The burden of representation, of which I was not aware until that moment, disappeared. However, even though I speak Sranang Tongo, the lingua franca of Suriname, at the level of a native, my Dutch accent with its rolled 'r's gave me away. With my not having grown up in the country, cultural clashes occurred and within days the sense of belonging disappeared. I realised that being 'des lands kind' (child of the land; a term used to indicate that one is born in Suriname) made me ethnically but not culturally Surinamese. After this 'homecoming' experience, the memory of losing the representational burden through semblance in skin colour, as well as the cultural dissimilarity, problematised my search for cultural belonging.

Against the grain, identifying as a Dutch person that is part of the African diaspora, with a direct cultural and embodied genealogy to Africa by way of Suriname, was a far more logical option for the location of cultural identity. As part of this Dutchness, my diaspora Creoleness is established through enslaved people, free blacks, contract workers and slave traders. What they all share is a history of oppression, migration, survival and adaptability. Whatever genealogy is followed, diaspora and internal cultural other-ness that is experienced as one-ness is foundational to the Creole subject that identifies as Dutch. Based on my African appearance, the intricacy of the Surinamese ethnic Creole is met with scepticism when mentioned in the Dutch context where most non-Creole Dutch expect me to identify as what they think of as Surinamese or Caribbean. The historical significance and lived experience of the multiplicity that is the Creole is lost in translation and forfeits its social weight in the Dutch context. How then is one to gain a contemporary Dutch sense of self, beyond the Creole understanding, of the 'I' as a

[93] Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, trans. Mercer Hook (Chicago, IL: Lawrence Hill & Co, Chicago Review Press, 1974).
[94] In 1821 and 1832 fires occurred in Paramaribo that destroyed archives about the enslaved brought in from Africa.

'kaleidoscopic, ever-moving sequence'?[95] The result is a Creole increased and complicated by a continental European cultural addition that results in a particular sense of Dutchness. A multiplicity of subjectivity that shifted my perspective from fixed identity thinking to a multilayered subjectivity thinking.

This understanding of subjectivity as inherently layered is in line with the multicultural environment of my upbringing. It includes a layering that came about not only because of a domestic culture embedded in a larger social culture, but also because these two cultures originated from different principles. Inhabiting these different spheres encourages young people with a migrant background to integrate at least two cultures into something new. Habits, sensibilities and concepts from the country of origin lose their meaning or are altered in this new constellation of lived cultural heritage. From the point of view of previous generations of Afro-Surinamese people, their identity was not constructed in opposition to the Dutch majority group but was mirrored in it. In other words, through colonialism, migration and integration, Afro-Surinamese (postcolonial) subjects came to inhabit Dutch cultural standards while their Surinamese-ness and Creoleness withdrew to the background.[96] Even though people of Surinamese descent in the Netherlands are considered to be the most successfully integrated, I am still today perceived as of immigrant background. This social perception obstructs the process of, and is in contrast to, identifying as Dutch.

Travelling revealed that in the UK perception of me points towards Black British, in the USA to African American / Black, in Egypt to Nubian or European and in Senegal to Wolof. Depending on location, my Afro-ness is always leading but the assumed cultural identity as a construct including ethnicity changes. From my perspective, being perceived as racially African, ethnically South American and culturally European in these spaces, asks for a rethinking of the contemporary subjectivity formerly known as Creole in order to resolve a sense of self that matches one's current condition. This process reveals that self-identification is not necessarily in line with how one is perceived by society. This case of my personal subject position is merely an example of the complex multilayered hybridity that subjects with an immigrant background experience in the Netherlands.

The contemporary subjects, the (grand)children of the first generation of immigrants to the Netherlands (1963–75), who are considered foreign due to their skin colour or religious background, are carving out a space for themselves in the Dutch cultural landscape. They are imagining their cultural and / or ethnic

[95] Gloria Wekker, 'One Finger Does Not Drink Okra Soup: Afro-Surinamese Women and Critical Agency', in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, eds. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (New York and London: Routledge Press, 1997), pp. 330–52 (p. 336).
[96] Robin Fransman, 'Het gaat ook heel goed met de integratie in Nederland' [It is also going very well with integration in the Netherlands], Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 22-12-2016.

subjectivity beyond the binary spaces that, as a form of control, demand submission to historical or (post)colonial relations. While unravelling the terms that already exist and being in the process of becoming, they are concerned with shaping their presence through the imagination. Their coalescing cultural backgrounds are modelling these subjects into a new form that leaves marks that make it identifiable. Difference is constitutional in imagining this twenty-first-century subjectivity with a migrant background that becomes self-referential by embracing its hybridity. Being part of this generation and from a personal and artistic subject position, I take the idea of hybridity as the inevitable starting point from which to jump into the unknown. From this departure point, this thesis explores how coalescing cultures are modelling a new artistic environment beyond the representational by pushing the boundaries of the confining spaces of historical circumstances. With the training wheels of existing ideas around African diaspora history and identity, this treatise mirrors the process of what it is to become rather than that of prevailing cultural standards.

1.1 A Conjunctural space

To understand the possibilities of imagining this self-referential subjectivity, I looked at the idea of the 'problem space', which David Scott introduced in his 2004 book *Conscripts of Modernity: the Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment.*[97] Placing this twenty-first-century Dutch Afro moment of imagining in context, David Scott's conceptualisation aids in exploring the conditions that created the different horizons in the intellectually most influential contemporary diaspora areas. In an interview about the text, Stuart Hall described it as follows:

> [A] 'problem space' […] is first of all a conjunctural space, a historically constituted discursive space. This discursive conjuncture is defined by a complex of questions and answers – or better, a complex of statements, propositions, resolutions and arguments offered in answer to largely implicit questions or problems […] [T]hese statements […] are moves in a field or space of arguments and to understand them requires reconstructing that space of problems that elicited them.[98]

[97] David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity: The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004).
[98] 'David Scott by Stuart Hall', in *Bomb,* No. 90, (New York City: New Arts Publication, winter 2004/5), https://bombmagazine.org/articles/david-scott/, acc. 18-09-2018.

Stuart Hall goes deeper into this idea of the problem space in his 2004 lecture 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three "Moments" in Postwar History':[99]

> Evoking a 'problem space', then, is to think of a conjuncture epistemologically. It is as if every historical moment poses a set of cognitive, political – and I would add, artistic – questions which together create a 'horizon' of possible futures within which we 'think the present', and to which our practices constitute a reply; a moment defined as much by the questions posed as by the 'answers' we seem constrained or 'conscripted' to give. When the historical conjuncture changes – as it did significantly between the 1960s and the 1980s and again, between the 1990s and the present – the problem space, and thus the practices, also change since, as David Scott puts it, what was a 'horizon of the future' for *them* has become *our* 'futures past' – a horizon which we can 'no longer imagine, seek after, inhabit', or indeed create in, *see* or *represent* in the same way.[100]

The historical horizons for the future in other diaspora areas evidence that this current conjunctural Dutch space of 'calling forth a people-yet-to-come who in some senses [are] already here'[101] is not new and has always happened in different contexts, producing different outcomes. Because the Dutch conversation on the role of Afro-ness in society is overdetermined by African-American and Black British discourses, it is useful to touch upon their historical social and artistic horizons. Knowledge of these histories brings into view the differences with the Dutch situation and confirms the importance of imagining a new artistic space in the Netherlands where Afro-ness is recognised as Dutch.

1.2 The American situation

Between 1910 and 1930 many African Americans from the South moved to the Urban North seeking economic and political advancement. Those who moved to New York settled in Harlem where a Black presence was already in place. With a large black population, 'Harlem represented a spirit of advancement' and the motivation to 'improve the social position of all blacks'.[102] With the move from rural to urban, the philosophies of black leaders also changed in how to self-express and gain political power. W.E.B. Du Bois' work led from Booker T. Washington's Atlanta Compromise (1895)[103] to the

[99] Stuart Hall, 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three "Moments" in Postwar History', *History Workshop Journal 2006*, Vol.61, No.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, spring 2006), pp. 1–24.
[100] Ibid., 4.
[101] Simon O'Sullivan, 'Notes Towards a Minor Art Practice', *Drain: Journal of Contemporary Art and Culture*, *'Syncretism'*, 2(2) (2005) www.drainmag.com, acc. 18-09-2018.
[102] Eva Lenox Birch, 'Harlem and the first Black Renaissance', *The Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2004), p. 116.
[103] Booker T. Washington, 'The Cotton States and International Exposition Speech' [Atlanta Compromise speech 1895], in *The Booker T. Washington Papers, Vol. 3: 1889–95*, ed. Louis R. Harlan (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1974), pp. 583–7.

formation of the Niagara movement (1905)[104] and subsequently the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) (1909).[105] An identity beyond that of ex-slave, which was previously denied to them, was found in this environment.[106] As a consequence, the Great Migration in the United States gave birth to the Harlem Renaissance. Henry Louis Gates Jr describes the Harlem Renaissance as having taken its artistic inspiration from Europeans. First he mentions Antonín Dvořák's declaration that the spirituals are America's authentic contribution to world culture (1890s). Secondly, he mentions the transformation of European art through its appreciation of African art by means of Pablo Picasso and the creation of Cubism (1900s). He concludes that the appreciation of African art from debased to sublime (1910) in a short period of time in the 'cultural imagination of the West'[107] opened up its potential for political use. W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke, who both trained in Europe during this period, were inspired by these events. Henry Louis Gates Jr explains that

> [i]f European modernism was truly a mulatto, the argument went, then African-Americans would save themselves politically through the creation of the arts. The Harlem Renaissance, in so many ways, owes its birth to Euro-African modernism in the visual arts. This Renaissance, the second in black history, would fully liberate the Negro – at least its advance guard.[108]

The Harlem Renaissance's major events are placed between the first publication of the NAACP magazine *The Crisis* in 1910 and Langston Hughes' publication of *The Big Sea* in 1940.[109] The outburst of creative output that launched the period took place between 1920 and 1930 during the economic boom in the United States. It happened at the same time as the Jazz Age, the Roaring Twenties and the Lost Generation. With a wealth of black-owned magazines and newspapers producing thought around the New Negro, and the support of white publishers, careers were launched that furthered the ideas of Du Bois and Locke among others.[110] Fine artists, musicians, dancers, performers, actors, writers and poets came out of

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[104] William Edward Burghardt Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter, *'The Niagara Movement's "Declaration of Principles"', Black History Bulletin. Vol. 68, No. 1, (Washington: Association for the Study of African American Life and History, March 2005), pp. 21–3.*
The Niagara Movement advocated for a strategy that was not based on patience and submission to white political rule, but on active demands on political, social and economic levels.

[105] Patricia Sullivan, 'Civil Rights Movement' in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience*, eds. Anthony Appiah, Henry Louis Gates Jr., (Philadelphia: Running Press, 2003), pp. 441–55.

[106] Eva Lenox Birch, 'Harlem and the first Black Renaissance', *The Harlem renaissance*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2004) p. 115.

[107] Henry Louis Gates Jr., *The Henry Louis Gates Jr. Reader* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2012), p. 453.

[108] Henry Louis Gates Jr., 'Harlem on our Minds', in *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed by Richard J. Powell and David A. Bailey et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 160–7 (pp. 163–4).

[109] Ella O. Williams, *Harlem Renaissance: A Handbook* (USA: Authorhouse, 2010), pp. 8–9.

[110] Alain Locke, 'Enter The New Negro', *Survey Graphic; Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro,* March 1925, http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/maai3/migrations/text8/lockenewnegro.pdf, acc. 19-09-2018.
'In the last decade something beyond the watch and guard of statistics has happened in the life of the American Negro and the three norms who have traditionally presided over the Negro problem have a changeling in their laps. The Sociologist, The Philanthropist, the Race-leader are not unaware of the New Negro, but they are at a loss to account for him. He simply cannot be swathed in their formulae. For the younger generation is vibrant with a new psychology; the new spirit is awake in the masses, and under the very eyes of the professional observers is transforming what has been a perennial problem into the progressive phases of contemporary Negro life.'.

this period, reaching far beyond national borders. Alain Locke's *Enter The New Negro* (1925) was the piece of writing that brought together ideas by previous intellectuals and defined the term for future generations. The New Negro argued for transformation. Locke's mandate was 'that the "New Negro" had to "smash" all of the racial, social and psychological impediments that had long obstructed black achievement'.[111] The goal was social progress through racial solidarity and transcendence of racial difference. These ideas were promoted through literature, painting, film and all other available forms of cultural expression and were heavily influenced by women and queer artists. The cultural production of the Harlem Renaissance was recognised by the 'mainstream' and gave Black people more control to represent themselves and speak about their own experiences. The critique for and against the success and effectiveness of the Harlem Renaissance mostly has to do with the interracial dynamics of the movement, and its appeal to black middle-class and white audiences. However, this movement succeeded in placing the Black experience in the frame of the American experience and changed forever how African Americans are viewed in the world. With its political message and core of racial consciousness, it helped lay the foundation for the civil rights movement. Simultaneously it presented a precedent for (downward) cultural adulation, as white middle-class Americans flocked to Harlem to hear the 'erotic black jazz', and the adaptation of jargon such as 'cool' and 'heavy' by the white marginal groups.[112]

Racial inequality, segregation and exclusion drove the horizon shift after WWII that gave birth to the civil rights movement. It was a system of 'racial domination – economic, political, and personal oppression – [that] was backed by legislation and the iron fist of Southern governments'.[113] In this environment of separation, black institutes (colleges, churches, societies) came into being where colour was more important than social class.[114] Here one could leave behind the weight of separation and consequently it was in these spaces that discussions could take place and collective resistance could be organised. By the 1950s blacks in the South were ready to challenge Jim Crow laws.[115]

What we have come to know as the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s is a collection of incidents and a plethora of organisations trying to undo the disenfranchisement of blacks in the United States, following in the footsteps of previous activists. Organising boycotts, protests, sit-ins, freedom rides, marches, non-violent and violent action and court cases were part of the strategy of civil resistance to change the situation for African Americans. It was 'the intersection of art and activism'.[116] The

[111] Richard J. Powell, 'Re/Birth of a Nation', in *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed by Richard J. Powell and David A. Bailey et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 14–33 (p. 18).
[112] Cathy Covell Waegner, 'Rap, rebounds and Rocawear: The "Darkening" of German Youth Culture', *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 171–86 (p. 176).
[113] Aldon D. Morris, *Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The Free Press, Simon and Schuster, 1986), p. 3.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 4.
[116] Dawn Levesque, 'Artists of the Civil Rights Movement: A Retrospective', *Guardian Liberty Voice*, 2 March 2014, http://guardianlv.com/2014/03/artists-of-the-civil-rights-movement-a-retrospective/#kLbtL2TrrD2zFoER.99 acc. 22-04-2015.

movement was made up of all layers in the Black community, and also this time supported by the American Jewish community and white sympathisers. From the civil rights movement emerged the Black Power movement that was prominent in the 1960s and 1970s. The use of the term Black Power popularised by Stokely Carmichael in 1966 was to challenge the philosophy of non-violence put forward by leaders such as Martin Luther King.[117] It was a terminology that was in accordance with other cries for power in the diaspora, such as the ANC in South Africa's cry 'Amandla' (Power) in that period. The civil rights and Black Power movements are interconnected and seen as one Black Freedom Movement.[118] As early as 1964, the Black Power movement's effect could be seen in popular culture in the live album *Nina Simone in Concert*, particularly in the song 'Mississippi Goddam' (1964). Ruth Feldstein, Associate Professor of History at Rutgers University, Newark, states that

> Contrary to the neat historical trajectories which suggest that black power came late in the decade and only after the 'successes' of earlier efforts, Simone's album makes clear that black power perspectives were already taking shape and circulating widely […] in the early 1960s.[119]

As the Black Power movement's 'aesthetic and spiritual sister',[120] the Black Arts movement emerged in the mid-1960s and lasted into the 1970s. In 1968 Larry Neal claimed: 'The new aesthetic is mostly predicted on an ethics which asks the question: Whose vision of the world is finally more meaningful, ours or the white oppressors? What is truth? Or more precisely, whose truth shall we express, that of the oppressed or the oppressors?'[121] And in the same year Ron Karenga stated: 'all Black art, irregardless [sic] of any technical requirements, must have three basic characteristics which make it revolutionary. In brief, it must be functional, collective and committed.'[122] It was a Black aesthetic that was never precise in its definition and was concerned with 'literature, music, visual arts, and theater'.[123] It emphasised 'racial pride, an appreciation of African heritage, and a commitment to produce works that reflected the culture and experiences of black people'.[124] Out of the Black Arts movement came dance

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[117] The Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute, King Encyclopedia, Stokeley Carmichael (Stanford, CA: Stanford University), https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/encyclopedia/carmichael-stokely acc. 11-05-15.
[118] Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement* (Chapell Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
[119] Ruth Feldstein,'Nina Simone: The Antidote to the "We Shall Overcome' Myth of the Civil Rights Movement", *History News Network* (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University), http://historynewsnetwork.org/article/154884, acc. 11-05-15.
[120] Larry Neal, 'The Black Arts Movement'*, A Turbulent Voyage: Readings in African American Studies*, ed. Floyd W. Hayes III (San Diego, CA: Collegiate Press, 2000) (3rd edition), pp. 236–46.
[121] Larry Neal L, 'The Black Arts Movement', *The Drama Review: TDR Vol. 12, No. 4, Black Theatre* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, Summer 1968), pp. 28–39.
[122] Ron Karenga,'Ron Karenga and Black Cultural Nationalism', *Black World / Negro Digest*, Vol. XVII (Chicago: Johnson Publishing Company, January 1968), pp. 5–9 (p. 5).
[123] Thomson Gale, *Black Arts Movement*, Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History, encyclopedia.com, 2006, https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/biographies/historians-miscellaneous-biographies/black-aesthetic-movement, acc. 11-05-15.
[124] Ibid.
Even though the Black Arts Movement is the most well known there were groups before it, such as Karamu Playhouse in Cleveland, National Conference of Artists (1959), Umbra Writers Workshop (1963), Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM 1965), Organization of Black American Culture (OBAC, 1967) from which emerged Third World Press and the Institute for Positive Education, (1967).

companies such as the Alvin Ailey Group that travelled to Africa and the diaspora. '[T]heir challenge was not to introduce new forms to American dance but rather to refine and extend a firmly established tradition' of African and diaspora dances in the United States.[125]

After the Harlem riots of 1964, Leroi Jones' (Amiri Baraka) Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BART/S, 1965) received funding from the New York City federal government via the Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited. This was a consequence of the 'war on poverty' legislation introduced by President Lyndon B. Johnson. *Jerry G. Watts,* Associate Professor of American Studies and *Political* Science argues that the school was one of the 'key launching pads for the crystallization and emergence of the Black Arts Movement'.[126] He goes on to say that 'while Jones believed that his dramatic productions and jazz concerts were educational, it seems clear that the state viewed them as tranquillizing entertainment'.[127] This school thus occupied an 'inauthentically autonomous'[128] space where, when government funding stops, the broader political agenda is undermined. Even so, Jones' concept was eventually copied as a model for 'similar efforts in urban areas throughout the United States'.[129]

A place, recognised by the large institutions, to exhibit the works by African Americans was opened as the Studio Museum in Harlem in 1968.[130] How it came about was either because of the New York Museum of Modern Art's Junior Council, or the local Harlem Community that came together for chilli dinners at the house of Betty Blayton-Taylor, resulting in the Committee to Form the Harlem Museum.[131] The committee argued that such a museum could contribute to the process of urban renewal. In her thesis, Andrea Allison Burns describes how on the museum's opening date there were protests in front of the building that reflected the 'underlying apprehension within Harlem regarding the purpose and

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'The most dramatic public statement by OBAC was The Wall of Respect, a Black Power mural painted on a building at the corner of 43rd Street and Langley Avenue on Chicago's South Side by Jeff Donaldson, Eugene Wade, Bill Walker, and other members of the visual arts workshop in 1967. The wall depicted various historical and contemporary black heroes such as Muhammad Ali, W. E. B. Du Bois, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Nina Simone, Amiri Baraka, and Gwendolyn Brooks. This mural galvanized the imaginations of community people, and based on their comments, the artists made various revisions on the mural. The appeal of public art notwithstanding, this privately owned building was eventually razed, and The Wall of Respect passed into legend. Despite its brief existence, the mural sparked a local and national movement. Numerous cities soon produced their own equivalents, such as The Wall of Dignity in Detroit, several murals by artists including Dana Chandler and Gary Rickson in Boston, and similar projects in New York, Philadelphia, and San Francisco, among others. Needless to say, the mural movement had roots going back to the 1930s in the WPA public art projects and especially in the powerful work created by the Mexican artist Diego Rivera. The Black Arts movement also echoed the 1930s in that the vogue of murals was seized upon by state and federal arts agencies. While black artists could see such murals as "committed and committing," government agencies saw them as a fine combination of public art and social control mechanisms for urban youths who could be organized into painting teams during the incendiary summers of the 1960s. Artists such as Bill Walker and Dana Chandler organized mural projects in several cities, but the political impact of these projects diminished as their frequency increased, and when government support evaporated in the arid 1970s, the mural movement withered away.'

[125] Thomson Gale, *Black Arts Movement*, Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History, encyclopedia.com, 2006, https://www.encyclopedia.com/history/biographies/historians-miscellaneous-biographies/black-aesthetic-movement, acc. 11-05-15.

[126] Jerry Watts, *Amiri Baraka: The Politics and Art of a Black Intellectual* (New York: NYU Press, 2001), pp. 160–1.

[127] Ibid., 158.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid., 160.

[130] The oldest African-American museum in the United States is the Hampton University Museum (1868). Also there were more African-American 'neighborhood' museums in DuSable Museum of African American History in Chicago (founded in 1961); the International Afro-American Museum in Detroit (1965); the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum in Washington, D.C. (1967); the Studio Museum in Harlem (1968); and the African American Museum of Philadelphia (1976). See thesis by:
Alison Burns, "*Show Me My Soul!": The Evolution of the Black Museum Movement in Postwar America* (Cambridge: ProQuest, 2008).

[131] Alison Burns, *"Show Me My Soul!": The Evolution of the Black Museum Movement in Postwar America* (Cambridge: ProQuest, 2008) p. 89.

presence of such an institution'.[132] With Black Power as its horizon, a point of critique was that the museum had many financial and governance ties to the white community.[133] In addition to that, Romare Bearden denied the claim that this was the first museum in Harlem.[134]

During this 'second renaissance' many events took place and artworks were made that are still referenced today. One of them is the 'I Am a Man' signs used during the Memphis Sanitation Strikes in 1968. Artists such as Faith Ringold and David Hammons used the American flag to speak about the African-American condition in the 1960s. With their actions these artists pushed the boundaries of what it means to be American by questioning the flag and thus pushing the horizon in the direction of where African-American arts and artists are today. Groups emerged such as the *Spiral* (arts alliance) and *AfriCobra* and *Where We At Black Women Artists, INC* that worked on social change and the Black aesthetic.

The Black Power movement gave rise to the Black is Beautiful movement, celebrating black skin, hair and facial features and rejecting white beauty standards. This development generated a celebration of blackness, notably with the Afro/natural hairstyles, name changes and handshakes. William Van Deburg, Professor of Afro-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, states that 'Recognizing that culture sometimes took the role of politics among the disfranchised, they hoped to reconcile ethics and aesthetics. Serving as a communication link between advocates of various "political" persuasions they articulated a new black consciousness.'[135] From a common ancestral past, the Black Power movement used all forms of expression to advocate for self-actualisation and self-definition.[136] It was a cultural and political movement.

The problem space that shifted through time, from resignation to the situation with the Atlanta Compromise to Black Power, also shifted the horizons of what was possible for African Americans. It resulted in a shift from 'boy' to *I am a Man* and *Black is Beautiful*. The horizons produced two notable renaissances with a plethora of artists working in a variety of mediums. Building on historical precedents they pushed the boundaries of how collective and individual subjectivities were produced and inspired other minorities to do the same. Of course, nothing happens in a vacuum. The Black Power movement happened during a time when the whole world was changing. Decolonisation of Africa and parts of the Caribbean infused the movement with energy and fueled Afro-centrism and Pan-Africanism in all regions of the diaspora.

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[132] Ibid., 92.
[133] Ibid., 94.
[134] Romare Bearden, Sam Gilliam Jr., Richard Hunt, Jacob Lawrence, Tom Lloyd, William Williams and Hale Woodruff, 'The Black Artist in America: A Symposium', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin,* Vol. 27, No. 5 (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, January 1969), pp. 245–61 (p. 252).
[135] William L. Van DeBurg, *New Day in Babylon: The Black Power Movement and American Culture, 1965–1975* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 191.
[136] Ibid., 192.

There were also deviating voices, notably that of the jazz musician and composer Sun Ra (Herman Poole Blount) who initially felt closely related to the ideas in Black Power and saw his music as part of liberating and educating Black people. He ultimately felt disillusionment and that he 'couldn't approach black people with the truth because they like lies'.[137] Over the years he imagined himself a personal mythology from another dimension and is consequently considered an early pioneer of what was to become Afro-futurism. Even though Black Power has been described as anti-semitic, misogynistic and racist, it inspired and provided the tools to other minorities to excavate their background. To underscore this, Ishmael Reed is quoted as saying:

> I think what Black Arts did was inspire a whole lot of Black people to write. Moreover, there would be no multiculturalism movement without Black Arts. Latinos, Asian Americans, and others all say they began writing as a result of the example of the 1960s. Blacks gave the example that you don't have to assimilate. You could do your own thing, get into your own background, your own history, your own tradition and your own culture. I think the challenge is for cultural sovereignty and Black Arts struck a blow for that.[138]

This thesis is not the place to delve deep into the African-American arts movements but the historical context confirms how horizons for the future inspired new artistic spaces in the United States. It also underpins the role of arts and culture in the formation of North American black discourse around self-image and representation. With this in mind, it is crucial to understand that, even though the predicament of Afro-ness is comparable, how it became part of the national fabric is totally different. Where African physical presence is a constituent element of what we know as American culture, the Dutch enjoyed colonialism without a significant African presence in the country. Therefore, in the cultural imagination of the Netherlands, Afro contribution to Dutch culture is negligible, if not non-existent. This crucial difference is fundamental to understanding how Dutch sensibilities are mobilised when people of African descent identify as Dutch and claim cultural citizenship. As comparison with American histories does not suffice in locating Afro-ness as a constituent element of Dutch culture, it underlines my proposition for a different way of thinking about the Dutch artistic landscape.

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[137] John F. Szwed, *Space is the Place: The Lives and Times of Sun Ra* (New York: Perseus Books Group, 1998), p. 313.
'I couldn't approach black people with the truth because they like lies. They live lies... At one time I felt that white people were to blame for everything, but then I found out that they were just puppets and pawns of some greater force, which has been using them... Some force is having a good time [manipulating black and white people] and looking, enjoying itself up in a reserved seat, wondering, "I wonder when they're going to wake up."'.

[138] Kalamu ya Salaam, (quoting Ishmael Reed), 'The Black Arts Movement (BAM)', in *The Oxford Companion to African American Literature*, eds. William L. Andrews, Frances Smith Foster and Trudier Harris (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) http://aalbc.com/authors/blackartsmovement.htm acc. 12-05-15.

1.3 The British situation

What looks like a closer historical and social match, due to immigration, is the British context. The circumstances that brought about horizons for the future were different here. I am not saying that there was no black presence in Britain before that, but I would like to start after WWII when the British needed a workforce and started looking at the colonies. The reason for this is the similarity with Dutch colonial rule, that included overseas territories and resulted in a moment of (post)colonial immigration to the motherland.

The British artistic development is clarified in Stuart Hall's 2004 speech at London's Conway Hall as three moments in postwar black visual arts in the UK.[139] According to Hall, there is no single movement to which 'all the artists […] can be said to belong'[140] but rather moments in which different kinds of elements, generations and kinds of work converge. Hall lifts out the 'last colonials' who were born in the early 1900s and came to Britain after WWII in the 1950s and 60s just before decolonisation. This 'first' generation entered Britain 'to fulfill their artistic ambitions and to participate in the heady atmosphere of the most advanced centres of artistic innovation at that time and produced writers and artists'.[141] He argues that they came as subjects of the modern movement with the 'promise of decolonization' firing their ambition, their sense-of-self as 'modern persons' that 'liberated them from any lingering sense of inferiority'.[142] '"[M[odern art" was seen by them as an international creed, fully consistent with anti-colonialism which was regarded as intrinsic to a modern consciousness.'[143] Their attitude toward 'the modern' was mirrored in other colonial spaces such as Brazil, the USA and South Africa. Their 'horizon of the future' was independence and a new era of progress in which, according to Stuart Hall, 'they seemed to see these things ['sights and sounds, cultures and tradition, histories and memories of their places of origin.'] within a modern vision-field, via the modern consciousness of a certain "de-territorialization" of colour and form'.[144]

In 1967, after Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, Guyana and Barbados' independence from the United Kingdom, Black Power, through Stokeley Carmichael's speech at Speakers' Corner, jumped the Atlantic and was adopted in Britain. This intersected with Michael X and the London Free School's involvement in the 'Carnival of the Poor' that developed from a 'jump up' street party for children in 1966 to an

[139] Stuart Hall, 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Postwar History', *History Workshop Journal 2006*, Vol.61, No.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, spring 2006) pp. 1-24.
[140] Ibid., 3.
[141] Ibid., 5.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.
[144] Ibid., 7.

organised strengthening of community cohesion in 1967.[145] According to Stuart Hall, by the 1970s this first group, who for a while were 'central to the avant-garde of the day',[146] became disenchanted due to 'institutional indifference' and the shift in attitudes towards Modernism, among other things. The situation changed and politically the 'shadow of race" fully entered the discussion by the mid-1970s.[147]

It is with this horizon of race rather than anti-colonialism that the 'second generation' – the first 'postcolonials' – who were born in Britain emerged. Political and artistic active artists stormed the scene in a reaction to racial discrimination. They pioneered the Black Arts movement and the creative explosion of the 1980s, and were 'anti-racist, culturally relativist and identity-driven'.[148] It was with the beginning of the BLK Art Group and the landmark exhibition *Black Art an' done* (1981) that the period of many independent exhibitions concerning these matters opened. Who are we? where do we come from? and where do we really belong? were central questions in this period of identity politics, which surfaced from the 1970s onward.[149] This new horizon 'produced a polemical and politicized art: a highly graphic, iconographic art of line and montage, cut-out and collage, image and slogan; the "message" often appearing too pressing, too immediate, too literal, to brook formal delay and, instead, breaking insistently into "writing"'.[150] Black art became a tool to 'assist in the struggle for liberation'.[151] Hall argues that 'the emergence of the identity question constituted a compelling and productive "horizon" for artists: not so much the celebration of an essential identity fixed in time and "true" to its origins, but rather […] what we would now call "the production of a new, black subject"'.[152] He writes: 'And since that is a conception of identity and subjectivity which can only be constituted within, rather than outside, representation, the "answers" in practice, which music and the visual arts provided, were absolutely critical.'[153] Through different practices of this era, the 'black body' became central and its belonging was put into question. It resulted in what Hall called 'the end of the essential black subject' going into the 1990s.[154]

Taking the first generation of Black British immigrants as the departure point, this idea of the end of the essential black subject in the arts going into the 1990s was reached over a period of 40 years. Looking at the different social history, it is clear why the American arts were not yet ready for such a proposition at

[145] Notting Hill Carnival; before this a Caribbean Carnival (1959) was organised in London as a reaction to the 1958 Notting Hill race riots. Indoor Carnival; 1960, 1962, 1963; at Seymour Hall – 1961; Lyceum theatre, Outdoor; 1963 in Manchester, 1964; Notting Hill Fair
146 Stuart Hall, 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Postwar History', *History Workshop Journal 2006*, Vol.61, No.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, spring 2006) (pp. 1-24) p 7.
[147] Ibid., 16.
[148] Ibid., 1.
[149] Ibid., 9.
[150] Ibid.
[151] Eddie Chambers, artist's statement in the 'Back Art An' Done' catalogue, Wolverhampton Art Gallery, June 1981.
[152] Stuart Hall, 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Postwar History', *History Workshop Journal 2006*, Vol.61, No.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, spring 2006) (pp. 1-24) p 10.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 442-–1 (p. 443).

that time. To connect the state of mind in the Netherlands to this moment, I will first discuss the Dutch generational difference with the British before going into Stuart Hall's third and the last moment in postwar black visual arts in Britain.

1.4 The Dutch situation: MTV and Internet / Language / Blackness / Self-naming

When music television and hip hop started their conquest of the world in the early 1980s, the majority of Afro youths in the Netherlands were first-generation immigrants. Without a demonstrable local black culture that went back for generations, the Dutch urban culture that developed at that time found much of its input in the local community. Starting with Michael Jackson's *Thriller* (1982), records and video clips on music channels provided teenagers such as myself with African-American examples to mirror. The appeal of African Americans advancing themselves from a disadvantaged position into musical and athletic stars had a strong effect on us. According to Cathy Covell Waegner, adopting style, mannerisms and speech from these role models makes young people feel more self-confident and cooler.[155] How we produced a sense of self through dance, rap, graffiti, language, posturing, signs (tags) and symbols was a direct consequence of what was presented to us via electronic media. In short, music television and hip hop were among the major contributors in providing the tools for the necessary street credibility. Mixing with all the different migrant teenagers, an inherently hybrid street language developed, infused with Surinamese, Moroccan, Papiamentu, Dutch and American slang.[156] Street language with its distinctive style finds its way into music and as such produces and speaks about our urban concerns in Dutch hip hop. It is evident how in the Netherlands reinterpretation and the development of hip hop, as a tool of self-affirmation and resistance, are located in a multi-ethnic urban community rather than in a 'Black' one. Éva Miklódy writes of the adoption of rap music in Hungary that 'Without violating the unity of form and content, any art form including rap can be borrowed and applied in different sociocultural circumstances.'[157]

On the continent this is exemplified with the emergence of *le hip hop*, which was developed by African and Caribbean youths in French cities in the 70s and 80s.[158] MC Solaar was the first star to emerge in 1991 and by the 2000s *le hip hop* and the image of the *banlieu* were more popular than ever. Funded by national and local agencies, hip hop was used in France to accommodate political and social

[155] Cathy Covell Waegner, 'Rap, rebounds and Rocawear: The "Darkening" of German Youth Culture', *Blackening Europe; The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York and London Routledge, 2003) pp. 171-186 (p. 172).
[156] J. van den Braak, 'Met andere woorden: straattaal in Amsterdam' [In other words: street language in Amsterdam], in J.B. Berns, *Taal in stad en land. Amsterdams* [Language in city and country, Amsterdam(ish)] (The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 2002).
[157] É Miklódy, 'A.R.T., Klikk, K.A.O.S, and the rest: Hungarian Youth Rapping', *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 187–200 (p. 191).
[158] Samir Meghelli, *Between New York and Paris: Hip Hop and the Transnational Politics of Race, Culture, and Citizenship* (Ph.D. Thesis) (New York: Columbia University, 2012).

discussions around race, class, opportunity and work.[159] French artists involved in the hip hop dance movement pinned 'their cause to the struggles of a people and art ghettoised in the United States'[160] and in this way encoded the issues connected to their (north) African immigrant status.[161] Hip hop is one of the ways of speaking about sensitive issues. In the visual arts, Dutch and French artists also use this strategy of adopting contemporary and historical African-American martyrs and heroes to discuss local concerns. For the artist, the coding circumvents direct criticism of the situation in their country while deflecting direct criticism from him- or herself.

The influence of electronic media was amplified by internet penetration in the Netherlands starting in the early 90s. In particular, African-American histories were absorbed as cultural commodities that influenced the lives of young Dutch (Afro) people. With more and more information becoming available online going into the 2000s, this boost brought other diaspora examples closer. Departing from the entertainment strand into the intellectual, embodied experiences found resonance in similar stories elsewhere in Europe and beyond. For young Afro-Dutch (artists) these developments created better self-understanding of their social condition.[162] In this sense, through electronic media other Afro experiences became examples that proved to be useful tools for expression and self-analysis.

> The people are now the very principle of 'dialectical and tacit knowledge reorganization' and they construct their culture from the (inter) national text translated into modern Western (European) forms of information technology, language, dress.[163]

When I left the Netherlands in 2004, the thorough analysis of the Afro-Dutch condition by Dutch Afro citizens and artists was still at an early stage. In the following years, I participated in the Wakaman project (2005–08) instigated by the artists Remy Jungerman, Gillion Grantsaan and Michael Tedja. This project, which is extensively discussed in chapter four, was concerned with 'the problems of categorization, recognition and interpretation that [the members] encounter as non-Western artists living in the West'.[164] By the time I returned to the Netherlands in 2010, electronic media (internet), and the critical analysis of Blackness that could be found there, was encouraging Afro awareness in intellectual and artistic circles. For the radical Dutch Afro artistic community, borrowing the term 'Black' as a self-identifier proved to be a useful, albeit problematic, way to connect to the African-American and Black

[159] Felicia McCarren, 'Monsieur Hip-Hop', *Blackening Europe; The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York and London: Routledge, 2003) pp. 157–70 (pp. 158–61).
[160] Ibid., 160.
[161] Ibid., 162.
[162] Charl Landvreugd, 'Notes on Afro-European Aesthetics and sensibilities # 1: North and Western Europe', *ARC Magazine*, Issue 7 (St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 2013). pp. 60-7.
[163] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994) p. 55.
[164] Fonds BKVB, http://www.intendant.nl/intendant/english/projecten/02/project.php, acc. 20-07-2016.

British diaspora theories. With the aim of critically engaging with what I then called a 'Black-Dutch consciousness in the visual arts',[165] the artist Patricia Kaersenhout and I organised the debate *Am I Black Enough?*[166]-[167] (2010). The debate was part of the public programme accompanying the *Paramaribo Perspectives* exhibition in TENT Rotterdam.[168] In my speech, that was the basis for conversation on how to give shape to a Dutch idea of Black, the following line of thought was articulated: the idea of Black already assumes exclusion but is consciously rooted in a multiple self and is not about emancipation. It is a position that claims, without reservation, the space to which all Dutch believe they are entitled, and consequently results in a Black self-awareness that is Dutch. This self-awareness is not a multicultural self-awareness because a bourgeoisie largely made up of white Dutch people formulates the definition of multicultural. The question was asked: how then do cultural producers contribute towards a broader Black awareness?[169] The conversation evolved into a discussion about the usefulness of explicitly mentioning Blackness in the work and in the work environment. The panel of cultural makers felt trapped between the private and the public and could not reach consensus in the use of any word drawing attention to their Blackness.[170] A conclusion drawn from this 2010 debate was that, at that time, self-identification with the idea of Black was a private matter that could not intervene in the overall public sphere. In line with the growing Afro awareness, there was a desire to break free from this confining circumstance. The general feeling was that drawing attention to this idea was harmful for career opportunities. Overcoming reluctance to identify the self and the work as Black in the public sphere also had to do with the scale on which the artists were able to operate, or the position they felt they held in the arts scene.

It was and still is a question of economic and / or political tactics based on the discussions the cultural makers choose, feel engaged by or empowered enough to enter. As Max Hantel notes, 'scale is always political'.[171] For Dutch Afro cultural makers, the level of connecting their work to the idea of Black depends on whether they are aiming for the local ethnic scene, local general scene, international Black scene or 'international' art scene. Finding ideological support in the Americo-centric discourse as a tool for legitimisation and empowerment is a tactical and, through the digital, a natural choice for contemporary Dutch Afro artists. As a consequence of the different tactics, terms such as 'Black' inevitably enter the discussion in the Netherlands. However, as this research will show, by tactically

[165] Charl Landvreugd, 'Notes on Black Dutch Aesthetics', *Conversations on Paramaribo Perspectives*, eds. Mariette Dölle and Malka Jonas (Rotterdam: TENT 2010).
[166] After: Billy Paul, *Am I Black Enough for You* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia International, 1973).
[167] Charl Landvreugd and Patricia Kaersenhout, *Am I Black Enough For You?* (debate), De Unie, Rotterdam, 26 October 2010.
[168] Participants were, documentary maker Tessa Boerman, movie director Hesdy Lonwijk, writer and publicist Clark Accord and fashion designer Marga Weimans. The debate was moderated by sociologist and writer Aspha Bijnaar.
[169] Charl Landvreugd, 'Notes on Black Dutch Aesthetics', *Conversations on Paramaribo Perspectives*, eds. Mariette Dölle and Malka Jonas (Rotterdam: TENT 2010).
[170] Also see; *Black France / France Noire The History and Politics of Blackness,* eds. Trica Danielle Keaton, T Denean Sharpley-Whiting and Tyler Stovall (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012).
[171] Max Hantel,'Rhizomes and the Space of Translation: On Edouard Glissat's Spiral Retelling', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism,* Vol. 17, No. 3 (42) (Durham: Duke University Press, November 2013), pp. 100–12 (p. 106).

encoding local issues through the Americo-centric as a way of legitimisation, the intertwining with local linguistic tropes proves not efficient enough to support the Dutch situation.

Charl Landvreugd, Molensteenkraag (2010), C-Print
Reaction to the emerging debate on Zwarte Piet (blackface figure) in the Netherlands

1.4.1 Language

To fully grasp this shortfall, it is important to acknowledge that all Dutch rely on understanding and translation of a foreign written and / or spoken language in pursuit of concepts that explain our situation. As a consequence, terminology needs to be translated linguistically and culturally to make sense in the Dutch context. Through translation the meaning of concepts and visual tropes is bound to change. The modified value gains a culturally different sensibility and informs the local in such a way that it needs explanation when translated back into the language in which the term originated. As Max Hantel notes, the meaning of borrowed terms and visual forms from one culture consequently only functions as a 'natural referent'[172] to that culture.[173] Through its translation and transformation the meaning forms and links the cultures connected to its shifting meaning. Rather than producing a 'carbon copy of equivalence or the linear projection of progress',[174] these translations and transformations are Edouard Glissant's spiral retelling; the movement from the One out to the multiple. Coming back to the shortfall, for the Dutch Afro cultural maker, the access to the texts that set out and determine the area of discussion and its borders follows the historical, academic and popular culture route established through African-American, British and Caribbean cultural output. Therefore, in the context of this thesis, I understand spiral retelling as the way in which American and British discourses are activated towards an understanding and reconsideration of Dutch Afro-ness in the arts. It is rhizomatic understanding 'in the sense of producing a rootedness in the world'.[175] Repeating the example, it is considering that a concept such as Black(ness) cannot be translated but only re-contextualised. This awareness 'undermines the illusion of global translatability and the possibility of pure transparency because we move through and across scales only by way of the opacity of others and their language'.[176]

1.4.2 Blackness

Exploring the Dutch position towards race is useful when unravelling the idea of Blackness as an indicator of the artist's social, legal and cultural position in comparison to the United States and Great Britain. A starting point is the particular Dutch eagerness to point out America's black-white problem and, as Gloria Wekker points out in her book *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*,[177]

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[172] Ibid., 104.
[173] Ibid., 108.
'the art of translation […] is creolisation at work, the unpredictability of Relation'. 'In other words, the way two languages interpenetrate in a specific act of translation actualises the network of unpredictable ties that every single language has to every other language in cultural, geographical and affective terms.'
[174] Ibid., 110.
[175] Ibid., 111.
[176] Ibid., 112.
[177] Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence; Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016) p. 16.

the collective denial of the racial and ethnic issues in the Netherlands. With racial bias disguised as 'cultural difference', the population and the arts are divided along the misleading axis of culture. However misleading it is, the current prevailing paradigm is that Dutch Afro art production should not be understood as racially marked, but as culturally different. This idea of non-racist equivalence and tolerance does not translate to ethnic equality. Ethnicity, which is marked as cultural, combined with implied Dutch native cultural superiority over most others, is so strongly rooted in the overall consciousness of the Netherlands that it conceals ideas about race. I see this as an opening to work towards an imagined normal space born from cultural hybridity. To get there, I deliberately choose to occupy a self-referential cultural space that allows the whole spectrum of multilayered Dutch subjectivity. From a local Afro and diaspora perspective, my position may seem politically unsustainable due to the everyday racism[178] and micro aggressions that are fully present in the visual arts and do not occur in isolation. Because of this reality I am thankful for my colleagues who are impassioned about eradicating Dutch anti-black racism within their work. In contrast, my position as thinking through the idea of culture rather than race might even be considered as giving in to the Dutch cultural superiority thinking or give white readers the idea that I am trying to eradicate colour. Questions may be raised about how internally colonised I am. These objections and considerations evolve out of the either / or binary system and the refusal to understand that it is possible to operate from a space that embraces the full multiplicity that is Dutch Afro-ness. This includes it being co-constituted through the same cultural paradigms as the majority group. Accepting this postcolonial condition as degree zero allows me to create from an environment that sets out from an Afro experience rather than from a space that is occupied with fighting majority group shenanigans, even if these affect me on a daily basis.

In the Dutch environment, where many different Afro (and other) ethnicities with a variety of histories live together, each group has different ways of dealing with everyday and institutional racism. Other than in Britain in the 1980s the variety of social – and political – agendas prevented uniting under the political umbrella 'Black' – or any other term, for that matter. There is not enough of a generally felt shared history or feeling of oppression to encourage or create a Black Dutch (cultural) nation based on the idea of race and ethnicity. This idea promotes a divide that leads to a cultural separation which in this context is not necessarily desired. The way Black is understood as an umbrella term for Afro people outside of the Netherlands does not work in the effort to imagine this Dutch subjectivity.

Allison Blakely, Emeritus Professor of European and Comparative History at Boston University, concurs with this argument that the current language does not suffice to speak about being Black on the

[178] See: Philomena Essed, *Understanding Everyday Racism; An Interdisciplinary Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1991).

continent.[179] Because of the historical diversity in Afro ethnicity in the Netherlands and the resulting variety of social and political positions, I argue that we have to ask ourselves whether following the American and British example is the way to go.

The historical development that occurred in the United States and Britain that gave rise to Black as a 'sense of self' is not applicable to the Dutch situation. As a borrowed political denomination, this construction lacks historical context and, even though it is of service to Dutch Afro subjects, does not find consensus in the Dutch Afro population. A growing Dutch Afro awareness towards a distinctive cultural identity is growing but is in its infancy and far from reaching a conclusion as yet. It is in a stage of becoming, a political 'pre-Black' state that opens up different possibilities of subject production. I argue that naming the subjects Black is taking advance on its potential political quality. Afro-Dutch and Black, for their own reasons, fall short in fully encapsulating the subjectivities this research imagines because they (unwillingly) position the subjects in the (post)colonial and 'Americo-centric discourse'.[180] When what is conveyed by English terms does not always match Dutch sensibilities, how does that language function in producing us? Of what use can it be when exploring the specific local language to speak about the self coming into existence as Dutch Afro and being solidified as such in the process of emerging? In other words, I wonder whether becoming essentially Black is useful when the horizon of moving towards the end of an essentialised culture is a possibility.

The Dutch state and society have their own ideas about this. Thinking along the lines of cultural difference, the state maintains categories that do not always reflect the lived reality. The Dutch Nationality law of 2003 states that all those born from Dutch Nationals or in the Kingdom are Dutch citizens. The fact that people of different ethnicities can become citizens is not reflected in the language used by government agencies such as the CBS (Central Agency of Statistics), which is not geared towards full cultural inclusion Since the recent wave of different ethnicities claiming their rights as cultural, rather than merely legal, citizens, national identity has become a political issue. When talking about the population, a distinction is made between 'native' and 'non-native' or, as it is called: *autochthonous*, originating from this country; and *allochtonous*, originating from another country. The word allochtonous is used for immigrants and their descendants. The law makes a distinction between first- and second-generation allochtonous. A first-generation allochtonous is someone living in the Netherlands but born in another country, with at least one parent born in a foreign country. A second-generation is someone born in the Netherlands with at least one parent born in a foreign country. The country of the mother is the

[179] Alison Blakely, 'Coda: Black Identity in France in a European Perspective', *Black France / France Noire: The History and Politics of Blackness,* eds. Trica Danielle Keaton, T Denean Sharpley-Whiting and Tyler Stovall (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 287-306 (p. 290).

[180] Paul Gilroy,' Foreword: Migrancy, culture, and a new map of Europe', in H. Raphael-Hernández (ed.) *Blackening Europe; The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York and London Routledge, 2004) pp.xi–xxii (p. xvi).

country of origin when both parents are from abroad, but in the case of the mother having been born in the Netherlands the father's country of origin becomes the country of origin for the child. When both parents are born in the Netherlands, the child is considered autochthonous.

The categories are a result of immigration due to decolonisation, invitation of migrant workers and influx of asylum seekers. Consequently, the allochtonous are divided into Western[181] and non-Western allochtonous.[182] The reason for this divide is the socio-economic and cultural position of the two groups.[183] In general parlance, the word allochtonous has come to indicate all those whose culture is dissimilar from Dutch culture. In practice this means everybody who is not obviously white. Even though by law children whose parents were born in the Netherlands are autochthonous (culturally Dutch), in the public sphere they are approached as allochtonous (from a different socio-economic background). Consequently, Dutch legal and legally confirmed cultural citizenship does not automatically lead to inclusion in the fabric of society as a full and equivalent participant and contributor to Dutchness.[184]

1.4.3 Self-naming

The problematic word Afro-Dutch that I have used thus far is an overarching term that tries to encompass the intricacies of naming strategies for people of African and diaspora descent in the Netherlands. It is also the term that marks difference from the Old Dutch ways as it deviates from, and refers to, the contemporary socio-political circumstances of the artists about whom I will speak. These circumstances (the Afro-Dutch condition) are the underlying condition from which this research is done. What I have in common with these artists is that we have developed strategies to incorporate cultural heritages and an embodied Dutchness into something new. From this comes the word *Zwart* (Black) that is acquiring a social and political specificity in the Netherlands, even though many Dutch people of Afro descent do not agree. At the same time, it cannot hurt to rethink the local self-naming tactics that have emerged over the years and have been available thus far. Taking an example in Afro writers such as the Surinamese-Dutch writer and poet Edgar Cairo can do this. He was a self-described Euro-Creole (centralising the Creole) who advocated for, and in doing so foresaw, a doubly creolised 'buffer culture'[185] in which black and

[181] If a group strongly resembles the Dutch population in socio-economic or cultural aspects they are considered Western Allochthonous; all countries in Europe except Turkey, North America, Oceania, Japan and Indonesia, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [Statistics Netherlands] Standaarddefinitie Allochtonen [Standard definition allochtonous], August 1999, p.1.
[182] Non-Western Allochthonous are Turkey, All African Countries, Latin America and Asia with the exception of Japan and Indonesia., Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [Statistics Netherlands] Standaarddefinitie Allochtonen [Standard definition allochtonous], August 1999, p. 1
[183] Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek [Statistics Netherlands], Standaarddefinitie Allochtonen [Standard definition allochtonous], August 1999, p. 1.
[184] Also See: Paul Gilroy,' Foreword: Migrancy, culture, and a new map of Europe', in H. Raphael-Hernández (ed.) *Blackening Europe; The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York and London Routledge, 2004) pp.xi–xxii. (pp. xi – xiv)
[185] Wim Rutgers, 'The Netherlands and its Colonies: Edgar Cairo', *A Historical Companion to Postcolonial Literatures – Continental Europe and its Empires*, eds. Prem Poddar, Rajeev S. Patke and Lars Jensen (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 326.

white influence one another. It is at this point and with this horizon of the new that the imagined normal space as a Utopian space where one can be culturally native emerges. It is with this horizon in mind, following Edgar Cairo and centralising Afro-ness, that I use the term Dutch Afro. For this subject the Dutchness is an addition to its multilayered Afro (Creole) cultural background.

1.5. The Imagined Normal Space

I have to go back first to the Stuart Hall text where he proclaimed 'the end of the essential black subject' going into the 1990s[186] to fully grasp this imagined normal space in which the Dutch Afro artistic subject emerges as native. Hall states that this third moment after WWII is the less politicised contemporary moment that is 'artistically neo-conceptual, multi-media and installation-based'.[187] It is the time when '"black"' by itself –in the age of refugees, asylum seekers and global dispersal – will no longer do'[188] in the British context. It is a horizon of going beyond Black, emerging from the specifics of the British artistic problem space. In the United States, this idea is echoed by the category of contemporary Post-Black art coined by Thelma Golden and Glen Ligon. In Post-Black art, race and racism are lined up while the interaction between these two is simultaneously rejected. As Thelma Golden remarks, the artists are 'adamant about not being labeled "black" artists, though their work was steeped, in fact deeply interested, in redefining complex notions of blackness'.[189] Effectively, the term tries to move beyond the ideas of Black and white towards imagining a different normal space. It is a horizon of going beyond Black, emerging from the specifics of the American artistic problem space.

All the steps of vindication, emancipation and representation through art that have been taken in the past century in the United States and United Kingdom are being repeated in the Netherlands today. The difference is that, in addition to digital media, all the theoretical frameworks and knowledge that have been created in the past century are available. This makes for a rapid development, going from barely any awareness to full-blown artistic activist action in ten years. Being fully aware of this Dutch spiral retelling in a contemporary environment of accelerated return, I propose the idea of an imagined normal space. This space is in full accordance with the end of the essential black subject and the ideas surrounding Post-Black art but emerges from a different problem space and has a different horizon for the future. Emerging from a pre-Black state, this problem space is invested in its constitution as a Dutch space of inherent

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'Cairo does not argue in favour of segregation nor assimilation or integration. What he wants is a doubly creolised "buffer culture", in which black and white influence one another. Through his own migration from Suriname to the Netherlands, Cairo in the course of his career has evolved from a pure "Sranan Man' to a "Euro-Creole" who has had to learn how to survive as a minority in the Netherlands.'

[186] Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 442–51 (p. 443).

[187] Stuart Hall, 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Postwar History', *History Workshop Journal 2006*, Vol.61, No.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, spring 2006) pp. 1-24 (P. 2).

[188] Ibid., 13.

[189] Thelma Golden, *Freestyle* (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 2001), p. 14.

cultural hybridity rather than giving power to the twentieth-century race dialogue where Black is understood as in opposition to whiteness.

The many contemporary Dutch Afro artists who refuse to be called Black inspire this imagined normal space. For them, the Afro-Dutch condition and the hyphenated Dutch category is a problem because it is not recognised as culturally native and as a constituent part of Dutch culture. It is an indication of social and geographical borders that can limit the effect of the artist's agency. I see this new environment that could tackle the predicament of Dutch Afro artists as a whole separate space that leaves the structures, including the in-between space from which it originates, intact. It is able to do so because it is not in opposition to the diaspora, the majority group or resulting friction between the two, but accepts all of this as elements in the multilayered, inherently hybrid, degree zero. It is the space where the rules that are in place on all sides of the hybrid spectrum do not apply but influence. A space, where one can wander off, abandoning set paths. Rather than in a geographical region, the imagined normal space – in my earlier writings conceptualised as Afropea[190] – functions as a cultural space where one can locate continental Afro-Dutch subjectivity as native. This subject is consequently the cultural maker and native inhabitant of the imagined normal space. This imagined native space is a Utopian place where race is depoliticised because it loses its function as a marker for difference. Here Afro-ness is evident to itself as a universal point of departure. It is here where artists start claiming their place in society rather than as representations of race.

As shown, the subjects that are to inhabit the imagined normal space (Afropea) are driven by not wanting to be essentialised and are carving out their specific 'end of the essential black subject'. At the same time, they cannot be post-black as they are figuring out what it means to be black in the Dutch context. Effectively, the Dutch Afro artistic subject is invested in the paradox of simultaneously becoming and refusing to be 'black'. By means of the imagined normal space, it is possible to hold that position as self-evident and reserve the right to explore, or develop, a gesture / artistic freedom that takes flight and creates a culture with a different horizon and shapes the future.

[190] Charl Landvreugd, 'Notes on Imagining Afropea', *Open Arts Journal*, Issue 5, Summer 2016 (Milton Keynes: Open University, 2016), pp. 41–52.

1.6 Conclusion

What this chapter argues and demonstrates is that imagining is not new and does not happen in isolation. Being born out of hybridity with African features determines how one is perceived. Going to the so-called original culture reveals that the expectation coming out of binary thinking does not match reality. Even when one's background is not fully grasped by the majority group, when pursuing cultural nativeness it seems more logical to look for it where one is local. In this local environment, rethinking of the imposed social, racial and cultural category is what creates a new understanding of the subject. This understanding should be constituted through unproblematic difference that rejects the biased categories, and I understand this as a problem space of self-evident hybridity.

Imagining a new horizon is part and parcel of the African experience with and in the West. It is always concerned with taking away obstructions that impede social progress while African-based cultural expressions are being incorporated and adapted by the majority group culture. History shows that, through self-organisation, art and activism, changes materialise and some of the obstructions can be removed. At the same time, when the means of producing 'general culture' are in the hands of the majority group it seems important to be affirmed through those channels. Consequently, the danger exists for 'inauthentically autonomous'[191] cultural expressions that are being instrumentalised for political purposes. Deviation from the current Dutch cultural obsession with diversity, by articulating a Dutch consciousness that is self-evidently hybrid, is one way of circumventing this predicament and moving towards imagining cultural sovereignty away from the idea of multi-culturalism. For Dutch Afro artistic subjects, it is a matter of self-actualisation and self-definition that recognises multilayered subjectivity as a common ground from which to operate.

This is a different point of departure than the previous generation that was brought up in the colonial era and moved to the Netherlands in the last quarter of the last century. They are Stuart Hall's 'last colonials' who did not arrive in the 50s and 60s but in the 70s and 80s. The art that came out of this group was concerned with fitting into the modern paradigms of that time. Now that the 'second generation – the first "postcolonials" – who were born in' the Netherlands emerge, it is under the 'shadow of race' that is politically and socially disguised as the shadow of culture. It is this group of artistically and politically active artists to which I belong. Just like in Britain in the 1980s, this moment, that is taking place 30 years later due to the different generational arrival, is producing a group that is 'anti-racist, culturally relativist and identity-driven',[192] but with the aim of co-deciding what Dutch culture is rather than solely eradicating racism. The diasporic knowledge that is collected through electronic media and the

[191] Jerry Watts, *Amiri Baraka: The Politics and Art of a Black Intellectual* (New York: NYU Press, 2001) p. 158.
[192] Stuart Hall, 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Postwar History', *History Workshop Journal 2006*, Vol.61, No.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, spring 2006) pp. 1-24 (P. 1).

particularities of Dutch culture, which include a sense of entitlement with regard to self-determination, have produced subjects that will not accept being racially essentialised without a fight. Besides that, growing up with globalisation produced subjects such as Remy Jungerman, Patricia Kaersenhout and myself who understand that they have agency in different realms than just the Dutch art scene.

As Rosamond King argues in her discussion about my practice, 'imagination can itself be considered a methodology'.[193] With this subjectivity and imagined normal space in mind, I work towards a curatorial practice that creates the conditions for the work to function on its own terms, as native to the larger Dutch art environment. Investigating the artists' relation to culture, self-naming strategies and their ideas about belonging, does this. The meaning that is excavated from the work they produce informs the creation of the imagined normal space outside of the known artistic fields while enabling its place in the diaspora and Europe. This process takes into account the underlying condition of this research which is the (historical) socio-political position of the Afro-Dutch subject. Overarching this curatorial approach is the exposure to media and digital information that helped shape the production of Dutch Afro artists. The driving condition is the subjectivity of the artist as it is experienced. Together these points are a complex intertwining of functions, illustrating the hybrid nature of culture that is taken as a given and starting point in this research.

In order to understand the circumstances that created the position Dutch Afro artists are in today, it is imperative to first trace the historical trajectory. In chapter two of this thesis I investigate the development of cultural policies, exhibition histories and art critique that shaped the visual art discourse that is applied to Afro-Dutch artists. Before the contemporary period there are no Dutch surveys available, let alone one that is comparable to Black British or African-American discourses on artistic developments. The contemporary exhibition and events that are available to frame Afro-Dutch visual art tradition, discourse and canon can be divided into the categories for which they were functional. First, there are the exhibitions that served to be disruptive to the Western artistic discourse on the continent, such as *Magiciens de la Terre* (Paris, 1989). Secondly, there are those which said something about the development of an aesthetic that could later be placed in the vicinity of a continental Afro-Dutch aesthetic, such as *Twintig Jaar Beeldende Kunst in Suriname* [Twenty years of visual arts in Suriname] (Amsterdam, 1997). And, thirdly, there are exhibitions and events that sought to bring about some change in perspective towards (historical) cultural citizenship such as *Black is Beautiful* (Amsterdam, 2008) and Documenta 11 (2001–02) and its five platforms. Together with Dutch art critique and governmental

[193] See the introduction and afterword to: Rosamond S. King, *Island Bodies: Transgressive Sexualities in the Caribbean Imagination* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2014).

cultural policies, these exhibition frameworks map an unexposed area in the Dutch, diaspora and international visual arts.

2. Tracing: Dutch art critique, cultural policies and exhibition histories; from exotic to diversity.

Introduction

To understand the changes in views that led up to this moment of an imagined normal space, I reviewed contemporary art journals held by the Van Abbemuseum in its library.[194] The museum played a key role in the Dutch process of thinking and curating diversity in the arts, which is fully investigated in chapter three. Established as a modern museum in 1936, the Van Abbemuseum has been developing its focus on the contemporary through the lens of diversity since the appointment of the British director Charles Esche in 2004.

The museum's library has an extensive collection of Dutch and international art journals going back well into the previous century. With the aim of finding an Afro presence located in the Dutch art discourse in the contemporary period I decided on the journal *Kunstbeeld* (1976–2012, 10 issues a year) for various reasons. Before I started my research in the archives it had already been mentioned in several interviews that the journal had regularly reviewed Dutch and diaspora Afro artists. Strengthening the journal's relevance for this research is the fact that Wouter Wellling was one of the contributing editors. As an art critic and curator, he has been working on interculturality and globalisation in the visual arts since the 1980s.[195] He is currently a curator at the National Museum of World Cultures with a focus on contemporary art from Africa and the diaspora, and specialises in the 'debate around presenting and collecting transcultural art'.[196] *Kunstbeeld* is also the journal to which Paul Faber was a regular contributor. He obtained his PhD (1980) from the University of Amsterdam in art history with a minor in African History and cultural anthropology. As an art historian and curator, he was connected to the Wereldmuseum (World Museum) in Rotterdam from 1986 to 1997 and worked as senior curator at the Tropenmuseum (now part of the National Museum of World Cultures) from 1997 to 2014. In his career Paul Faber has contributed to over 100 exhibitions and international museological collaborations.[197] *Kunstbeeld* is also the magazine that allowed Rob Perrée, one of my main interviewees in this thesis, to publicise on diaspora arts from the mid-1980s onwards. Rob Perrée holds a PhD (1988) in art history from the University of Amsterdam and is a curator and critic 'specialized in contemporary American, African American, African and Surinam art and artist's [sic] books'.[198] Today these three individuals are considered the pre-eminent authorities on African and diaspora arts in the Netherlands.

[194] APPENDIX 1.
[195] Framer Framed, 'Wouter Welling', https://framerframed.nl/mensen/wouter-welling/, acc. 13-11-2018.
[196] LinkedIn, 'Wouter Welling', https://nl.linkedin.com/in/wouter-welling-43528277, acc. 13-11-2018.
[197] Framer Framed, 'Paul Faber', https://framerframed.nl/mensen/paul-faber/, acc. 13-11-2018.
[198] Rob Perrée, personal website, http://robperree.com/biography/, acc. 13-11-2018.

During the period covered by this thesis, *Kunstbeeld* was also the longest-running Dutch-language journal concerned with contemporary art. It was locally distributed, self-funded and advertisement-based from when it was first published in 1976. Around 1979 the journal had a paid circulation of 15,000 of which 10,000 were subscribers.[199] It came second only to *Kunstschrift* (20,000) which focused on art from before the nineteenth century. In her 2014 MA thesis[200] in art history, Fenna van den Berg discusses the role of *Kunstbeeld* in the Dutch art landscape. She explains that by the 1990s there was a large diversity in Dutch art magazines which were separated along two lines. 'On the one hand there were the magazines that came out of art (historical) institutes, such as *Museumjournaal*, *Metropolis M*, *Kunstschrift* and *jongHolland*. On the other hand there were magazines that were established with a commercial point of departure, such as *Kunstbeeld*, *Tableau* and *Vitrine*, which later became *Museumtijdsschrift*.'[201] With a broad division between public and scientific magazines, *Kunstbeeld* fitted into the former.[202] In the first years of the magazine's existence it focused on transferring information to the audience and functioned outside of the inner circle of Dutch art criticism.[203] In 2000/2001 *Kunstbeeld* received a one-off grant from the Mondriaan Fund to sharpen their formula in such a way as to find a better connection with a younger audience[204] (i.e. digital media developments were threatening the journal's market). They received this grant on the basis of being a '"special interest" journal for an audience that is "actively interested in modern and contemporary art forms"'.[205] The result was that half-way through the 2000s, of all the conventional magazines *Kunstbeeld* was having the most success in functioning as a cross-medium Dutch art journal.[206] By the time it was physically terminated in 2008 it had a circulation of 8,600. Fenna van den Berg states that *Kunstbeeld* positioned itself as a guide to the world of fine art for a broad audience.[207] She goes on to say that the magazine formulated 'a specific audience; that of serious art lovers who did not settle for cursory reports and wanted to be challenged to think'.[208] She argues that the value of *Kunstbeeld* in the landscape of Dutch art journals was its audience-orientated character and its ability to adapt to the 'wishes and needs of an art audience that has significantly emancipated itself in the past 30 years'.[209] The *Kunstbeeld* contributions of Wouter Welling, Paul Faber and Rob Perrée and the journal's role in the landscape

[199] Fenna van den Berg, *Een kunsttijdschrift voor de kunst, het publiek of de markt; De positie van Kunstbeeld in het Nederlandse landschap van kunsttijdschriften (1976–2012)* [An art magazine for the art, the audience or the market: The position of *Kunstbeeld* in the Dutch landscape of art magazines (1976–2012)] (University of Utrecht: PhD thesis, 2014), p. 9.
[200] Fenna van den Berg, *Een kunsttijdschrift voor de kunst, het publiek of de markt; De positie van Kunstbeeld in het Nederlandse landschap van kunsttijdschriften (1976–2012)* [An art magazine for the art, the audience or the market: The position of *Kunstbeeld* in the Dutch landscape of art magazines (1976–2012)] (University of Utrecht: PhD thesis, 2014), https://dspace.library.uu.nl/bitstream/handle/1874/295711/Kunstbeeld.pdf?sequence=2 acc. 11-07-2018.
[201] Ibid., 45.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.
[204] Ibid., 20.
[205] Ibid., 21.
[206] Ibid., 27.
[207] Ibid., 45.
[208] Ibid., 46.
[209] Ibid., 47.

legitimises *Kunstbeeld* as a reliable source for reporting on the change in understanding art made by non-Western artists from exotic to a postcolonial / world art context of diversity.

In addition to the art critique and exhibition histories, this chapter also gives some attention to Dutch national cultural policies. Together these topics provide a broad picture of the Dutch notions around the production of contemporary Dutch Afro artistic subjectivities. However, there are a few issues that I would like to highlight for the non-Dutch reader before going through the available information. This is important because you, the English-speaking reader, may bring in preconceived notions from your own cultural history. As I have argued in the previous chapter, Dutch history, sensibilities and practices do not readily match with American and British histories of ethnic diversity thinking in its broadest sense. In the Dutch context, for instance, the terms of engagement went from 'transcultural' (1970s onward) with cultural relativism as its point of departure, to 'diversity' (1997 onwards) where everything needs to be referenced through white cultural paradigms. This is in contrast to the British environment where the word diversity was used before the word transcultural made its entrance. I also want to explain that this chapters deals exclusively with Dutch critique on international developments (internationalism) and exhibitions that took place in that context and is not a comparative study with Britain or the United States. Developments in these and other diaspora areas are mentioned only if they appeared in the reviewed art critique under review. With this in mind, it will become clear why, a conference such as *A New Internationalism* (1994) that was held at the Tate Gallery is not mentioned. This absence may have to do with the access, enjoyed by, only the hardly a handful of critics had, to moments such as these in a pre-internet era. Secondly, there is the problem of language (level of critical thinking) that is used in the anthology[210] that came out of the conference. With a wide readership and the continuing present aversion to complex concepts in the general population, reviews of such conferences did not fit in the strategy of a journal such as *Kunstbeeld*. At the same time, this 1994 anthology rehearses all of the arguments and the incorporation of world art that will come up over time in a period in Dutch art, when thinking about a diaspora artistic idiosyncrasy that is distinctively Dutch is not even on the horizon. It could not and cannot be on the horizon because today, in 2019, the Dutch are only at the beginning of acknowledging their colonial past and of allowing non-whites to co-decide and think through what Dutch culture is. This is one of the main reasons why this thesis had to be undertaken in an English- speaking country where the histories and questions are established in such a way that it can support research on conditions that set out from a Dutch Afro experience.

[210] *Global Visions: Towards a New Internationalism in the Visual Arts*, ed. by Jean Fisher (London: Institute of Visual Arts, Kale Press, 1994).

2.1 Part 1: Exotic / Postcolonial: Dutch art criticism on non-Western art

2.1.1 Africa

In 1982, recalling the historical relation of art from Africa and the Dutch, Paul Faber drew attention to the fact that the Benin Bronzes and masks were admired for their 'simplicity, force and subtlety', despite having been produced by 'primitive souls' who were 'wildlings', or so was the speculation.[211] He notes that the novelty of contemporary Nigerian art is not only a surprise but, with its necessary points of contact with known art forms, is consequently considered very interesting for a Western audience. [212] In this first essay I found in *Kunstbeeld* on non-Western art, Faber explains that these contemporary works break 'the barrier of unfamiliarity and anonymity […] The first impression is confusing because of the diversity, the form-richness, the colourfulness and the exotic themes.' [213]

Over the years he makes a comparison and distinction between so-called traditional art practices of the different locations in the world and Western art practices. These traditional art practices, operating in the realms of religion, are placed in the exotic context of magic and mysticism. Faber makes an effort to understand the works and notes about the Indian feast in honour of Durga (where many religious sculptures and installations are being sunk in the Hooghley River, a distributary of the Ganges): 'Despite the prescribed iconography the stylistic difference is great and the technical perfection is impressive.'[214] He goes on to say that the difference between Indian art and our [Western] art lies not only in how it looks but also in 'how it is used, its meaning, the sources of inspiration. When one explores non-Western art with these criteria, one meets extremely interesting phenomena, contemporary and alive, but not always fitting into our ideas of how or what art should be.'[215] Demonstrating that this approach to the art had not changed much 15 years later, when considering altars as an art form, the curator and critic Wouter Welling states that 'A Yoruba altar is an "environment", that can reach theatrical splendour, of which the Catholic Church can only be jealous.'[216] He remarks that, unlike in contemporary Western art where context is necessary before it can be appreciated, this art form is very compelling.[217] Welling asks whether these altars should be seen as art or whether they are 'only interesting from an anthropological standpoint?' [218]

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[211] Paul Faber, 'De Goden zijn niet dood; Nigeriaanse Kunst in Zwolle' [The Gods are not dead; Nigearian art in Zwolle], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 5, Jaargang 6 (Utrecht: Veen Media, February 1982), pp. 12–13 (p. 12).
[212] Ibid., 12-13.
[213] Ibid., 12.
[214] Paul Faber, 'Kunst uit een andere wereld – een niet-Westers vierluik' [Art from another world – A non-Western tetralogy],*Kunstbeeld*, No. 12, Jaargang 12 (Utrecht: Veen Media, december '88 / januari '89) pp. 26-28 (p. 26).
[215] Ibid., 27.
[216] Wouter Welling, 'Op de drempel van twee werelden – Altaarkunst uit Afrika en Afro-Amerika' [On the threshold of two worlds – Altar art from Afrika and Afro-America], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 5, Jaargang 21 (Utrecht: Veen Media, 1997), pp. 45–6 (p. 46).
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.

The contrast between 'traditional' and Western art practices is highlighted and made explicit while speaking about Venda sculptures in the exhibition on South African art, *Freedom Flight* (1997). The publicist and curator Anne Berk says: 'In contrast with Western conceptual art, which challenges the intellect, this art is corporal, taken from the heart [uit het hart gegrepen].'[219] South Africa is a country of contrasts that is not only the economic engine of the continent but also plays a big role in the cultural field where, on the one hand, naïve sculptures (black people) and, on the other, oil paintings (white people) are being produced.[220] Here the geographical difference between Western and African art practices is reduced to a cultural difference between black and white living in the same environment.

The mapping of the art world in the rest of Africa by *Kunstbeeld* also speaks about this cultural difference as an absence of art doctrines in environments such as Benin. As Wouter Welling notes, a 'different character' of the art world without infrastructure (academies, museums for contemporary art, galleries) is presented here.[221] About this difference the artist Romuald Hazoumé (b. 1962) says that there is no need for an academy, as 'there we would only learn to mimic Western art'.[222] With this, Hazoumé reiterates the cultural difference and articulates a need for a contemporary Beninese artistic idiosyncrasy. He says that 'if there is something that the artists from Benin make clear, it is that the old [art from Benin] does not have to be a burden, but rather can form an excellent breeding ground for the new'. [223]

Hazoumé was critiquing the art from Africa that was constructed through Western involvement. Over the years *Kunstbeeld* discusses several examples of this development. Paul Faber reviews the creation of contemporary art from Africa exemplified in Nigeria's Oshogbo where an 'African renaissance' produced many artists, due to the presence of the German linguist Ulli Beier and Austrian artist Suzanne Wenger. [224] The influence of Dutch teaching about the etching and Batik technique as an influence on Nigerian art processes results in work that 'is not heavy, theoretical art. It is illustrative, fairy-tale-like but above all indestructibly merry, this work [by Bruce Onobrakpeya] exudes a heart-warming charm.'[225] In Zimbabwe's stonemason colony, Tengenenge, 'the sculptures stand disordered without pretence'.[226] Here it is Tom Blomefield[227] who migrated to 'Rhodesia' in 1947 where he became a mineworker and later tobacco and maize farmer, who delivers the stones, hammers, chisels and other tools and takes care of the sales of the works in Harare. The artist, teacher and museum administrator

[219] Anne Berk, 'De Apartheid voorbij – Vrije vlucht van kunst in Zuid-Afrika' [Beyond Apartheid – Free Flight of art in South Africa], *Kunstbeeld*, No.2, Jaargang 21 (Utrecht: Veen Media, February 1997), pp. 18–19 (p. 19).
[220] Ibid.
[221] Wouter Welling, 'De vitale traditie van Benin' [The vital/lively Benin tradition], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 3, Jaargang 22 (Utrecht: Veen Media, maart 1998) pp. 48-51 (p. 50).
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid., 51.
[224] Paul Faber, 'De Goden zijn niet dood; Nigeriaanse Kunst in Zwolle' [The Gods are not dead; Nigearian art in Zwolle],, *Kunstbeeld*, No. 5, Jaargang 6, (Utrecht: Veen Media, februari 1982) pp. 12-13 (p.13).
[225] Ibid.
[226] *Kunstbeeld*, 'Zimbabwe op de berg' [Zimbabwe on the mountain], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, July / August 1989), pp. 17–20 (p. 19).
[227] LinkedIn, 'Tom Blomefiel', https://nl.linkedin.com/in/tom-blomefield-58706555 , acc. 18-07-2018.

Frank McEwen started the Zimbabwean 'Workshop School' in 1955. It was not designed as 'formal training' but rather as a place where interested people were provided with 'paint, pencils and cloth'.[228] 'Instead of clogging an unformed mind with foreign information, examples and prescribed subjects, it [the school] is concerned with the spirit, the esprit, of art that is nourished and expressed with care.'[229] The result of these interventions is 'an idiom of an unstoppable stream of fantasy and curious design, an expressive form-language without the burden of hyper- or post-modernism, with which young artist in the West are tormented'.[230]

In addition to being modelled in this way, gaining appreciation in the Western art market also depends on being discovered, being bought by or being exhibited in institutions with a considerable reputation. In 1982, Faber was already observing that the success gained by African contemporary artists in the West is based on an 'unquestionable idiosyncratic character'[231] – a certain 'authentic African' feel that can be compared to the likes of Klee and Cobra. He portrays an artist such as Twins Seven Seven (b. 1944) as someone who is not a 'Western surrealist looking for individual dream-images', but as someone who recalls the 'fairy tales and mythical world of the gods' of his youth.[232] However, when the works became larger and moved towards a 'harmonious whole' – in essence, started dealing with aesthetic issues in Western modern art – it is considered to be less surprising and to have less tension.[233] This line of critique that centres on the perceived inability of modern non-Western (particularly Afro) artists to attain the same quality standard as their Western counterparts develops into one of the key arguments in the appreciation of works. In the rest of the text, this false binary between ethnicity and quality is defined as the quality argument. Where, according to *Kunstbeeld*, in the 1989 art environment, the African 'stone masons appear to be totally unaware of any European master whatsoever',[234] they observe that in the appreciation of art from Africa 'there is a strange tension between makers of contemporary art exhibitions and cultural anthropologists'.[235] This tension, the quality argument, can consequently be seen in the views on Susan Vogel's *Africa Explores* (New York, 1991) and Clementine Deliss' *Africa '95* (London, 1995) which are not discussed in *Kunstbeeld*.

[228] *Kunstbeeld*, 'Zimbabwe op de berg' [Zimbabwe on the mountain], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli / augustus 1989) pp. 17-20 (p. 18).
[229] Ibid.
[230] Ibid.
[231] Paul Faber, 'De Goden zijn niet dood; Nigeriaanse Kunst in Zwolle' [The Gods are not dead; Nigearian art in Zwolle],, *Kunstbeeld*, No. 5, Jaargang 6, (Utrecht: Veen Media, februari 1982) pp. 12-13 (p.13).
[232] Ibid.
[233] Ibid.
[234] *Kunstbeeld*, 'Zimbabwe op de berg' [Zimbabwe on the mountain], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli / augustus 1989) pp. 17-20 (p. 19).
[235] Ibid., 18.

Wouter Welling states that, by 2000, for the (African) artists involved, their position on the world stage is one in which they want to be seen as artists first and not placed in the ghetto.[236] The word 'identity' is, in the words of the *Dak'Art 2004* director Rémi Sagna, seen as 'too burdened! Everybody is authentic and a world-citizen at the same time. People have no more borders, it is a notion of a large open-ness to the world. Purity is a dangerous notion.'[237] In the essay on *Dak'Art 2004* and *Africa Remix* (2004–07) the curator and critic Simon Njami explains this development by identifying certain stages in the contemporary world art process from the position of the non-Western (African) artist. The first phase is becoming aware of one's own cultural background. Second is a distancing from one's roots, due to feeling clamped down by the 'exoticising bodice'.[238] In the third phase, 'ethnicity is no longer an initial concept, but rather aesthetics and politics [are the central focus]'.[239] Njami effectively predicts the imagined normal space while echoing Stuart Hall's 'end of the essential black subject in the Black British artistic problem space of the 1990s'.[240]

The African example is a template that confirms the idea of difference in non-Western visual art production that is dependent on Western involvement to develop into what is considered 'art'. It reveals a strictly framed notion of art that is also assumed by modern and contemporary artists from these (colonised) areas. The demand for local authenticity and fitting into Western artistic doctrines leads to a double-bind which in Dutch art criticism reinforces colonial beliefs of Western cultural superiority. For the artists, the possibility of passing as 'art' in this framework not only sets up the vague borders of the indefinable space that is the quality argument but also locates the artists in this no-man's-land that is patrolled by the international art world.

2.1.2 Pre-colonial influence: Australia, Caribbean (Haiti), Latin-America, Indonesia

The form of 'accommodating' locals towards artistic production that is recognised as art in the West also happened outside of Africa. In Australia it was a white drawing teacher who stimulated the Aboriginal to start using canvasses and hardboard in 1971. This makes Aboriginal art only several decades old when seen from the perspective of the hardboard carrier as a method recognised in the West.[241] In Haiti it was the American artist DeWitt Peters who arrived in 1943 as an English teacher and later opened an art

[236] Wouter Welling, 'Dak'Art 2000: Globalisering van de Afrikaanse kunst' [Dak'Art 2000: Globalisation of African art], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 24 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli/augustus 2000) pp. 28-33 (p. 28).
[237] Ibid.
[238] Wouter Welling, Afrikaanse kunst [African Art], *Kunstbeeld*, No. n.a, Jaargang n.d., (Utrecht: Veen Media, 2005), p. 44.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Stuart Hall, 'New Ethnicities', in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, eds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) pp. 442-451 (p. 443).
[241] Wouter Welling, 'Het Aboriginal Art Museum – De vitaliteit van een oeroude kunsttraditie' [The Aboriginal Art Museum – The vitality of an ancient art tradition], *Kunstbeeld,* No. 3, Jaargang 27 (Utrecht: Veen Media, maart 2003) pp. 20-23 (p. 22).

centre, geared towards the elite of Haiti. According to Paul Faber, this development ignited a spark that passed over to the black population of the island[242] and resulted in a 'prairie fire' because artists were encouraged to examine their possibilities. [243] As a result, Faber states that the Haitian artists produce work that ranges from 'almost chaotic colour trumpeting full of Voodoo symbolism [… to] carefully constructed monochrome'.[244] 'This jungle of images, combined with a cultural isolation, has produced paintings and sculptures that deserve more than the meagre term "naïve art".'[245] With this statement Faber acknowledges the development of a site-specific idiosyncratic form-language based on Western principles of art making**.** Where in Haiti it is 'cultural isolation', as Faber puts it, in other parts of the world there is a significant pre-colonial visual language that is recognised as art that informs the language of the local artists. Unlike with the sub-Saharan art, in these instances the 'old' is not seen as something that hinders but rather enriches the new / the West.

In *Kunstbeeld*, apart from Indonesia of which I will speak later, the pre-colonial local influence on art is mostly discussed in relation to Latin America. In the journal, the Chilean poet Raúl Zurita says that the quest for identity and the appearance of the continent in a new historical context is constructed more on 'fantasy than on a concrete direct reality'.[246] He states that it is a 'subtle and ambivalent' reality that embodies an 'unknown relation to Utopia'. [247] The British art historian Dawn Adès adds that the 'identity question is not so much a problem but rather a source for the ideas of contemporary artists. They see their "Americanness" as an idea that is worth investigation to be examined against reality.'[248] In this defining of the relationship to Utopia, many artists are inspired by the pre-Columbian culture while others portray contemporary Indian [sic] culture.[249] 'The autochthonous art has contributed to the idea of a mixed *mestizo* culture, of which the origins are as strongly rooted in the Indian as the European world.'[250] The works are not a 'weak shadow of European painting, but a new and multifaceted development'.[251]

The Dutch curator and critic Wim van Beek explains that different 'artists from those different countries, each in their own way, are trying to define their relationship to Utopia: a "common" Latin

[242] Paul Faber, 'Kunst uit een andere wereld – een niet-Westers vierluik' [Art from another world – A non-Western tetralogy],*Kunstbeeld*, No. 12, Jaargang 12 (Utrecht: Veen Media, december '88 / januari '89) pp. 26-28 (p. 27).
[243] Ibid., 28.
[244] Ibid., 27.
[245] Ibid., 28.
[246] Raúl Zurita catalogue essay for exhibition U-ABC beeldende kunst uit Latijns-Amerika quoted by Willem van Beek, 'U-ABC, beeldende kunst uit Latijns-Amerika' [U-ABC, visual art from Latin America], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 10, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, October 1989), pp. 14–17 (p. 17).
[247] Ibid.
[248] Dawn Adès, 'Kunst uit Latijns-Amerika' [Art from Latin America], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, July / August 1989), pp. 32–5 (p. 33).
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.

American art in which each country looks for its own identity with specific accents'.[252] An example of this is contemporary Latin American photography, where there is hardly any distinction between art photography and documentary photography.[253] Here, the developments lead to the issue of 'stereotypical subjects [… which] in our Western world still determine the strong and emotional, romanticised image of these countries'.[254] Even so, according to Adès, 'It is neither coincidence nor simply a reflection of international "good taste" that some of the impressive visual images and constructions in Latin American art are at the crossroads of folk art and environment art, on the basis of which a true, original *mestizo* art develops.'[255] For Latin American artists such as Fredy Flores working in the Netherlands in the 1980s, this form of art production means recognising something valuable in the pre-Columbian heritage, which Europeans often describe with terms such as 'primitive', 'exotic' or 'folkloric'.[256] It shows that the work is trying to grapple with this Latin American relation to Europe, between academia and 'the spontaneity of its own culture'.[257]

What this account reveals is how the perception of local authenticity is valued when it comes from an area that has historically been appreciated for its cultural achievements. While content and form are questioned, in the case of Latin America, these historical cultural achievements are enlarged because they are canalised through European descendants. Therefore, the double-bind of local authenticity and Western artistic doctrines works differently in this case because of the (mestizo) whiteness and cultural Europeanness of the artists. Consequently, the authority to measure the work against Western standards invokes the quality argument but without the notion of inherent cultural inferiority.

Dealing with art from the ex-colonies, the Dutch art world and critique situate Eastern art traditions as valuable practices. This may have to do with the longstanding trade relation with Japan and the influence of Chinese art on the development of Delfts Blauw. Consequently, looking at the ex-colony in the East, where there was already a thriving culture and pictorial tradition in place before colonialism, a different picture emerges. The Western influence on traditional art practices that transformed into local contemporary art under Dutch colonial rule is exemplified in the accounts on modern and contemporary Indonesian art history. The history starts in 1936 when the artists S. Sudjojono and Agus Djaja established the association of painters *Persagi* in which Sudjojono in particular rejected the *Mooi-Indië*

[252] Willem van Beek, 'U-ABC, beeldende kunst uit Latijns-Amerika' [U-ABC, visual art from Latin America], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 10, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, oktober 1989) pp. 14-17 (p. 17).
[253] Ibid., 15.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Dawn Adès, 'Kunst uit Latijns-Amerika' [Art from Latin America], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli / augustus 1989) pp. 32-35 (p. 33).
[256] Rob Perrée, 'Latijnsamerikaanse kunstenaars in Nederland 2 – – De dialoog van Fredy Flores' [Latin American artists in the Netherlands 2 – – Fredy Flores' dialogue], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7, Jaargang 12 (Utrecht: Veen Media, July / August 1988), pp. 54–5 (p. 54).
[257] Ibid., 55.

(Beautiful Indonesia) style, that romantically idealised the landscape and traditional living.[258] As a result, an Indonesian Modernism developed that was 'highly influenced by the social-political context'.[259] Wouter Welling states that, because the form-idiom but not the content derived from the West, the main question in the 1930s was whether 'modernisation is equal to westernisation'.[260] From this question two schools developed. The one in Yogyakarta preferred 'realistic or expressionistic painting, with an undertone of social sensitivity, based on "Indonesian" subjects.'[261] The one in Bandung, where the Dutch painter Ries Mulder taught, favoured 'an abstract, aesthetic style, deriving from Cubism'[262]. According to art historian Helena Spanjaard, this difference played out in Indonesia as the Bandung school, where the community stayed Dutch-inclined in the 1950s, was accused of being a laboratory of the West.[263] In 1975 the Indonesia Art Movement was established, which made 'an explicit distinction between higher arts and traditional art'.[264] They drove the discussion to the brink by stating that 'the possibility exists of syncretism, through which the modern and traditional can merge. Welling states that the result is "a modern art with an Indonesian charisma".'[265]

What the review of articles in *Kunstbeeld* shows thus far is that gaining appreciation in the West works differently depending on the region. Latin American and Eastern art practices are looked at differently than practices with an Afro background. In summary, the coming into being of contemporary art in (ex-) colonial spaces is constructed through the intervention of Westerners who encourage the locals. As the magazine argues, 'All the attention that has been given to the influence of African expressiveness on European art […] has little to do with declaring the contemporary art from third-world countries as matured.'[266] Even though, in for instance Haiti, the art is appreciated as more than naïve art, the production coming out of this encouragement is viewed as lacking theoretical and formal grounding and is appreciated for its charm, naiveté and expressiveness. At the same time, the role of pre-colonial influence on contemporary art production is regarded as valuable in the Latin American context. Here, people of European ancestry who are rooted in the native-American and European culture produced a mestizo visual culture that can be measured on an international stage. As a whole, it is the European influence on all of these locations that provides the mandate to decide whether or not the work is valuable

[258] Wouter Welling, 'Doorbraak en bloei in de Indonesische kunst' [Breakthrough and boom in Indonesian art], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 2, Jaargang 22 (Utrecht: Veen Media, februari 1988) pp.46-49 (p. 48).
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.
[261] Helena Spanjaard, 'Ahmad Sadali een religieuze abstract' [Ahmad Sadali a religious abstract], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 4. Jaargang 9 (Utrecht: Veen Media, February 1985), pp. 43–5 (p. 43).
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid., 43-44.
[264] Wouter Welling, 'Doorbraak en bloei in de Indonesische kunst' [Breakthrough and boom in Indonesian art], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 2, Jaargang 22 (Utrecht: Veen Media, februari 1988) pp.46-49 (p. 48).
[265] Ibid.
[266] *Kunstbeeld*, 'Zimbabwe op de berg' [Zimbabwe on the mountain], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli / augustus 1989) pp. 17-20 (p. 19).

enough to be appreciated as part of the contemporary (Western and Dutch) art discourse. Effectively, during this period between 1982 and 2000, *Kunstbeeld* paints an art environment in which ancient and traditional non-Western art traditions were compared to modern and contemporary Western art practices. As a result, and subject to the quality argument, a picture emerges of contemporary non-Western art being dependent on its semblance to and mastery of carriers approved in the West.

2.1.3 World Art

It was only in 1989 with *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989) that the idea of non-Western art as 'modern' would begin to gain a strong foothold. Reviewing this exhibition, Paul Faber wonders what the purpose is of this striking combination and what there is to be seen.[267] He explains that the curatorial team 'did not choose for a general image of a culture but for the personal approach and intensity with which something is conceived and designed'.[268] Seeing the exhibition, Faber comes to the conclusion that 'Even though the presentations are organised in such a way that alternations are great and didactical side effects fail to appear, the observant visitor will make out interesting cross-connections [in regard to African cultural elements].'[269]

With the previously discussed appreciation for Latin American art, the *Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam* mounted the exhibition *U-ABC (Uruguay – Argentina, Brazil, Chile)* (1989), shortly after *Magiciens de la Terre*. The motivation for this exhibition was an effort to give more attention to artists outside of the Cologne-New York international art axis.[270] *The Groninger* Museum contributed with the exhibition *Africa Now* (1991–92) with the curatorial argument that [after *Magiciens*] 'it did not seem justified anymore to present art from the West in art museums and leave art from the rest of the world to ethnographic museums'.[271]

Paul Faber and writer/curator Sebastian Lopez contextualised this moment through the historical narrative of the *Sao Paolo Biennial* (1942), the *Havana Biennial* (1984) and exhibitions such as *Imagen de Mexico* (Frankfurt, 1987) and *Latin American Art* (London, 1989). Even so, *Magiciens de la Terre* inflamed the discussion on art versus ethnography in the Netherlands. Wouter Welling states that the accusation of the exoticising character of *Magiciens de la Terre* resulted in the fact that now 'only non-Western art which

[267] Paul Faber, ''Les Magiciens de la Terre' Honderd Tovenaars in Parijs' '[Les Magiciens de la Terre' Hundred Wizards in Paris], *Kunstbeeld*, No 7/8, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli / augustus 1989) pp. 12-16 (p. 13).
[268] Ibid., 14.
[269] Ibid.
[270] Raúl Zurita catalogue essay for exhibition U-ABC beeldende kunst uit Latijns-Amerika quoted by Willem van Beek, 'U-ABC, beeldende kunst uit Latijns-Amerika' [U-ABC, visual art from Latin America], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 10, Jaargang 13 (Utrecht: Veen Media, oktober 1989) pp. 14-17 (p. 14).
[271] Frans Haks, qouted in 'Het museum als instituut staat ter discussie' [The museum as institution is under discussion], Framer Framed, https://framerframed.nl/dossier/het-museum-als-instituut-staat-ter-discussie/, acc 14-11-2018.

has familiarised itself with the Western (conceptual and / or technological) idiom, is shown in Western institutes. Everything with an explicit cultural timbre is left to ethnographic museums.'[272] Effectively, the quality argument obtained a tool for separating out works by non-Western artists at the door. Nevertheless, the works that passed were still scrutinised on their mastery of Western-idiom art practices. A case in point is Welling's observation that the Aboriginal development towards internationally orientated art, 'going beyond the political and […] identity, but keeping the ties with the traditional background', is a development that inspires optimism.[273] However, urban Aboriginal 'political art is rarely [considered] the best art'.[274] In the same spirit he describes the 2004 *Dak'Art* Biennial as filled with clichéd politically correct work. [275] Welling makes a judgement about the works and validates his authority by saying that contextualisation of the works by Okwui Enwezor and Salah Hassan 'sound critical and politically correct. But when putting pen to paper with the intent to write it down […] it becomes more difficult.'[276] What Welling does here is apply the quality argument to the scholarship about issues in contemporary art emerging from these Afro thinkers. In other words, colonial assumptions about ethnicity are being applied to the quality of the intellectual labour based on a political position. It is what Sebastian Lopez observed in 1996 as being intellectual discrimination[277] coming from a patronising Dutch position, to which I add accustomed only to Western (white) scholarship on art from Africa.

Two years earlier, during *Documenta XI* (2002) with its theme of 'cultural identity' in the postcolonial era, Enwezor's position was that 'an artist "produces knowledge"'.[278] Art critic Robert Roos writes that the expectation was that Enwezor would 'come with a procession of non-Western artists that would make political statements about the new, postcolonial world. Artists that would chastise the dominance of the Western art order. It turns out better than expected.'[279] As Perrée notes, Enwezor insists that issues faced by African artists are similar to those faced by artists in the West.[280] And that 'it is totally imaginable that Documenta is not the right platform for many artists'.[281] I argue that, with this line of thinking, Okwui Enwezor destabilises the quality argument by proposing that Western art institutions are insufficiently equipped to grasp the full complexity of current cultural identities. As the research will show, this

[272] Wouter Welling, Afrikaanse kunst [African Art], *Kunstbeeld*, No. n.a, Jaargang n.d., (Utrecht: Veen Media, 2005), p. 44.
[273] Wouter Welling, 'Het Aboriginal Art Museum – De vitaliteit van een oeroude kunsttraditie' [The Aboriginal Art Museum – The vitality of an ancient art tradition], *Kunstbeeld,* No. 3, Jaargang 27 (Utrecht: Veen Media, maart 2003) pp. 20-23 (pp 20-21).
[274] Ibid., 20.
[275] Wouter Welling, Afrikaanse kunst [African Art], *Kunstbeeld*, No. n.a, Jaargang n.d., (Utrecht: Veen Media, 2005), p. 47.
[276] Ibid., 45.
[277] *Kunstbeeld*, 'Vanwaar je dacht te vertrekken sta je geplant' [Whence you thought you were leaving you are rooted], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 2, Jaargang 20 (Utrecht: Veen Media, februari 1996) pp. 34-35 (p. 35).
[278] Robbert Roos, 'Documenta van Enwezor overtuigd' [Enwezor's Documenta convinces], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 26 (Utrecht: Veen Media, July / August 2002), pp. 22–6 (p. 22).
[279] Ibid., 25.
[280] Rob Perrée, 'Directeur Okwui Enwezor geeft visie op zijn Documenta –"Ik dans niet voor geld"' [Director Okwui Enwezor gives vision on his Documenta – "I don't dance for money"], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 5, Jaargang 26 (Utrecht: Veen Media, May 2002), pp. 6–9 (p. 7).
[281] Ibid., 9.

proposition is lacking in the Dutch context and the argument is applied to Dutch Afro artists as a validation of the quality argument that insists that their ethnic concerns have no place in an established art environment.

From the start of this development there was a tension in the Netherlands between international art and what would become known as world art. With *Magiciens de la Terre* looking outside of the dominant axis of art, the idea of a general image of culture shifted towards the intensity with which artists conceive and design their work. Leiden University lecturer Wilfried van Damme, who obtained his PhD in 1993 from the University of Ghent, 'with a thesis[282] outlining an anthropological approach to aesthetics'[283] speaks about this moment when world art studies as a concept was first proposed by the art scholar John Onians in 1996. In the book *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches*, which he co-edited with professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory Kitty Zijlmans, he describes the historical development towards this point:

> whereas scholars of music, despite changing opinions, would con-tinue[sic] to regard their multifaceted field as an intellectual unity under the flag of musicology […], no 'artology' developed that could have safeguarded scholars of the visual arts from seeing their shared subject matter fragmented into epochal, regional, and disciplinary specialties whose practitioners hardly communicate with each other. World art studies […] may be considered an attempt to remedy this situation. [It is interpreted in this book as] to approach its subject matter from a global perspective across time and place and to study it from all relevant disciplinary viewpoints imaginable, ranging from evolutionary biology to analytic philosophy.[284]

Conclusively, when the modern international art world started looking outside of the Western axis of art, the outlines of world art started to emerge. According to the publicist and curator Anne Berk, the result of this was that by 1997 contemporary art was no longer the exclusive domain of the West. [285] However, as we have seen thus far, this contemporary art was not appreciated in the same way as Western contemporary art.

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[282] Wilfried van Damme, *Beauty in Context. Towards an Anthropological Approach to Aesthetics* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).
[283] Leiden University personal page Wilfried van Damme, https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/staffmembers/wilfried-van-damme#tab-1 , acc. 24-07-2018.
[284] Wilfried van Damme, 'Introducing World Art Studies', *World Art Studies: Exploring Concepts and Approaches,* eds. [and contributions] Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2008), p. 27.
[285] Anne Berk, 'De Apartheid voorbij – Vrije vlucht van kunst in Zuid-Afrika' [Beyond Apartheid – Free Flight of art in South Africa], *Kunstbeeld*, No.2, Jaargang 21 (Utrecht: Veen Media, februari 1997) pp. 18-19.

Berk made some poignant remarks about the changing art world and used the phrase *eigen-aardig*. When written as one word, it is 'eigenaardig', which means peculiar. Written the way she did, *eigen-aardig* would translate as *inherently appealing*. The move from peculiar to inherently appealing marks this timeframe up to the turn of the century. According to Berk, after *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989), 'the advancement of exotic art is unstoppable. [The artists] pass by as a colourful procession, a cocktail of surprises.'[286] She explains this as a product of 'third-world countries' emancipation'.[287] Interestingly enough, in her article *Oriëntatie op het eigen-aardige* (Orientation on the inherently appealing), she is the first to mention the internet in relation to artists of colour (1996). In her words, 'Precisely now the electronic highway wants to fuse us into world-citizens, interest is revived in things that were once, as the source of all evil, discarded to the waste basket.'[288] The *inherently appealing* is a 'favourite of the cosmopolite art lover while the critic raises the admonitory finger: this is superficial exotism. Or worse: this is a form of ethnocentrism in which the West once again decides the criteria.'[289] Berk sees this as a positive development. 'Just as with the Indonesian rice table, it is the variation of dishes that makes the delight. It is something different from hotchpotch.'[290] (Hotchpotch is considered a classic in Dutch cuisine.)

In 1998 Welling declares that the West no longer has a monopoly on 'the development of (post)modern art', this art-problematic of societal, political and intellectual obstacles' is, for the most part, representative of 'all cultures outsides of Europe and the United States'.[291] By 2005 he observes that the keywords 'globalisation, identity, gender, post-colonialism, religion, spirituality and life in the metropole' are 'on the agenda of curators and critics in Africa, Europe and the United States'.[292] For Afro artists operating on the world stage this means that between the British end of the essential black subject going into the 1990s, the American 'post-black' in the late 1990s and Okwui Enwezor's global *Documenta XI* in 2002, ethnicity is no longer a driving concept.

[286] Anne Berk, 'Indonesiërs en Hollanders in Lakenhal – – Oriëntatie op het eigen-aardige' [Indonesians and Hollanders in Lakenhal], *Kunstbeeld,* No. 5, Jaargang 20 (Utrecht: Veen Media, mei 1996) pp. 42-43 (p. 42).
[287] Ibid., 43.
[288] Ibid.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Ibid.
[291] Wouter Welling, 'Doorbraak en bloei in de Indonesische kunst' [Breakthrough and boom in Indonesian art], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 2, Jaargang 22 (Utrecht: Veen Media, februari 1998) pp.46-49 (p. 46).
[292] Wouter Welling, Afrikaanse kunst [African Art], *Kunstbeeld*, No. n.a, Jaargang n.d., (Utrecht: Veen Media, 2005), p. 44.

2.2 Part 2: Dutch cultural framework

Now that some insight has been offered into the Dutch view of the outside world, I turn to the local cultural framework in the last quarter of the twentieth century going into the twenty-first. In the Netherlands, the mode of questioning which declares exoticism, magic and mysticism to be a site for an anthropological approach towards understanding art is also applied to non-white artists from Western countries. How African-American artists in particular are understood inevitably had an influence on the Dutch understanding of their own artists with an Afro background.

Speaking about the African-American Martin Puryear's (b. 1941) work in the catalogue for the *Black USA* (1990) exhibition that was mounted in the *Overholland* museum (1987–90), the researcher and writer Marijke Beek concludes that the work 'evokes confusion in the eyes of a Westerner, because, in Western culture, the function of nearly every object is fixed'.[293] When it comes to non-white Western artists of African descent, the 'magic' and incomprehensibility of the works are sometimes characterised as innate. An artist such as the African-American Bill Traylor (1854–1947) is described by Marijke Beek as an 'archetypal'[294] 'naïve wonder child'[295], as someone who has got 'down to the primal score of things'.[296] A 'Bon Sauvage'[297] breaching time and place in a way that links him straight to ancient times. In short, Traylor is portrayed as a romantic artist and magical 'negro' archetype who works straight from the soul. The exoticising language reassigns the work to the magical and is emphasised when Beek describes the artist experience. The 'Negro experience' that Romare Bearden (1911–88) visualises and speaks about is translated into 'zwart levensgevoel'.[298] Here the translator chose to use the words black (zwart) and life-feeling (levensgevoel) instead of life-experience (levenservaring). The artist Benny Andrew's idea of living a 'dual existence'[299] is translated as 'schizofreen bestaan'[300] (schizophrenic existence), which in essence places him further away from sanity and constructive intellectual labour. Until today, the 'innate incomprehensibility' of work dealing with Dutch Afro 'life-feeling' (i.e. Negro experience) proves to be an impregnable fortress for Dutch art critique and the curatorial.

The development of the Dutch framework differs from that of the United States and Great Britain when it comes to the parallel appreciation of Afro-ness in contemporary arts. Cultural policies, an advancing understanding of non-Western art through art criticism and the emergence of world art prompted the active move from transcultural in the 1980s to diversity in 2005. Consequently, this 2005 moment, when

[293] Marijke Beek, *Black USA: Overholland* (Eindhoven: Lecturis BV, 1990), p. 75.
[294] Ibid., 8.
[295] Ibid., 10.
[296] Charles Shannon quoted in: Michael Bonesteel, 'Bill Traylor and the natural talent' in *Bill Traylor Drawings* (Chicago: Chicago Public Library Center, 1988) quoted in Marijke Beek, Black USA; Overholland (Eindhoven: Lecturis BV, 1990) p. 9.
[297] Marijke Beek, Black USA; Overholland (Eindhoven: Lecturis BV, 1990) p. 11.
[298] Ibid., 24.
[299] Ibid., 57.
[300] Ibid., 56.

internationally ethnicity seemed no longer to be a driving concept will prove to have been important for Dutch artists. This pivotal moment and its artistic and curatorial consequences in the Dutch context are the basis for chapters three and four of this doctoral thesis. Leading up to this moment where the arts were 'global in orientation but multidisciplinary in approach',[301] several steps were taken in the Netherlands where the cultural identity of the artist took centre stage. Art historian Nanda van den Berg, who is a regular contributor to the cultural and literary magazine *De Gids* (The Guide) and is now the director of the photography museum *Huis Marseille*, wrote an article in 1994 on the position of allochthonous artists in the Netherlands. In this essay she explains how the word 'allochthonous' does not mean artists such as Sigurdur Gudmundsson (Iceland) or Marlene Dumas (South Africa) who are successful artists working in the Netherlands.[302] She observes that 'allochthonous artists' belong to the group of 'acknowledged minority groups' such as 'Antilleans, Surinamese, Turkish, Moroccans and artists from places such as South America, China or Iran'.[303] Van den Berg notes that the label of allochthonous artist 'implies that the artist is "amateuristic" and delivers "bad work" which is the reason why the artist is not admitted into the "acknowledged circuit". On top of that the allochthonous artist is mostly black or coloured.'[304] Supporting the insights that have emerged from this chapter so far, when it comes to appreciation of non-Western art, this article provides further understanding of the racial and ethnic division as it applies in the Dutch context in relation to art history, museology, and art-market categorisation that determines 'quality'. I will extensively quote and paraphrase van den Berg here as the text has all the information needed to contextualise what will come next and it is the only text I have found that is a written record of this period at that time.

> The first initiative in the area of 'allochthonous arts' stems from the welfare [as in well-being] atmosphere: in 1971 *Srefidensie* [Independence] was established in Amsterdam, [a] 'Gallery for Surinamese, Antillean and Caribbean artists'. The gallery was established single-handedly without subsidy on the third floor of the Surinamese well-being organisation *Welsuria*. There were no high art goals set, but according to Eugène Chateau, one of the founders, simply a podium for the creativity and expression of the people. […] The first exhibiting artists were drawn from the artist cafés on the Leidseplein [popular square in Amsterdam city centre] […] The exhibitions in the gallery eventually mapped the Surinamese and Antillean artists that were present in the Netherlands. That this gallery policy helped to define the image of the allochtonous

[301] Kitty Zijlmans and Wilfried van Damme, 'World Art Studies', *Art History and Visual Studies in Europe: Transnational Discourses and National Framwerks*, eds. Mathew Rampley, Thierry Lenain, Hubert Locher, Andrea Pinotti, Charlotte Schoell-Glass and Kitty Zijlmans (Leiden Koninklijke Bril N.V., 2012) pp. 217-230 (p. 220).
[302] Nanda van den Berg, 'De kunst van het weglaten; De positie van allochtone beeldend kunstenaars' [The art of omitting; The position of allochtonous visual artists], *De Gids*, Jaargang 157 (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 1994), pp. 69–77 (p. 69).
[303] Ibid.
[304] Ibid.

> artist can be deduced from the fact that the core exhibitors were part of the exhibition *Farawé* [Surinamese for far away]. *Acht kunstenaars van Surinaamse oorsprong* that was organised by people of Surinamese descent in the Nieuwe Kerk in Amsterdam in 1985.[305]

Van den Berg notes that to her knowledge, in 1994, the *Farawé* catalogue[306] was the only art-historical description of Surinamese art in the Netherlands at that time. She describes that when *Farawé* was organised the artists[307] were, like all Dutch artists, subsidised through the national Beeldende Kunstenaars Regeling (Visual Artists Arrangement) and that when this subsidy was stopped in 1987 the consequence was that several of the artists were referred to the 'allochthonous subsidy' that was handed out by the Ministry of Well-being, Public Health and Culture.[308] In her words, 'the designation allochthonous artist consequently became less informal'.[309] Because of this van den Berg recounts that support-points for allochthonous artists came into being through organisations that focused on different ethnic groups that united as one third-world category.[310]

One of these organisations was *Cosmic Illusion*, which in 1976 was founded in Curaçao by Felix de Rooy and Norman de Palm. By way of New York they found a base in Amsterdam and became one of the leading organisations in the area of allochthonous arts, with independent departments focusing on performing arts, visual arts, literature and film.[311] They organised several exhibitions such as *Schaduw, Licht, Vorm* (Shadow, Light, Form) (1987, de Balie in Amsterdam), *Beeld, Vorm, Kleur* (Image, Form, Colour) (1988, Galerie Inkt, Den Haag) and *Structuurenvorm / Vormenstructuur* (Structureform / Formstructure) (1990, Volkshogeschool Drakenburgh, Baarn).[312] It attracts van den Berg's attention that all these exhibitions took place in 'secondary exhibition spaces'.[313] In addition she observes that 'there is a clear principle at the basis of all these exhibitions as can be seen on the leaflet of the exhibition *Schaduw Licht Vorm*'.[314]

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[305] Ibid., 69-70
[306] Emile Meijer, *Farawe: Acht kunstenaars van Surinaamse oorsprong* [Farawe: Eight artists of Surinamese origing], (Heusden: Aldus Uitgevers, 1985).
[307] The artists were: Armand Baag, Frank Creton, Eddy Goedhart, Hans Lie, Guillaume Lo A Njoe, Sam Parabirsingh, Q. Jan Telting and Erwin de Vries.
[308] Ibid., 70.
[309] Ibid.
[310] Ibid.
[311] Ibid.
[312] Ibid.
[313] Ibid.
[314] Ibid., 71.

> The works of the artists in this exhibition who are brought together are an example of the imagery that originates from the melting pot of modern society. A melting pot that emerged from the blending of races and cultures […] In this way, through their work, they speak a visual 'Esperanto'. The emotions of the modern man are being made visible in a universal imagery, detached from cultural-historical backgrounds and other limitations. A panorama of artists in the Netherlands united through the universal theme of Shadow, Light, Form.[315]

In this article she notes that the artists in these exhibitions do not belong to the invisible centre of power dominated by the mythical norm of white men of a certain class, religious background and financial status and that the process of exclusion is in many ways comparable to that of their colleagues in the United States.[316] Where most of these artists, in line with Stuart Hall's 'last colonials' called themselves 'universal artists',[317] the Dutch art critique struggles with the work they produce, as the imagery is unfamiliar. Even though these artists saw modern art and their quest for a universal language as 'intrinsic to a modern consciousness',[318] it is safe to say that the Modernism emerging from these artists was not understood because it was not recognised as such.

They were dealing with Modernism and not with a Dutch Afro 'life-feeling', but the 'innate incomprehensibility' stood in the way. Van den Berg speaks of the new variety of exhibiting allochthonous artists that emerged from this point and that seemed to come from a sense of 'Dutch (autochthonic) amicability. In these exhibitions it was not about detaching from the cultural-historical backgrounds but about cultivating them [as different].'[319] In *Van allochtoon naar kunstnomade* (2004, From allochthonous to art-nomad) Paul Faber recounts that there was a 'wave of activities that started half-way into the 1980s and ebbed away half-way into the 1990s'.[320] It was a period in which many initiatives were developed to 'discover, present and integrate'[321] the 'allochthonous artist as they were called in those days'.[322]

One of the instigators in this process was Els van der Plas who studied art history in Utrecht, founded the Gate Foundation in 1988 and the Prins Claus Fund in 1997. She started the Gate Foundation

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[315] Ibid.
[316] Ibid., 72.
[317] Ibid., 74.
[318] Stuart Hall, 'Black Diaspora Artists in Britain: Three 'Moments' in Postwar History', *History Workshop Journal 2006*, Vol.61, No.1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, spring 2006) pp. 1-24 (p. 5).
[319] Nanda van den Berg, 'De kunst van het weglaten; De positie van allochtone beeldend kunstenaars' [The art of omitting; The position of allochtonous visual artists], *De Gids*, Jaargang 157 (Amsterdam: J.M. Meulenhoff, 1994) pp. 69-77 (p. 71).
[320] Paul Faber, '25 mei 1991. De opening van de tentoonstelling Double Dutch – – Van allochtoon naar kunstnomade' [25 may 1991. The opening of the Double Dutch exhibition – From allochtonous to art-nomad], *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1980-2000*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema R. and Maaike Meijer, (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2004) pp. 171 – 188 (p.172).
[321] Ibid.
[322] Ibid.

(1988–2006) 'to stimulate intercultural exchange in the area of modern and contemporary art'.[323] This organisation was initially interested in promoting 'Japanese and Asian artists'[324] (note the distinction between Japan whose subjects in the Netherlands are considered Western allochtonous and the rest here) and later on developed an interest in other non-Dutch artists in the Netherlands.[325] The Gate Foundation organised exhibitions with 'foreign artists living in the Netherlands'[326] such as *Het land dat in mij woont* (The country that lives in me, Museum voor Volkenkunde [Museum for ethnology], Rotterdam, 1995). It also produced *Indonesian Modern Art* (Oude Kerk Amsterdam, 1993) and made possible an exchange between Dutch and Indonesian artists with *Orientation* (Museum De Lakenhal Leiden, 1996).[327] Most notable is *Het Klimaat* (The Climate, Museum De Lakenhal Leiden, 1991) 'which aimed to take stock of the "foreign" artists who lived and worked in the Netherlands and involved 70 artists'.[328] *Het Klimaat* was initiated by Centrum Buitenlanders Dordrecht (Foreigners' Centre Dordrecht) in conjunction with similar organisations in the province of South Holland.

Years later van der Plas explained that one of the reasons she started the foundation was that she also wanted to show the modern art that she saw on her travels but was not being showed in Dutch museums.[329] In a 1996 interview she states that, before the Gate Foundation, 'If there was talk about non-Western art, the conversation quickly turned to primitive art.' Moreover, at the moment of that interview a Thai artist from New York was considered to be more interesting than a Thai artist from Thailand.[330] She notes the fact that modern art museums are still very reserved: 'when you want to do something for or with non-Western artists, you quickly end up in the swampy circuit of community centres or other institutions filled with good intentions'.[331] Her remarks are exemplified in other exhibitions in this period such as *Schakels* (Links, Museum voor Volkenkunde, Rotterdam, 1988), *De stad, een wereld* (The city, a world, Artoteek Zuidoost, Amsterdam, 1989/1990) and the exhibition *Double Dutch* (Tilburg, 1991 / Ministry for Foreign Affairs Den Haag, 1992) that was a high point in this overall development. [332]

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[323] Nationale Opera en Ballet, personal page Els van der Plas, https://www.operaballet.nl/nl/het-instituut/organisatie/directie/els-van-der-plas , acc. 27-07-2018.
[324] Paul Faber, '25 mei 1991. De opening van de tentoonstelling Double Dutch – – Van allochtoon naar kunstnomade' [25 may 1991. The opening of the Double Dutch exhibition – From allochtonous to art-nomad], *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1980-2000*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema R. and Maaike Meijer, (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2004) pp. 171 – 188 (p.175).
[325] Ibid.
[326] Judith Koelemeijer, 'Grachtenpand inspireert niet-westerse kunstenaars' [Canal house inspires non-Western artists], *de Volkskrant*, 10-09-1996, https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/grachtenpand-inspireert-niet-westerse-kunstenaars~bbc50c6d/, acc. 27-07-2018.
[327] Ibid.
[328] Paul Faber, '25 mei 1991. De opening van de tentoonstelling Double Dutch – – Van allochtoon naar kunstnomade' [25 may 1991. The opening of the Double Dutch exhibition – From allochtonous to art-nomad], *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1980-2000*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema R. and Maaike Meijer, (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2004) pp. 171 – 188 (p.172).
[329] Judith Koelemeijer, 'Grachtenpand inspireert niet-westerse kunstenaars' [Canal house inspires non-Western artists], *de Volkskrant*, 10-09-1996, https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/grachtenpand-inspireert-niet-westerse-kunstenaars~bbc50c6d/, acc. 27-07-2018.
[330] Ibid.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Ulco Mes, 'Golf van veranderingen' [Wave of changes], *Double Dutch* (Tilburg: Stichting Kunst Mondiaal, 1991) p. 16.

The Stichting Kunst Mondiaal [Mondial Art Foundation] received compliments for their exhibition *Double Dutch; transcultural influence in the visual arts* (1991). The goal of this Tilburg initiative was to organise easily accessible and multidisciplinary art projects in public space such as schools, parks and government buildings. The positive reviews appreciated the idea, execution and counselling that created a contextualised context through the notion of world art that was much better than many museums.[333] Paul Faber states that the combination of 'artists' with a partner who was based in the Netherlands but came from a different culture was not based on 'the geographical origin of the artists but rather their cultural baggage, curiosity, and the artistic will to cross cultural borders'.[334] Out of 180 applicants the committee chose 9 artists based on their oeuvre and their proposals,[335] with the intention of producing an artistic experiment that could also be seen as a metaphor for social encounters in a multicultural society.[336] The couples consisted of a 'Dutch artist who uses other cultures as a source of inspiration, and an artist from another culture-area but working in the Dutch art-climate'.[337] Faber states that, because of the quality of the work, 'flat travel impressions or a socially motivated presentation by "allochthonous artists", was avoided'/[338]

In the *Double Dutch* catalogue J. Mensink states the developments that took place in this timeframe can be interpreted as 'speaking with a forked tongue. A confusion of tongues that may lead to extremes, cross-pollination or self-pollination, incomprehension or curiosity, dangerous prejudices or exciting new art.'[339] The art historian Ulco Mes proposes 'asking in which way mutual cultural influence becomes visible in the works made by the artists'.[340] Expanding on these notions, contributor to the catalogue Ad van Rosmalen introduces the idea of the 'daardroom' (there-dream). He argues that the use of motives that are not so-called culturally native give the imagination an extra dimension:[341]

> If one could speak about cultural influence it could be an influence that is not so easily characterised as 'here and there'. Both [artists] are 'here' while 'there' roughly plays an equal part in the daily experience. It is pointless to make distinctions in degrees of origin of who is more from 'there' and who lives more 'here'. What one could say is that just the fact that the artists see each other as from 'there' is of greater importance than the fact that they both maybe only have

[333] Paul Faber, 'Double Dutch – Tilburg en de rest van de wereld' [Double Dutch – Tilburg and the rest of the world], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 15 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli / augustus 1991) pp. 22-23 (p. 23).
[334] Paul Faber, '25 mei 1991. De opening van de tentoonstelling Double Dutch – – Van allochtoon naar kunstnomade' [25 may 1991. The opening of the Double Dutch exhibition – From allochtonous to art-nomad], *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1980-2000*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema R. and Maaike Meijer, (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2004) pp. 171 – 188 (p.171).
[335] Ibid.
[336] Ibid.
[337] Paul Faber, 'Double Dutch – Tilburg en de rest van de wereld' [Double Dutch – Tilburg and the rest of the world], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 15 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli / augustus 1991) pp. 22-23 (p. 22).
[338] Ibid.
[339] J. Mensink, 'Double Dutch', *Double Dutch* (Tilburg: Stichting Kunst Mondiaal, 1991), p. 8.
[340] Ulco Mes, 'Golf van veranderingen' [Wave of changes], *Double Dutch* (Tilburg: Stichting Kunst Mondiaal, 1991) p. 19.
[341] Ad van Rosmalen, 'Een wederkerige droom' [A reciprocal/bilateral dream], *Double Dutch* (Tilburg: Stichting Kunst Mondiaal, 1991), p. 25.

> second-hand experiences located in the country of origin. The question becomes topical as to what the nature is of that 'there'. Possibly these artists are each other's 'daardroom'[there-dream] and there is less a question of cultural influence but rather personal and reciprocal influence that is common to artists.[342]

Following the conventional systems of cultural histories and assumptions, Ulco Mes states in the *Double Dutch* catalogue that 'the organisations, often tacitly, assume that cultural elements, in one way or another, are visible in the artworks and that information about cultural backgrounds increases insight into the artworks'.[343] Presumably there is a relation between the artist's cultural identity and the style. 'In all cases cultural identity is determined by geographical information: country of birth, work and city of residence of the artist.'[344] The preface to the educational project's didactic workbook accompanying the catalogue and exhibition remarks that this period makes clear that 'more and more often transcultural influences in contemporary art are being recognised'[345] and that there is a lack of present-day (1991) material that can be used as guidance to deal with this 'new attitude'.[346] In the introductory chapter of the workbook the culturally relativist idea is put forward that there is no difference between Western and non-Western art 'because it becomes ever clearer that a sort of formal iconographic globalisation is taking shape'.[347] The author F.J. Witteveen argues that terms such as 'intensity' and 'vehemence' in arguments about quality of the work are considered disastrous in developing a nuanced view.[348] He calls for a rejection of formal Greenbergian paradigms and Iconology [sic], which has the tendency to side-track the viewer if not applied correctly and, more importantly, when inspired by preconceived opinions about the artist's cultural background. The essayist proposes instead an abandonment of regional thinking and approaching the works as art and as an 'artistic achievement'[349] and avoiding terms such as 'cultural identity and multicultural pluriformity'.[350] All of this in an effort to prevent what he calls an 'art-geography' emerging that is comparable to nineteenth-century ethnographic museums' reading of the works. [351]

With the exhibitions taking place around the same time, Faber states that 'Unlike with Double Dutch, there were no Dutch artists involved [in *Het Klimaat*] which made the stigma of separation lie in

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[342] Ibid., 21.
[343] Ulco Mes, 'Golf van veranderingen' [Wave of changes], *Double Dutch* (Tilburg: Stichting Kunst Mondiaal, 1991), p. 16.
[344] Ibid.
[345] Theo Andriessen and Sirano Zalman, 'Voorwoord' [Preface], *Double Dutch Educatief Project Inleiding bij het didactisch werkboek* [Double Dutch educational Project – Introduction to the workbook] (Tilburg Stichting Kunst Mondiaal, 1991), p.4.
[346] Ibid.
[347] Frans J. Witteveen, *Double Dutch Educatief Project Inleiding bij het didactisch werkboek* (Tilburg: Stichting Kunst Mondiaal, 1991), p. 16.
[348] Ibid., 17.
[349] Ibid., 27.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid., 16.

wait.'[352] There was a specific search for artworks which owed their idiosyncrasy and quality to the supposed cultural confrontation.[353] *Het Klimaat* instigated a symposium at the Jan van Eyck Academy with the title *Cultural Identity: Fiction or Necessity*.[354] Faber goes on to say that this was a fortunate development because the idea of 'cultural identity' proved to be the key concept in understanding and interpreting the developments that were visible in both exhibitions.[355]

The Dutch art scene was constructing an understanding of the art world through transcultural mixing of foreign and native artists. In addition to the exhibitions that have already been mentioned, in 1988 *Zo ver het oog reikt: trans-culturele invloeden in het werk van zes Brabantse en zes van oorsprong niet-westerse kunstenaars* [As far as the eye can see: transcultural influences in the work of six Brabantian and six originally non-Western artists] (1988–89) was mounted in Den Bosch. According to the catalogue accompanying the exhibition, it was based on the idea that 'with art too, one can experience the richness of cultures, after all people from other countries are more than just unemployment percentages. Good quality art with an ethnic tinge also gives the unemployed foreigner something to be proud about and to recognise oneself.'[356] After all, 'problems too often obstruct the positive sides of a multicultural society. Positive is truly: getting acquainted with each other's culture.'[357] This goes beyond

> the field of food, drink and sport [where] the inherent qualities of migrants have long been recognised. […] recognising [and acknowledging] of idiosyncratic artistic qualities in the area of visual arts is still a cumbersome process. Separate exhibitions of allochthonous artists are therefore the safest way. With that, benevolence is demonstrated and the issue itself is circumvented.[358]

[352] Paul Faber, '25 mei 1991. De opening van de tentoonstelling Double Dutch – Van allochtoon naar kunstnomade' [25 may 1991. The opening of the Double Dutch exhibition – From allochtonous to art-nomad], *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1980-2000*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema R. and Maaike Meijer, (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2004) pp. 171- 188 (p.172).
[353] Ibid., 173.
[354] Ibid.
[355] Ibid.
[356] J. Mensink, 'Steunfunctie-instellingen en kunst' [Support function-institutes and art], *Zover het oog reikt: trans-culturele invloeden in het werk van zes Brabantse en zes van oorsprong niet-westerse kunstenaars* [As far as the eye can see: transcultural influences in the work of six Brabantian and six originally non-Western artists] (Provincie Noord-Brabant, 1988) p. 4.
[357] Joep (Johanna) Baartmans-van den Boogaart, *Zover het oog reikt: trans-culturele invloeden in het werk van zes Brabantse en zes van oorsprong niet-westerse kunstenaars* [As far as the eye reaches: transcultural influences in the work of six Brabantian and six origiginally non-Western artists] (Provincie Noord-Brabant, 1988) p. 3.
[358] H. Egbers, 'Kleuren verschieten' [Colours fade], *Zover het oog reikt: trans-culturele invloeden in het werk van zes Brabantse en zes van oorsprong niet-westerse kunstenaars* [As far as the eye reaches: transcultural influences in the work of six Brabantian and six origiginally non-Western artists] (Provincie Noord-Brabant, 1988) p. 34.

With this in mind, looking at Turkish, Moroccan, Yugoslavian, Spanish, Greek, Surinamese, Antillean and Aruban immigration to the Netherlands, this exhibition focused on exhibiting '[in origin] non-Western professional artists together with Dutch professional visual artists'.[359]

This is also the time when the first notable exhibition in the contemporary period to take steps to curate and perceive from a Black perspective in the Netherlands was mounted; *Wit over Zwart* [White about/over Black]*: images of blacks in Western popular culture* (Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, 1989). It was conceived by the artist, curator, film director and founder of the intercultural multidisciplinary artist collective foundation *Cosmic Illusion Productions* Felix de Rooy (1952) and consisted of the collection Negrophilia items. [360] In the Netherlands this exhibition is said to have had more impact than *Magiciens de la Terre*, which was taking place around the same time. It was an exhibition about image-forming (*beeldvorming*) in the past two centuries based on the 4,000 images that the foundation had collected. The images came from mass culture and put forward the image of 'Blanke' (white with a capital B) superiority against black humiliation.[361] The makers hoped for a 'collective consciousness in which there is space to undo ingrained [negative] stereotypes'.[362] In nine chapters the exhibition and accompanying brochure covered world images; the European self-image; slavery and the absence of images; race-science – image-forming by scientists; Africa as ideal décor; South Africa – rigid images about culture and identity; from slave to servant; Black entertainers; stereotyping and image-forming, including in advertising and in the world of children.

Over the years the local Dutch art world and its critique moved from 'other' art to transcultural when it comes to non-Western artists living in the Netherlands. To understand the work in the then emerging context of world art, Paul Faber concludes that 'for young artists the tension-field between personal tradition and Western modernity no longer constitutes a problem'.[363] Looking at the Dutch relation with art from Indonesia, the critic Jim Supangkat speaks of a multi-modernism.[364] In 2000, this multi-modernism 'daar-droom' [there-dream] understanding prompted exhibitions in the Dutch/Euro arena such as *Continental Shift* (2000) in Heerlen, Maastricht, Aken and Luik. This exhibition brought together artists from 'China, Japan, Korea, the Near East, Africa and Latin America' and was thought of as an

[359] J. Mensink, 'Steunfunctie-instellingen en kunst' [Support function-institutes and art], *Zover het oog reikt: trans-culturele invloeden in het werk van zes Brabantse en zes van oorsprong niet-westerse kunstenaars* [As far as the eye reaches: transcultural influences in the work of six Brabantian and six origiginally non-Western artists] (Provincie Noord-Brabant, 1988) p. 5.
[360] Cosmic Illusion (1983–2009), *Theaterencyclopedie*, http://theaterencyclopedie.nl/wiki/Cosmic_Illusion_(1983-_2009), acc. 13-06-17.
[361] Jesse Bos and Hester Poppinga, *Wit over Zwart; beelden van zwarten in de westerse populaire cultuur* [White about/over Black: images of blacks in Western popular culture] (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1989), p. 4.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Paul Faber paraphrased in Wouter Welling, 'Doorbraak en bloei in de Indonesische kunst' [Breakthrough and boom in Indonesian art], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 2, Jaargang 22 (Utrecht: Veen Media, February 1988), pp. 46–9 (p. 47).
[364] Ibid., 48.

experiment that 'needed to be followed with curiosity'.[365] Taking migration developments into account, the programme featured artists with a 'plural cultural background' living 'temporarily or permanently in Europe' and who are simultaneously Western and non-Western.[366] This duality was celebrated particularly when, as Wouter Welling puts it, they (African artists) became 'less and less anecdotal in the way in which they process elements of their cultural background'.[367] In line with the thinking of the transcultural approach of earlier years, Welling states that, through the artists having left home and been trained in the West, the distance in relation to their cultural background that emerges confronts them even more strongly with the meaning of that background.[368] Ironically, this point of view was not generously granted to the 'modern' artists, the 'first colonials', but became a benchmark idea for the next generation of artists working in the Dutch environment. As the research in this chapter and in chapter four will show, it became a tool to negotiate the quality argument.

For this next generation of artists with a migrant background (Dutch Afro) it is apparent that they are assessed by their capability of abstracting the particularities of their cultural background into a (recognisable) Western idiom. How this works is demonstrated in Dutch world art patronage which is tightly intertwined with discovering and encouraging talented non-Western individuals. In the case of Houcine Bouchiba who lived in the Netherlands for 20 years, being noticed at *Ateliers 63* in Haarlem and being encouraged to shape his ideas led to his works eventually being bought by the Stedelijk Museum (2001).[369] Or, in the case of the Egyptian-born artist Achnaton Nassar, who studied in Egypt and at the Rijksacademie in Amsterdam and lives in the Netherlands, he is framed as someone who sees freedom as 'choosing the unknown over the known and security'.[370] His background in folk culture is 'riches of the most colourful kind, full of atmosphere and surprise and like a many-layered jumble also still harmonious'.[371] Compared to this description of Egypt, the Netherlands is a young fresh culture, which also has its advantages for an artist.[372] The enabling of locals in their own environment to create art and receiving a contemporary Western art education should be considered as old and new forms of patronage. At the same time, the Dutch attitude towards the 'discovered' allows for backtalk that is not appreciated in native non-Western immigrant background subjects. The backtalk is exemplified in an artist such as

[365] Saskia Monshouwer, 'Kunstenaars "on the move"' [Artists 'on the move'], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 5, Jaargang 24 (Utrecht: Veen Media, May 2000), pp. 26–9.
[366] Ibid., 26.
[367] Wouter Welling, 'Body & Soul in Heerlen – In gesprek met Afrika' [Body and Soul in Heerlen – In conversation with Africa), *Kunstbeeld*, No. 4, Jaargang 22 (Utrecht: Veen Media, april 1998) pp.22-23 (p. 22).
[368] Ibid.
[369] Willem van Beek, 'De gelukkige familie van Houcine Bouchiba – Onder de Afrikaanse zon' [Houcine Bouchiba's happy family – Under the African sun], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 3, Jaargang 25 (Utrecht: Veen Media, March 2001), pp. 20–3 (p. 20).
[370] Hans Sizoo, 'De vrijheid van Nassar' [Nassar's freedom], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 2, Jaargang 26 (Utrecht: Veen Media, February 2002), pp. 22–3 (p. 22).
[371] Ibid.
[372] Ibid.

Meschac Gaba (b. 1961) who was trained at the Rijksacademie and tackles the issue of the quality argument head-on by asking: 'What do we expect from Africa, of African art and of contemporary African art?'[373] In his work he questions the relation between Africa and the West and the problematic artistic relationship between the two and shows that the relation is based on a false contradistinction – the double-bind. 'In a playful anarchistic way, he proves the right to existence of contemporary African art and simultaneously answers the naïve and uncertain European question as to whether art is still being produced in Africa now that the authentic Africa has disappeared [due to colonisation].'[374]

To understand how the Dutch development of policy supported this move that provided space for African artists to study at the Rijksacademie, while locating Dutch Afro-ness outside of the official art circuit, we have to go back to the beginning period. Before the policy shifts, Faber argues that artists such as Stanley Brouwn (Paramaribo, 1935 – Amsterdam, 2017), Miguel-Ángel Cárdenas (Espinal, 1934 – Amsterdam, 2015), Ulay (Solingen, 1934) and Marina Abramovic (Belgrade, 1946) who could be categorised as belonging to ethnic minorities, were part of the art scene and played a significant role. Their origins did not play a role, let alone any that would instigate special activities.[375] He describes how the collective category of the 'foreign' or 'non-Western' artist emerged from this previous period in the 1970s in which the idea of the 'foreign artist' was not an issue. Faber notes that it was the migration streams from the 1970s, leading to larger communities of immigrants who permanently settled in the Netherlands, that led to political policy-making. As a consequence, '[a]rtists from these groups were pulled away from their profession and colleagues and were replaced in the category of their countrymen and cultural equals (*cultuurgenoten*)'. [376] This change meant that their ethnicity was more meaningful to the policymakers, who were trying to manage the new migrants, than their vocation. The artists were placed in the terminology that over the years 'developed from guest-workers, ethnic minorities to allochthonous'.[377] These artists belong to the group of 'first colonials' that were described earlier.

In tandem with the policies that were coming into place with regard to the new immigrants, another shift was taking place in the Netherlands. This was the Dutch development towards internationalism during the early 1980s in which modern art was being recognised as a 'worldwide, polycentric activity, executed by an ambitious and mobile top layer'[378] from Asia, Africa and Latin America. According to Faber, the Dutch art world was questioning the idea of Western modern art on

[373] Saskia Monshouwer, 'Speels anarchistische installaties van Meschac Gaba – Het musuem als kunstwerk' [Playful anarchistic installations by Meshac Gaba- The museum as artwork], Kunstbeeld, No. 3, jaargang 25, (Utrecht: Veen Media, Maart 2001), p. 18.
[374] Ibid., 19.
[375] Paul Faber, '25 mei 1991. De opening van de tentoonstelling Double Dutch – Van allochtoon naar kunstnomade' [25 May 1991. The opening of the Double Dutch exhibition – From allochtonous to art-nomad], *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1980-2000*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema R. and Maaike Meijer, (The Hague: Sdu Uitgevers, 2004), pp. 171–88 (p. 173).
[376] Ibid.
[377] Ibid.
[378] Ibid., 174.

'theoretical and pragmatic grounds'.[379] As these young artists were looking for 'new locations with more possibilities',[380] more and more of them also came to the art academies in the Netherlands. Faber states that these two contradictory developments of, on the one hand, integration politics and, on the other, the discussions about modern art created confusion.[381] The action that was taken around 1985 to solve this was to map these changes and the artists living in the Netherlands that may be an enrichment to the Dutch or Western perspective on art.[382] The investigation, known as the *KEM-Project* (Art by ethnic minorities project), was instigated by the Centrum Beeldende Kunst (Centre for Visual Arts), De Rotterdamse kunststichting (The Rotterdam Art Foundation) and the Museum voor Volkenkunde (Museum of Ethnography, now known as the Wereldmuseum).[383] The investigators, some of whom were of non-Dutch backgrounds, compiled a list of hundreds of artists with addresses and slides. The 1987 final report did not result in a manifestation but was partly taken over by the Gate Foundation, established by Els van der Plas in the same year. In her PhD thesis on government policy for culture and migrants, Eltje Bos states that: 'It is only after 1987 […] that the tension between the existing cultural policy and the one designed around migrants becomes clear.'[384] By then, due to the existing cultural policies centred around well-being and initiatives centred around bringing out the qualitative allochthonous artists, it proved to be hard to integrate art by migrants into the existing high art system.

She explains that it was a certain ambivalence in the governmental intervention, derived from romantic, universal ideas, as well as the contextual and participatory approach towards art that focused on quality, removal of arrears and participation.[385] Bos argues that, due to their immigrant status being more prevalent than their vocation, cultural expressions coming from immigrants were positioned somewhere between amateur and professional. Essentially, the difference was between those who were recognised in the official art circuit, such as Stanley Brouwn and Erwin de Vries (1929–2018), and those working in the exhibitions coming out of the *Srefidensie* gallery or *Cosmic Illusion*. According to Paul Faber, the initiatives that were developed (out of this last group) were designed around the instigators 'going on a voyage of discovery and they wanted to show their surroundings the unknown treasures'.[386] Eltje Bos concludes that this not only named them as a 'separate category but also excluded them from the facilities that were in place for professional arts and artists'.[387] Except for institutes for artistic development and

[379] Ibid., 173.
[380] Ibid., 174.
[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.
[383] Ibid.
[384] Eltje Bos, *Beleid voor cultuur en migranten: rijksbeleid en uitvoeringspraktijk 1980-2004* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, PhD thesis, 2011) p. 72.
[385] Ibid.
[386] Paul Faber, '25 mei 1991. De opening van de tentoonstelling Double Dutch – Van allochtoon naar kunstnomade' [25 may 1991. The opening of the Double Dutch exhibition – From allochtonous to art-nomad], *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1980-2000*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema R. and Maaike Meijer, (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2004) pp. 171- 188 (p.175).
[387] Eltje Bos, *Beleid voor cultuur en migranten: rijksbeleid en uitvoeringspraktijk 1980-2004* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, PhD thesis, 2011) p. 72.

amateur art, other art institutes were not included in the execution of the policy, even though they were named.

By 1989 the Raad van de Kunst (Dutch Arts Council) produced the *De kunst van het artisjokken eten* (The art of eating artichokes) report that looked into the developments of 'foreign' and 'non-Western' arts in the Netherlands since 1982. The title refers to artichokes not being on the daily menu of the Dutch. It is a delicacy that, according to the Dutch *wikiHow*, 'if not consumed properly may result in digestion problems while when done correctly can be an exceptional addition to any meal'.[388] The report states that 'Despite the mentioned initiatives it was established that more support was needed for the "allochthonous artists" and that, from all the disciplines, the possibilities for support were least utilised in the visual arts.'[389] Several methods that placed art made by people of colour in the non-Western category were investigated to speak the 'difference' between Western and non-Western art. Even though using this terminology and developing this specific interest promoted cultural relativism, a particular mapping inadvertently came into existence. This mapping placed different values on different regions at a time when, according to Faber, contradictory developments of integration politics combined with discussions about modern art created confusion about the location of migrant artists in the Dutch art world.[390]

As I argued earlier, the answer to how and where to locate the Dutch Afro artists was mirrored through the African-American artistic discourse. This ethno-political cultural framework around Blackness is different from the Dutch situation because, in the Dutch discussion, race does not openly play a role in the artistic appreciation. Nevertheless, a key understanding in this process of influence is how American and Dutch Afro-ness are aligned as racially the same and therefore comparable. This principle supports the development of integration politics in the arts.

The awareness sets up African Americans as a separate cultural nation whose artistic production is informed by and needs to be confirmed through European Americans first. Once this is done, their influence on the world stage is presented as that of ethnic and cultural difference in a multicultural society. The issue of Black identity seems central to the discussion of the work and it has to be restated that it is white American appreciation that acts as a filter. The way the filter works is by locating the way in which the artists occupy the place of Blackness in the general artistic and racial discourse of the United States.

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[388] wikiHow, 'Een artisjok eten' [Eating an artichoke], https://nl.wikihow.com/Een-artisjok-eten, 15-11-2018.
[389] Paul Faber, '25 mei 1991. De opening van de tentoonstelling Double Dutch – Van allochtoon naar kunstnomade' [25 may 1991. The opening of the Double Dutch exhibition – From allochtonous to art-nomad], *Cultuur en migratie in Nederland. Kunsten in beweging 1980-2000*, ed. Rosemarie Buikema R. and Maaike Meijer, (Den Haag: Sdu Uitgevers, 2004) pp. 171- 188 (p.175).
[390] Ibid., 174.

Briefly summarising the African-American development that influenced Dutch thinking, Perrée writes that in the 1980s there was a rise in popularity of artists of colour. During this development the galleries embraced artists that 'acted black', because 'obviously they had to fit into the politically correct trend' of the time.[391] He argues that 'Multicultural art threatened to be absorbed by the white [*blanke*] Walhalla',[392] and it was a 'sophisticated variety of the old master-slave relation'.[393]

The ideas about the quality and being filtered through white American appreciation are echoed by the African-American artist Martin Puryear (1941) in the catalogue for the exhibition *Black USA*. He states that the consciousness about his blackness seems to stand in the way of critiquing the work on its own merits. 'Black artists are still not accepted in a matter-of-fact way. […] But once you get some attention, it's the reverse. Then you're more special, because you're black.'[394]

In that process, it was important for the artist or the critique to circumvent the quality argument by any means possible. In the Dutch environment, one of the ways was by stating European and Dutch influence on African-American art development, as is proposed through Romare Bearden in the *Black USA* catalogue. He is portrayed as an artist who was inspired by his European avant-garde contemporaries and the Dutch painting masters of the Golden Age. Concerning the role of art, he and other artists asked the question: 'what role should be fulfilled by a black artist in this day and age?'[395] According to the text, the answer to this question is that the creation of art is a necessity for survival in an environment of segregation, humiliation and lack of food.[396] Simultaneously, it is an investigation into the dominance of 'white' culture over black histories that are hidden. Therefore, inserting blackness into white visual narratives questions the role of black people in society and the relationship between black and white.[397] The text continues by saying that thinking about 'the social position of black artists in the United States, it is a way of applying medicine to race and racism in the USA'.[398] With this narrative, the whole discussion on race and its consequences is safely placed in the context of the USA while appreciation of the artists is secured through well-intended sympathy for the struggle. How this plays out in the Netherlands is that because the Dutch do not 'do race' and the policy is geared towards well-being, the narrative of Dutch Afro racial or ethnic plight cannot be maintained in the local art environment.

How the artists are trained and what weight is given to the training is also a way of circumventing the quality argument that emerges from the *Black USA* text. In the case of the sculptor Martin Puryear, when speaking about being trained globally and where the knowledge comes from, the difference in

[391] Rob Perrée, 'Nieuwe stroming in de Afrikaans-Amerikaanse kunst – Vertegenwoordigers van Post-Black' [New current in African-American art – Representatives of Post-Black], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 11, Jaargang 25 (Utrecht: Veen Media november 2001) pp.16-19 (p. 16).
[392] Ibid.
[393] Ibid.
[394] Marijke Beek, Black USA; Overholland (Eindhoven: Lecturis BV, 1990) p. 79.
[395] Ibid., 27.
[396] Ibid., 55.
[397] Ibid., 47.
[398] Ibid., 61.

Dutch cultural appreciation for other cultures becomes even more apparent. In the English text about his global education the author says that, during his time in Sierra Leone, 'He became fascinated by the craftsmanship and feeling for materials possessed by the local woodworkers.'[399] The Dutch text adds a clause saying '*die met primitief gereedschap gebruiksvoorwerpen maakten*'[400] (who produced utensils with primitive tools). This is contrasted to his time in Sweden where he learned the 'subtleties of cabinet making'.[401] 'Putting things together in a way that is not as neat as when white people do it.'[402] This exemplifies that, even when being from a different cultural background, it is possible to master the Western art idiom when trained in the Western (Dutch) system.

According to Perrée, by the end of the 1990s, many American artists did not want to be shown in the kind of 'Black-History-Month'-type exhibitions anymore and demanded a more equal treatment from the galleries.[403] He insists that, effectively, a new generation that had the same education as their white counterparts knocked on the doors and 'undoubtedly took advantage of the emancipating pre-work of their older colleagues'.[404] They continually considered new terms. Perrée finds Thelma Golden's (and Glen Ligon's) Post-Black to be the most notable of all these terms.[405] This term constitutes Blackness as a theme disappearing into the background, but this does not suggest 'that the previous generation is dated and the problematic of racism belongs to the past'.[406] According to Perrée, Post-Black is 'more often than not a crude generalisation, a stigmatising disguised form of paternalism' when in the hands of curators.[407] This is because it can be used to mitigate the effects of racism on the artists and their practice, which diminishes the artists' desire not to let this deadlock dictate their lives. In the Netherlands, this meant that, taking a cue from the Americans, works that explicitly dealt with Dutch Afro-ness as an identity question could be relegated to the side-lines on a version of the quality argument constructed through the idea of post-black.

[399] Ibid., 73.
[400] Ibid., 72.
[401] Ibid., 73.
[402] Ibid., 95.
[403] Rob Perrée, 'Nieuwe stroming in de Afrikaans-Amerikaanse kunst – Vertegenwoordigers van Post-Black' [New current in African-American art – Representatives of Post-Black], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 11, Jaargang 25 (Utrecht: Veen Media november 2001) pp.16-19 (pp. 16-17).
[404] Ibid., 19.
[405] Ibid., 16.
[406] Ibid., 19.
[407] Ibid.

2.3 Part 3: Dutch Afro-ness and the curatorial

In the Netherlands there is this idea that, on the one hand, art is art and its rules are equal for everybody so there should be no need to separate a group and, on the other hand, that artistic and qualitative relevance comes from the ability of the work to participate in the existing discourse and not from the ethnic background of the maker. With this in mind, ideas about the validity of African-American and Dutch Afro cultural background in art are conflated. The difference between the two seemingly similar (because Afro) backgrounds is based on the different trajectories and ultimately on who decides what is relevant and in what context. African-American relevance was established in the United States through literary, musical and visual Modernism and therefore has authority (in the Netherlands). As a consequence, African-American culture is perceived as distinctively different from Euro-American culture and I argue is approached as a non-Western artistic expression. This argument is supported by the observation of Simon Levie, the art historian, curator at the Centraal Museum Utrecht (1953–58), museum director of Amsterdam Historical Museum (1963–75), Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (1975–89) and guest curator at the Aboriginal Art Museum in Utrecht (2003), that, irrespective of cultural background and geographic location, non-Western artistic expressions and ancient art traditions presented as contemporary art exist as Art and become *museum-fähig* (museum-worthy) when they are on a carrier approved by the West and can be judged by Western standards, such as 'composition, use of colour [*coloriet*], painting technique […] and not in the first place what the image means'.[408]

With their critique on contemporary African-American (non-Western) artistic expression, the New York critique is set up as paramount in speaking the difference in cultural background and methods of expression in the arts. This dominance is underlined by the fact that, according to Rob Perrée, even though

> Paris has been it for decades, Cologne made a failed attempt in the 1980s to become it, London has the artistic potential and is getting the infrastructure to possibly become it, Berlin thinks it can be realised from behind the drawing board, but New York has been it for fifty years already: the capital of contemporary art.[409]

The American critique is part of an environment that makes engagement inevitable and this is expressed through a diversity of methods and has the potential to somewhat adjust what Perrée calls Dutch 'naïve

[408] Simon Levie quoted in Wouter Welling, 'Het Aboriginal Art Museum – De vitaliteit van een oeroude kunsttraditie' [The Aboriginal Art Museum – The vitality of an ancient art tradition], *Kunstbeeld,* No. 3, Jaargang 27 (Utrecht: Veen Media, maart 2003) pp. 20-23 (p. 23).
[409] Rob Perrée, 'Een trip door de hoofdstad van de hedendaagse kunst – New York, A se' [A trip through the capital of contemporary art – New York, A Nuthouse], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 24 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli/augustus 2000) pp. 56-59 (p. 56).

ideas about minority culture'.[410] In the Netherlands, the Dutch are in control of deciding whether or not other narratives are relevant to the local art discourse. Considering the initial cultural policies of integrating with preservation of the home culture that developed into an understanding of assimilation in the guise of integration, appreciation of artistic expression that does not pass the cultural standard in the Netherlands was out of reach for Dutch Afro artists. This is exemplified in a personal interview about a month before the opening of the exhibition *Twintig Jaar Beeldende Kunst in Suriname, 1975–1995* (Twenty Years of Visual Arts in Suriname, 1996), curated by Paul Faber and Chandra van Binnendijk, when the then director of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Rudi Fuchs, remarked:

> I am putting together an exhibition of Surinamese artists. It does not include one really good one, but I find it an intriguing phenomenon. Suriname is mud, a tropical kind of Zeeland. What will be shown in the Stedelijk later on is a sluggish stuck-in-the-mud variety of Dutch painting. I have respect for that struggle: I admire the courage it takes. It deserves to be seen (*Dat mag gezien worden*).[411]

In Fuch's comment we can see the commonly accepted Dutch colonial superiority at work in regard to the ex-colony. What is reiterated in this comment is the premise of cultural inferiority with the possibility of rising to the Dutch (visual) cultural standard. It is in line with the ideas about art coming from the African continent. At the same time, entangled in the double-bind of local authenticity and Dutch artistic doctrines, there is a hint of the leeway given to art coming from Latin America, as Suriname's acknowledged cultural life was modelled by white patrons comparable to the Haiti example. In this remark the works are appreciated for their 'exotic' variety but not contextualised through the Dutch colonial project or recognised as an idiosyncratic artistic development. Fuchs' remark started living a life of its own and placed Fuchs and the exhibition in an unfavourable light. As a critic of Fuchs noted, if Suriname was an 'intriguing phenomenon' it had to do with the history of the Dutch (colonial) cultural policy in the Netherlands. The anthropologists '[Richard] Price and [Sally] Price only spent a few years in Suriname, and they produced a book and an exhibition *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rain Forest* (1980) […] This exhibition was offered to the Netherlands twice but was turned down.'[412] The exhibition looked at Suriname's Maroon art and recognised it as an idiosyncratic visual form of abstraction coming from people of African descent.

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[410] Rob Perrée, 'Brooklyn Museum toont Hip-Hop Nation – Kunst van de straat' [Brooklyn Museum shows Hip-Hop Nation – Art from the strees] , *Kunstbeeld*, No. 11, Jaargang 24 (Utrecht: Veen Media, november 2000) pp. 28-29 (p. 28).
[411] Frénk van der Linden, 'Museumdirecteur Fuchs: "Het ergste van vreemdgaan is de ontrouw aan jezelf"' [Museum director Fuchs: 'The worst thing about cheating is the disloyalty to yourself'], *NRC*, 2 November 1996, http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/1996/11/02/museumdirecteur-rudi-fuchs-het-ergste-van-vreemdgaan-7330346 acc. 11-04-16.
[412] Lucien Lafour, 'Fuchs (1)', NRC, 9 november 1996, http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/1996/11/09/fuchs-1-7331354 acc. 11-04-16.

What this means is that Dutch cultural 'common sense' and policy changes that influenced exhibitions also changed expected outcomes and artists' reaction to them. The Dutch Afro artistic presence must be understood in tandem with and in relation to how African and diaspora artists were being perceived at that time. Contemporary Dutch Afro artists, just like the Black Americans in the United States and the Black British, were / are caught between being considered a different culture living in the West and their mastery of the Western idiom – in other words, how encultured they are. A shining example of the 1990s is Avery Preesman (b. 1968) who was brought up (second generation) in the Netherlands and for whom the 'formal aspects are subordinate. His canvasses are more than abstract expressions of emotions, they are contained emotions, emotions that are visible, without showing themselves.'[413] The artist is looking for the 'hardest option', which is described as 'the space' on the canvas. He is 'absorbing the environment, turn[ing] the environment into the self, without making explicit what this environment is exactly'.[414]

The difference between how local (with a migrant background) and foreign non-Western artists were treated and perceived prompted elements in the *Pantser of Ruggengraat Cultuurnota 1997–2000*[415] (Armour or Backbone Cultural Policy Paper) by the ministry of Education, Culture and Science under the secretary of state Aad Nuis (1994–98). The paper spoke about the gap that needed to be corrected, meaning that on the level of policy there needed to be more attention given to art from other parts of the world: the idea of 'diversity art'. This move proved to be the catalyst that would change the artistic output coming out of the Afro-Dutch condition, how it was talked about and how it was curated in the second generation. By 1999 the new secretary of state Rick van der Ploeg (Secretary of State for Culture and Media 1998–2002) chose to explicitly use the word 'allochtonous' in relation to artists.[416] The policy paper was based on the paternalistic idea of distinguishing (and separating) non-white artists as a group that needed an extra push. The paper argued from the position of integrating artists with a migrant background into the existing system. It framed the second generation who were brought up in the Dutch system and were working in the Western idiom as allochtonous. At the end of the period in 2000, the criticism of this cultural policy paper was that the policy leaned towards the well-being work (social work) of before 1987. The artist Gillion Grantsaan declares: 'so what? First, they did nothing at all. Maybe this will support black people.'[417] However, rather than focusing on including artists, the author

[413] Rob Perrée, 'Emoties die schuilgaan' [Emotions that hide], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 3, Jaargang 25 (Utrecht: Veen Media, maart 2001) pp. 12-15 (p. 13).
[414] Ibid., 12.
[415] Aad Nuis, *Pantser of Ruggengraat Cultuurnota 1997-2000* [Armour of Backbone], (The Hague: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 1997) [Ministry of Education, Culture and Science], http://catalogus.boekman.nl/pub/96-550A.pdf, acc. 02-08-2018.
[416] Rick van der Ploeg, *Cultuur als confrontatie* [Culture as confrontation], (Den Haag: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 1999).
[417] Sandra Jongenelen, 'Kunstenaars tussen twee culturen' [Artists between two cultures], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 2 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli/augustus 2000) pp. 12-16 (p. 14).

Sandra Jongenelen argues that it was a development that made cultural institutions look for allochtonous audiences in a convulsive manner.[418] Eltje Bos writes that 'realising the intent to promote intercultural expressions through regular facilities'[419] does not work out well. 'The cause of this is that the secretary of state [van der Ploeg] did not take measures to ensure that this intention could be realised. In the execution this leads to the decision to end the specific policies and to establish a separate arrangement circumventing the official circuit.'[420] She states that 'because it exists (for a long time) and specific arrangements have settled, it seems like the specific policy impedes the realisation of its own objectives'.[421]

The developed policy did not consider the strategies of an artist like Avery Preesman, who rose to prominence before 1996 when state policy advised attention for artists from other regions. He was part of a group of artists who were born, raised and / or grew up in the Dutch system and developed ways to become successful. Before being made allochtonous in 1999, the artist Remy Jungerman (b. 1959) rose to prominence because he was identified as being from Suriname, but created installations that deviated from what was known by Surinamese artists up until that time. When Remy, in response to being 'made' other, started making works in an international form-language in an effort to culturally pass as Dutch in the new situation, he was no longer recognisable as a Surinamese. Remy says: 'The images I was producing at that time were almost a reaction to be understood. It's like – I can also create an image that you can comprehend. An image that you literally understand. An image about current affairs.'[422]

This strategy worked well outside of the Netherlands but did not change his position in the country much. His newly found culturally passing position confused curators who were grappling with the new environment of world art and the state policies. The result of these developments was that, according to Remy, invitations to participate in exhibitions stopped arriving. The argumentation for this change was that the Afro artists were good because of the preference they received from the state. The consequence of this measurement and this logic was that the quality of the work was questioned. He did not fit that mould of difference anymore with his work, but was still from elsewhere – the colonies.

> People forgot that you were already bought by the Stedelijk and had quite a few exhibitions to your name […] However, in their experience you were acquired because you were allochthonous.[423]

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[418] Ibid.
[419] Eltje Bos, *Beleid voor cultuur en migranten: rijksbeleid en uitvoeringspraktijk 1980-2004* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences, PhD thesis, 2011) p. 72.
[420] Ibid.
[421] Ibid.
[422] Remy Jungerman, Interview with Remy Jungerman in his studio, Amsterdam: Kruitberg 15-03-2016.
[423] Ibid.

> We were stunned because we were already in the picture. We were already taking part in Europe and had exhibitions in the Stedelijk and suddenly you noticed that all of a sudden you had nothing left.[424]

This public policy and language development were geared towards advancing the position of 'allochtonous' artists, but had an adverse effect on those who were already participating in the general art scene. They were now being racialised which made their work secondary to their ethnicity. Even though their ethnicity had played a role before in regard to what was expected of them as artists, this point of departure raised an extra obstacle to be overcome. As a consequence, the visual language that was successful up to that point was scrutinised. References to personal cultural background were now suspect as they could be considered tools used for public financial support, stemming from the fact that the artists were just not good enough to participate in the general art discourse. When Remy returned to using his Surinamese background in his work, he regained attention within the Dutch niche of 'diverse' art.

The change in political position forced Remy and his colleagues into a position where they had to fight the created (stereo)type evolving from affirmative action. They started asking whether they and their visual language were faltering or whether it was the other people faltering. This question turned the gaze inwards towards what it was they had actually developed and could put forward as an original / personal contribution to the art world. Remy concluded that they were there – meaning that they had a personal visual language but, due to the visual language they used as artistic reference material, they were not connected to the wider world or that at least that connection had been severed through the new policy. At the same time, due to the increased separation, the larger art world in the Netherlands did not understand their extra frames of reference as personal input but as a different language that they did not understand and did not invest(igate) in enough. Inviting Enwezor in was one of the ways in which the policy tried to make the visual language and ethnic background that was separated from the general art discourse intelligible. A new language in sync with Americo-centric discourse had to be constructed to speak Afro-Dutch artistic production and place it within the context of the diaspora. Even so, Remy concludes that the stage that was offered after this political change based on ethnicity was too small.

When not fitting into, or exceptionally mastering, the Western idiom, the positioning of (local) non-Western Dutch artists on the Dutch stage is heavily determined by the quality argument and they have to formulate a reaction. In the Dutch context, art critic Sebastian Lopez observed this inequality as the phenomenon of 'cultural, social and intellectual discrimination, which for the migrant, in finding a new

[424] Ibid.

homeland and also when making autonomous art, can hinder and even lead to a new flight, this time as far away as possible from patronising Europe'.[425] Consequently, the awareness of the role their skin colour plays in their position on the Dutch art stage is resulting in a critical stance in Dutch black artists.

> The Netherlands is a racist or Eurocentric country. The European culture is everything to them, the rest is less. The Dutch are also bad at imagining through the other. I am not saying this out of rancour, but Dutch society has given me nothing that shows that I belong. (Gillion Grantsaan, 2000)[426]

Apart from handling changing cultural policies, the artist, writer and curator Michael Tedja (b. 1971) argues that dealing with the quality argument means understanding that 'the consciousness of a young black artist in Europe cannot be compared to that of others'.[427] They 'cannot afford the luxury of producing images that have minimal or no history',[428] as these young artists try to create a space from which to operate. For Tedja it is by literally placing the drawing behind the painted image and calling this the narrow escape.[429] Artist Gillion Grantsaan (b. 1968) 'tries to develop a self-acquired art form, next to the ruling art, that can be judged on its own merits'. [430] He looks

> at the holes in art history that may lead to new cross-pollination [*kruisverbanden*]. As Martin Kippenberger has said 'Only real negroes know insult.' Jeff Koons says: 'Exploit the masses.' Gerhard Richter says: 'Politics is impotent.' And Basquiat said: 'I use a lot of colours, not only black!' You could say that all my work is already there, but its independence is not yet visible. 'Light only penetrates the darkness that's already there, I am already there.'[431]

Grantsaan speaks about how his engagement changed over the years. Starting with issues around consumption in the 1980s, he progressed into 'nullifying our invisibility, to place in history that I am here. I wanted to portray that, also for others. If you do that, you are legitimised and become more than a side-table.'[432] What these artists show in this *Kunstbeeld* article is that they are well versed in the Western

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[425] *Kunstbeeld*, 'Vanwaar je dacht te vertrekken sta je geplant' [Whence you thought you were leaving you are rooted], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 2, Jaargang 20 (Utrecht: Veen Media, februari 1996) pp. 34-35 (p. 35).
[426] Sandra Jongenelen, 'Kunstenaars tussen twee culturen' [Artists between two cultures], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 2 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli/augustus 2000) pp. 12-16 (p. 13).
[427] Michael Tedja, 'Narrow Escape', *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 26 (Utrecht: Veen Media, July / August 2002), pp. 10–13 (p. 12).
[428] Ibid.
[429] Ibid., 10.
[430] Ibid., 12.
[431] Ibid.
[432] Sandra Jongenelen, 'Kunstenaars tussen twee culturen' [Artists between two cultures], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 2 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli/augustus 2000) pp. 12-16 (p. 16).

idiom and theory and are grappling with the position they are manoeuvred into because of their ethnicity. In other words, being made allochtonous.

To exemplify how the quality argument functions when of migrant background but not considered allochtonous is by looking at the positioning of Fiona Tan (b. Pekanbaru, 1966). (I am not arguing here that she does not face the same or similar intellectual and ethnic dilemmas but rather how the work is discussed in *Kunstbeeld*.) Tan was born in Indonesia out of a Chinese father and a Scottish mother and is not discussed in terms of heritage.[433] She is granted personal autonomy that is not connected to her background. The author writes:

> She asks questions in her work, that is her perspective. Because, in the question-form it is possible to merge ratio and emotion. It is a form in which analysis and experience are woven into one another. It leads to timeless images and existential insights.[434]

With these kinds of readings, which only hint at her background, Tan is granted the allure of the artist without the explicitly racialised mechanisms.

The Dutch newspaper columnist of Surinamese descent, denoted (in the article) as the Surinamese newspaper columnist, Anil Ramdas, noted that 'Allochtonous artists are more easily celebrated for their heritage than for their talent.'[435] For Grantsaan who, considering the negative comments of visitors, experiences his non-Dutchness as a handicap, it does not work like that. He says he did not experience affirmative action even in the academy.[436] For the artist Iris Kensmil (b. 1970) the same appears to be true. 'Never have I noticed any of this. Not even during openings. In those cases, it is always about the quality of my work. That is what is being talked about.'[437] [438] One critic notes that in the first encounter with Iris' work she did not know quite what to make of it. She wonders whether the words she read were a political statement: 'Is it about text or painting?'[439] When she sees more of the works together she realises that the works 'are making a promise. They are radical' and a relation to previous works can be made.[440] Kensmil deliberately plays with letters as painterly forms and seduces the viewer to extract meaning from it. The author concludes that we also 'dispense meaning to a painting which goes beyond

[433] Saskia Monshouwer, 'Een kinderdroom – Tijdloze beelden en existentiële inzichten' [A childrens dream – Timeless images and existential insights] *Kunstbeeld*, No. 9, Jaargang 24 (Utrecht: Veen Media, september 2000) pp. 16-17.
[434] Ibid., 17.
[435] Sandra Jongenelen, 'Kunstenaars tussen twee culturen' [Artists between two cultures], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 2 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli/augustus 2000) pp. 12-16 (p. 13).
[436] Ibid.
[437] Ibid.
[438] *Please note that Grantsaan is very dark-skinned and Kensmil is very light skinned. Colourism, may have an influence on perception.*
[439] Saskia Monshouwer, 'Iris Kensmil', Kunsbeeld, No. 11, Jaargang 25 (Utrecht: Veen Media, November 2001) pp. 44-45 (p. 44).
[440] Ibid., 45.

iconography and the way we understand the meaning of a painting is undoubtedly structured differently from the way we understand language'.[441]

The curatorial decisions and strategies in Dutch museums are tied up with state cultural policies and how art from other parts of the world is appreciated. In the case of integrating foreign non-Western art, it proves to be a lengthy process because the space that is given to non-Western art in contemporary art museums around 1998 is limited. The incidental acquisitions are mostly of artists who are recognised in the international art market and these acquisitions seem to be of a fashionable nature. Developments 'elsewhere' are the territory of ethnographic museums and, as Welling states in 1998, it

> testifies to the one-sided focus on Europe and (North) America. In a multicultural world this [attitude] is no longer of this time, but it also bears witness to the arrogant denial of the high artistic level of much non-Western art.[442]
>
> The ethnographic museums are doing their best, from time to time, to exhibit contemporary art, as far as their limited budget allows.[443]

The Aboriginal Art museum that opened in 2001 aimed to present the work just like in an 'ordinary museum'.[444] The management expressed that, in due course, integration into other museums was desirable but 'immediately making cross-connections [with Western art] is hard for people [to understand]'.[445] By 2003, when the discussions are around interculturality, globalisation and the reversal of interest in art with a specific cultural identity, isolating a culture seemed to go against the tide.[446] Consequently, the plan to open a museum for non-Western art in Almere was also abandoned rapidly.[447] At the same time there was a tendency to be 'socially engaged, international and colourful'.[448] In a conversation on tricky issues in contemporary visual arts with Remy Jungerman the question is central: 'in accordance with policy what are the consequences for the participating artists concerning content in this environment of socially engaged, culturally mixed, "multiculti" art that is in fashion?'[449] The active policy of supporting minority

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[441] Ibid.
[442] Wouter Welling, 'De vitale traditie van Benin' [The vital/lively Benin tradition], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 3, Jaargang 22 (Utrecht: Veen Media, maart 1998) pp. 48-51 (p. 49).
[443] Ibid.
[444] Wouter Welling, 'Het Aboriginal Art Museum – De vitaliteit van een oeroude kunsttraditie' [The Aboriginal Art Museum – The vitality of an ancient art tradition], *Kunstbeeld,* No. 3, Jaargang 27 (Utrecht: Veen Media, maart 2003) pp. 20-23 (p. 21).
[445] Ibid., 22.
[446] Ibid.
[447] Ibid.
[448] Saskia Monshouwer, 'Real time art – Multicultureel beleid in de kunsten is onzin: het gaat om kwaliteit en communicatie' [Real time art – Multicultural policy in the arts is nonsense: it is about quality and communication], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 11, Jaargang 27 (Utrecht: Veen Media, november 2003) pp. 60-61.
[449] Ibid., 60.

artists was helpful, according to Jungerman, but 'if your work is bad you will not make it'.[450] Underscoring the diversity, internationalism and world art influence on the Dutch art environment and what this means for Dutch Afro artists, Jungerman calls the Dutch pavilion at the Venice Bienniale (2003) into question.

Rein Wolfs who at that time was the head of presentations at the Rotterdam museum Boymans van Beuningen curated it. The Dutch contribution to the Venice Bienniale with the title *We are the World* included the artists Carlos Amorales (b. Mexico City, 1970), Alicia Framis (b. Barcelona, 1967), Meschac Gaba (b. Cotonou, 1961), Jeanne van Heeswijk (b. Schijndel, 1965) and Erik van Lieshout (b. Deurne, 1968). Jungerman states: 'The image is so politically correct. The statement is how 'colourful, mixed and good Dutch society is".[451] Had they given space to one or two artists the statement would have been "Look, the Netherlands can also be represented by an African-born black man [Meschac Gaba], a Mexican [Carlos Amorales] or whatever. This is acceptance in its full glory. The Netherlands have a strong group mentality which levels out everything.'[452] The interviewer asks whether there might come a policy that declares that you cannot participate in this government support because you are not a foreigner anymore. Remy replies that with this question we come to the crux of the problem:

> foreigner, native [inlander], what does that mean? The development has already taken place, 'We are here to stay.' This is what the policy has been trying to do for centuries (*op aangestuurd*). There is no way back. I think that the insight has to develop in the Netherlands that you participate if you are good, whether you are a foreigner or not.[453]

I agree with Jungerman's critique, as the contribution to the Biennale was an example of Dutch internationalism combined with compliance with world art logic that shuns the local non-Western artists dealing with the same issues. Because the latter are submitted to the logic of the Dutch quality argument, which means denial of the plight of the Afro-Dutch condition, while being subject to the double-bind of local authenticity and fitting into Western artistic doctrines, it means that the questions in the world art debate around the location of the art and the artists are reiterated in the local Dutch context. Effectively, asking whether non-Western art can be located as native to the global art world is (the same question as) asking whether Dutch Afro artists can be located as native to the Dutch art world.

[450] Ibid.
[451] Ibid., 61.
[452] Ibid.
[453] Ibid.

> Would they think my work is better because I have a foreign background? It is more likely to have a negative effect. You see them thinking: 'This smells like ethno' or 'oh no, … it is multicultural. A little bit exhausting …' 'Are you still working on that?' or 'You should be over it by now' or smoothed over 'You can't hear you are from Suriname at all.'(Gillion Grantsaan , 2000)[454]

2.4 Conclusion

The review of articles in *Kunstbeeld* shows that, from the exotic to the postcolonial label, the indication of an idiosyncratic visual language in the arts is not equally distributed among the different areas in the world. Regions are appreciated differently and Dutch dealing with art coming out of the ex-colonies makes a distinction between Indonesian art and art coming out of Suriname and the Dutch Antilles. In the Netherlands itself, the lack of a coalesced Dutch Afro identity prompts policymakers, curators and critics looking for examples on how to deal with and relate to this new subjectivity in other diaspora places. As a consequence, contemporary Dutch Afro artists are dealing with the inheritance of a local art world that moved from a transcultural understanding of their practices (1980s) to one where diversity (1996) was the key word and they were being made allochtonous (1997). Despite the Dutch culture and education that co-constituted their (artistic) subjectivity, the cultural background of the new generation (born c. 1970 and later) came to be understood as distinctively different. In other words, their artistic output was perceived as, and placed in, a different culture-area in the space of non-Western artistic expressions. This last phase happened in an environment where, on the international stage, ethnicity is no longer a driving concept. While they are at the beginning of trying to grapple with their ethnic background, which was made explicit through state policy, they are in straight 'competition' with artists operating in the area of world art whose works have been described as inherently appealing.

The critical combination of being rooted in the immigration wave that started in the late 1960s and growing up to coincide with the contemporary period of the emergence of world art makes up the Dutch Afro artistic problem space of the late twentieth century. In this space several forms of curatorial and critiquing knowledge on how to deal with the diaspora come together to deal with political, artistic and curatorial questions from a majority group perspective.
The problem with the international orientation (which leads to cultural policy) is that it does not work, because the basic Dutch premise is the idea of gradual cultural assimilation in the guise of integration.

[454] Sandra Jongenelen, 'Kunstenaars tussen twee culturen' [Artists between two cultures], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 7/8, Jaargang 2 (Utrecht: Veen Media, juli/augustus 2000) pp. 12-16 (p. 13).

Here is where internationalism does not land [see PhD thesis by Elsje Borst], as internationalism cannot be applied to a group that is set up to integrate while keeping their own culture through benevolent work (*welzijnswerk*). The system assumed that the artists were not getting into the arts system because they were not walking the *welzijnswerk* route that had been set up. In other words, integration was happening but was effectively being halted by cultural policies intended to support assimilation processes. Effectively, non-Western foreign artists were being instrumentalised by the system as an ideological tool and in order to produce a particular international-looking discourse. The research shows that Dutch Afro artists are struggling to formulate a reply to this development that, in the words of Alain Locke's *Enter The New Negro* (1925), would '"smash" all of the racial, social and psychological impediments'[455] that are constructing them as different. It is in an effort to move away from the implicitly racialised space that is reserved for them through state cultural policies and imagine a different horizon for the future. One way of escaping this predicament is by altering the scale of operation and establishing visibility on one's own terms through international connections. Alternatively, local curators can formulate a political position with a broader range in the Dutch environment. The opportunity was seized when consecutive cultural policies led to a defining moment with a well-funded opportunity. This moment happened when the Mondriaan Fund initiated the *Intendant Culturele Diversiteit* (Cultural Diversity Administrator) (2006).[456] It was a Development Prize for Cultural Diversity that produced the two distinctive curatorial projects: the Be(com)ing Dutch project by the Van Abbemuseum discussed in chapter three and the Wakaman project by Dutch Afro artists discussed in chapter four.

[455] Richard J. Powell, 'Re/Birth of a Nation', in *Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance*, ed by Richard J. Powell and David A. Bailey et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), pp. 14–33 (p. 18).
[456] Mondriaanfonds, http://www.intendant.nl/intendant/english/index.php , acc. 08-05-15.

3. Experiencing: Cultural Diversity Price and Be(com)ing Dutch.

Introduction

In chapter one I speak about my personal subject position and how this is informed by different cultural backgrounds. Placing this subjectivity in the larger diaspora means accepting that, even though there are similarities, Dutch Afro-ness is differently constituted than the African-American and Black British discourses would propose. Consequently, I argue that naming this subject 'black' would be taking an advance on what it could become socially, politically and artistically in the Dutch context. I suggest that being in a state of pre-Blackness opens up the possibility of thinking Dutch Afro-ness along the axis of culture rather than the axis of race. Chapter two shows that this line of thinking fits into the Dutch tradition of thinking along cultural lines. The exhibition histories and art critique reveal how, with consecutive cultural developments and policies, appreciation for art made by artists with a migrant background shifted from a transcultural appreciation in the early 1980s to a diversity approach in the 2000s. The chapter demonstrates how the appreciation of works by the 'last colonials' converged with the emergence of world art and how the second generation of Dutch Afro artists were dealing with passing as culturally native to the Dutch art world going into the 2000s.

In 2005 when, internationally, ethnicity was no longer considered a driving concept, the defining moment occurred in the Netherlands with the Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit (Development prize for Cultural Diversity) for Dutch modern art museums in 2005–08. Taking an example from the 'art events' such as *Africa Remix* (London, 2005) and *Short Century* (Berlin, 2001) where 'diversity was the point of departure rather than just showing African art', the prize was created by the Mondriaan Foundation 'with the hope that the cultural participation of allochthonous would grow'.[457] The aim of this chapter is to explore this moment through the institutional lens that is the Van Abbemuseum which was the recipient of the € 500,000 grant. The jury for the prize were Salah Hassan (Cornell University, USA), Rose Issa (independent curator, UK), Abdelkader Benali (writer, NL) and World Art Studies professor Kitty Zijlmans (Leiden University, NL). The Van Abbemuseum won the prize for its curatorial and discursive two-year project *Be(com)ing Dutch* (2006–08). Their experience of this process and being an agent in and of this assignment towards 'cultural diversity' in the museum is the way into investigating diversity along the axis of culture in the Dutch landscape. Through the exhibition archive and interviews with the director and curators, an image emerges of an institute that is grappling with an internal desire to be inclusive and the external forces that place non-Western (read non-white) art outside of the existing canon. The chapter

[457] Gitta Luiten in Joost Ramaer, 'Prijs voor culturele diversiteit musea' [Museum prize for cultural diversity], *Volkskrant*, 27 October 2005, https://www.volkskrant.nl/cultuur-media/prijs-voor-culturele-diversiteit-musea~bf660f77/, acc. 30-11-2018.

will show that, even though hindered by their own Anglo-Saxon cultural limitations, deriving from their lack of knowledge of Dutch sensibilities at that time, the director and chief curator explore the limitations of what it is acceptable to speak about in the Dutch art context with the *Be(com)ing Dutch* programme.

3.1 The Museum

In tandem with the developments in art of the late 1980s and 1990s, the Van Abbemuseum was no stranger to the discussion around world art and its consequences for curatorial practices. Christiane Berndes, curator and head of collections, having worked at the museum in this position since 1997, remembers that the question about how to deal with global changes, while having the ambition to work globally, was alive and well.[458] She notes that, with only four staff-members, they wondered how they could expand the collection and make a strategy for these issues.[459] And that these questions came up but were not really discussed in detail before the departure of the museum's director Jan Debbaut (1988–2003) who was also part of the *Magiciens de la Terre* advisory team. In the final years of his tenure the museum was renovated. When the newly added space was finished in 2003, it was also the time when the curatorial staff started questioning how to react to the changes in the world with a collection that was rooted in Dutch art and was mainly focused on Western Europe and Northern America.[460]

With his background as a director at the *Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art* in Malmö (2001–04, Sweden) and *Tramway* (1992–97, Glasgow), the appointment of Charles Esche as the new director in 2004 brought an international network, experience and a clear position to the questions of the four members of staff. Esche inherited a museum with a collection established by his predecessors. First, there was the post-war canonical building of the collection by Edy de Wilde (1946–63) who focused on the classical Modernists such as Picasso. Secondly, focusing on collective and individual creativity, a slight alternative canon was built by Jean Leering (1964– 73). Through conceptual work from the United States and German painting, there was a third canonical building by Rudi Fuchs (1975–87). And lastly a secondary canon was built by Jan Debbaut (1988–2003) who looked at art at the intersection of Modernism and Postmodernism and later moved towards audio-visual and process-based work. According to Esche, his appointment had to do with the idea that this policy could not be continued as it was and something needed to change, even though the administrators did not know quite what.[461] The larger internationalised museum appointments at director level in Europe where competitive museums of

[458] Christiane Berndes, Interview with Christiane Berndes at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 08-12-2016.
[459] Ibid.
[460] Ibid.
[461] Ibid.

modern art were beginning to be both national and international attractions of relevance may have been the reason for this appointment of a foreign director. Christiane Berndes observes that, with his appointment, Esche brought the museum to the centre of the larger discussions.[462]

Interviewing Charles Esche ten years after the *Be(com)ing Dutch* programme in 2016, he immediately acknowledged that he had to reconstruct certain elements in his head if he wanted to be precise about the experience. He declared that it is sometimes difficult to separate what you think now from what you thought then and that it is hard to be accurate because you now have knowledge that you did not have then. I was interested in knowing the ideas behind the project and the kind of questions that were asked.

To understand the motivation behind the project I asked him about his personal history towards the *Be(com)ing* Dutch moment. Esche comes from a German family, was born in England and later moved to Scotland as an adult. He frames his drive around *Be(com)ing Dutch* in terms of a European identity as someone for whom the 'question of identity, of who you were and what you were allowed to be, was very much part of his daily experience where he had this experience of not being English'.[463] In essence he grew up as a migrant in the mid-1960s. He describes how, in his experience, 'the hatred of Germany was still quite common in England. So, you had a certain question about who you were and how you would identify with the place that you were living in, and have a certain distance from it.'[464] As a result of this background, the idea of how to build a (imagined) community such as the nation as a form of collective became a strong influence in how he taught about art. It also informed how to belong to such a community and has been part of his personal approach. This is exemplified in his decision to become and self-identify as Scottish, even though that identification has its own problematic. Secondly, and coming out of that, he was informed by the Swedish project he worked on, called *in 2052 Malmö will no longer be Swedish* (2002). This project explored whether a country's second city has a reason to exist, independently of its relation to the capital. In his words, the question thus became 'what if Malmö in the future no longer identified with Stockholm and with Swedish-ness but created some kind of alternative identity maybe in relation to Denmark?'[465] Esche describes how 'in *Be(com)ing Dutch* it was this idea of this construction of a European identity. How does that match with these national identities, which are sort of leftovers but are still incredibly important?'[466] Discussing the fact that education is controlled by the nation state, he argues that it is hard to imagine a community of Europe if Dutchness is the thing that is being imposed by the state and reiterated through people [right-wing politicians] like Rita Verdonk,

[462] Ibid.
[463] Charles Esche, Interview with Charles Esche at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 21-11-2016.
[464] Ibid.
[465] Ibid.
[466] Ibid.

Pim Fortuyn and now Geert Wilders.[467] With this history it was obvious for Esche that the Van Abbemuseum should apply for the *Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit*.

With his appointment as director of the Van Abbemuseum, Esche became part of the 'mini-convent', which is the voluntary gathering of museum directors in the Netherlands. In 2004, with Esche being the only foreign museum director at that time, he already knew that his colleagues thought that Morocco was not the place to go to find art.[468] (Why they named Morocco specifically will become clear later in the text.) The white middle-class cis-gendered heterosexual view inhabited by these directors dictated that Jörg Immendorf and Martin Kippenberg were real artists and it was very antagonistic towards Esche's ideas at that time. Esche was considered political, didactic and pedantic (*belerend*) and he points out that his colleagues insisted that 'they were into pleasure and art as beauty'.[469] When the Mondriaan Stichting and Fonds BKVB said they wanted to invest in cultural diversity, Esche describes how 'all these people stood up and said it's outrageous that the Mondriaan should want to determine the policy of museums and cultural diversity. And why should I want to go to Morocco because it's full of, you know, Islamic peasants or whatever? Charles notes that all these very reactionary attitudes suddenly got spoken out and they [the directors] complained to the Mondriaan and it is in the newspapers.'[470] Despite all this, Esche comments that several of the institutes that complained also applied for the prize and some turned and became quite supportive. For him the title *Be(com)ing Dutch* was 'a personal and professional interest played out in the museum in real time'.[471]

With hindsight he thinks that what was being defended in the critique around that time 'was still the old modernist card, the square, the grid, Sol LeWitt'.[472] Concurring with the findings in the previous chapter, he points out that the art world as it was understood before then went from New York, maybe Los Angeles, to Vienna and from Stockholm to Naples.[473] Within this he observes a construct that was overwhelmingly white heterosexual male, with 'some allowance for gay men of the right class and the right ethnicity but that was it, that was the art-world'.[474] Esche effectively reiterates the difference in existing art worlds and the rigid delineation of what is / was considered 'real art'. He goes on to point out that this meant that the Van Abbemuseum, up until then, had not collected any work from, for instance, the Middle East or Turkey [world art areas]. Effectively, the majority of the Dutch art world was still

[467] Ibid.
[468] Ibid.
[469] Ibid.
[470] Ibid.
[471] Ibid.
[472] Ibid.
[473] Ibid.
[474] Ibid.

working with 1968 and the revolution against the establishment while 1989, when walls fell and the world opened up, had already happened.

When Charles Esche came to the Netherlands and became the head of the Van Abbemuseum he also did not find a black movement such as he had seen in the United Kingdom in the 1980s/90s and assumed it was not there. He points out that it was also the time when there was 'reliance on the art world and the art world systems of reference to produce subjects for dialogue'.[475] Esche describes how they 'still relied on the modernist idea about art having a particular place in the world'.[476] In his words, 'I was thinking about Stanley Brown at the time, thinking about why he doesn't have any pictures of himself taken. And … someone like [the artist of Surinamese descent] Melvin Motti who we asked to participate in this [*Be(com)ing Dutch*] but didn't want to participate because he didn't want to be black in that context or didn't want to be dealing with identity issues. … I think at that time we just thought OK, it is not really in Dutch society, we cannot really deal with this black issue.' [477] Esche remarks that 'it wasn't there to be grabbed. You just have to really dig.' What was missed here, the so-called blind spot, was the resistance by 'black' artists to being labelled while the curatorial team was looking for 'a sort of British militant black'.[478] Simultaneously, 'successful' second-generation Afro artists were working inside of the existing art paradigms in an environment where their 'difference' had only recently been highlighted. The next chapter will show how that difference played out as a 'militancy' that was there but was not gaining any critical recognition. Conclusively, what 'was to be grabbed was of course [the right-wing politician] Rita Verdonk and the Islamophobia that was growing and the question of identity'.[479] At the same time, due to changes in cultural policy, the Gate Foundation was being closed down which politically was also sending the message that that particular strand was not of interest and one should focus on the known art world. Esche states that 'at the same time it [art works outside of the known grid] pulled … it was a double pressure'.[480] He relates that 'it was very double because on one hand they were funding *Be(com)ing Dutch* and on the other hand they were closing the Gate archive (1988–2006) more or less the same time. So there was this sort of push pull of how you would deal with diversity …'[481] In the same vein, a heavy restraining force in expanding the idea of *Be(com)ing Dutch*, in addition to the mini-convent of museum directors, were the public letters attacking Gitta Luiten (director of the Mondriaan Fund 2001–

[475] Ibid.
[476] Ibid.
[477] Ibid.
[478] Ibid.
[479] Ibid.
[480] Ibid.
[481] Ibid.

11) and Van Abbe for accepting the prize.[482] In Esche's own words, the critique was 'that there was no reason for this nonsense about cultural diversity to affect museums which are autonomous'.[483]

With Esche's account of that period we get an idea of modern and contemporary art museums' attitudes towards art made by ethnic minorities in the Netherlands and the relation to world art when, internationally, ethnicity no longer seemed to be a driving concept (2005). There is a strict divide between the Western axis of art and 'others', and directors like Jan Debbaut, in line with the developments laid out in the previous chapter, were more concerned with finding the links between these two, rather than exploring the qualities of the latter. Esche's approach towards the museum was founded on exploring issues of belonging in the European environment. This included art spaces that, from a previous Dutch perspective, were not considered parts of the art world that were up to par. Looking for these spaces in the Netherlands failed because Esche and his team were looking at 'the art world systems of reference to produce subjects for dialogue'.[484] Even though they were there, as the next chapter will show, the Dutch art-world system did not wholeheartedly include obvious migrant subjects that specifically discussed the particularities of belonging in the (Dutch) visual arts. Esche comments that, in the [Dutch] art world of that time, this sort of cultural diversity politics did not belong in autonomous [read modern and contemporary art] museums that were concerned with 'arts as beauty'.[485] At the same time, public cultural policy was concerned with diversity, and organisations such as Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (State museum for Ethnography) in Leiden were inviting Okwui Enwezor to conduct a symposium (2001) on non-Western contemporary art in ethnographic museums. I suggest that cultural policy and ethnographic museums were looking for language that could, on their terms, undo the quality argument in an effort to integrate minorities into the existing modern and contemporary museums as 'arts as beauty'. The need to undo the discrepancy that existed between state policy and the actual execution of the guidelines once again highlights the difference in art worlds. The difference is that ethnographic museums already had an anthropological language and method of assessing the work that needed reconsideration in light of the postcolonial era. The modern and contemporary museums on the other hand had to develop a language rooted in artistic quality based on an equal level of cultural and aesthetic appreciation.

According to Esche, the supposed autonomy claimed by the Dutch modern and contemporary art museums vis-à-vis cultural policy and how they can react to it is a misunderstanding. In his words, 'I can't even begin to understand the mentality that we claim autonomy and meanwhile you just take money from the state.'[486] Arguably, due to the funding system in the Netherlands, a large amount of the art and

[482] Ibid.
[483] Ibid.
[484] Ibid.
[485] Ibid.
[486] Ibid.

institutions are a form of 'state art'. In the case of the Van Abbemuseum, which functions under the supervision of the city council, the alderman of Culture together with the council function as the board of governors. This means that the policy of the museum directly reflects on the city council that approves the policy plan every four to five years. Esche points out that this can become tricky, as was exemplified in 2011. In this year the PvdA (Labour Party), which was part of the city council and politically catered to white middle-class voters, wanted to get rid of Charles as a director. The reason for this was that they wanted a more 'populist policy' that would bring in large numbers of visitors as had been done at the Groninger museum.[487] Political influence was exerted on the museum and in the past directors had been discharged on the basis of their policies. New city elections therefore may, but not always do, have a direct impact on the museum's track.

Having said that, when the chief curator at the Van Abbemuseum, Annie Fletcher, who after being acting head of exhibitions at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (2001–02) and co-founder of *If I Can't Dance, I Don't Want To Be Part Of Your Revolution* (2005) started working with Esche in 2005, the position of the Van Abbe was that of a regional museum with a history of transnationalism that was supposed to buy international art, while keeping in mind its 'national role because everything financially is structured in relation to that'.[488] Over the years, museums did receive extra state funding allocated to acquire Dutch artists or represent the Netherlands abroad. As a municipal museum, this dictated what Fletcher calls the local and national social contract.[489] With the many museums in the country, the Van Abbe could be precise about the deviating path they had embarked on because they did not have the national function of institutions such as the Rijksmuseum or the Stedelijk in Amsterdam.

However, the autonomy of all Dutch art institutions is bound to acquisition policy. Esche explains that one of the conditions was that the work is recognised as art. This recognition of art was left to the market, meaning that for the museum it became difficult to buy a work from an artist who was not represented by a gallery or – the less convincing route – confirmed by other public institutions. It was also difficult to buy a work that did not have an official author, or was by someone who does not self-identify as an artist.[490] He points out that the museum could only buy objects made by humans who call themselves artists and consequently this also had an effect on collecting in the realms of cultural heritage.[491] Esche describes how, with state regulations on what art is, the intention with the *Be(com)ing Dutch* project, 'struggling with an idea of the postmodern',[492] was to add to the grid and enlarge the story.[493] In his words,

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[487] Ibid.
[488] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[489] Ibid.
[490] Charles Esche, Interview with Charles Esche at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 21-11-2016.
[491] Ibid.
[492] Ibid.
[493] Ibid.

> I think at that time I was still struggling with an idea of the postmodern, which I was discarding but I didn't really have very much else to do … as a way of trying to continue the traditions of emancipation, traditions which I would see in modernity which I no longer see. I don't see anything emancipatory in modernity anymore in the way that it works. It is basically colonialism under another name. And there isn't anything emancipatory about colonialism. But at the time I would still keep those two apart. I would have kept colonialism and modernity or Modernism apart. And I would have seen Modernism as being this sort of avant-garde and communism and these things, which I still felt to be emancipatory at that moment. And so, I was trying to rescue that bit. And I suppose continue it, while discarding this part, discarding the colonial racist heritage. And I think I saw that as being possible. I would now say that's ridiculous … I think it was about pluralising modernity … I wouldn't have understood that it's necessary to put modernity in its box.[494]

Looking back at this problem, Annie Fletcher adds that, consequently, *Be(com)ing Dutch* resulted in a rethinking of the curatorial practices. It became clear to her that, if they were to do a project like *Be(com)ing Dutch*, it needed to impact on what they were collecting.[495] This move was driven by the discussions about what the role of the museum could be as a public space, what they were collecting and how this connected to the public.[496] In our interview, Fletcher describes how they were starting to understand that all the programming they were doing might need to literally think about the infrastructure of the museum in different ways. Rather than just going through the museum and seeing the history, another way of engagement was envisioned. She notes how collecting an identity became a thing that they wanted to look at. Fletcher emphasises that it became the autonomous object versus the autonomous experience in a museum environment, the cathedral of autonomous art, where according to the national mores political things had no place. [497]

This is exemplified in the Be(com)ing Dutch *Read the Masks. Tradition is not Given* (2008) project by artists Annette Krauss and Petra Bauer. This project questioned the social and political implications of the Dutch tradition of *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete). Here, an art project questioning a racist Dutch cultural tradition exploded in the political sphere – a case in which politics shot itself into the museum on the basis of questions that were raised about the work in parliament. One of these questions, coming from the PVV members of parliament to the Minister of Education, Culture and Science, Ronald

[494] Ibid.
[495] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[496] Ibid.
[497] Ibid.

Plasterk (2007–10), was whether he was 'willing to personally educate the two German ladies about our Dutch culture in order to help them overcome their adjustment issues'.[498]

Fletcher observes that 'there's this leg, the normal common sense of how the museum operates in terms of how it governs time, versus urgent political time that smashed into the museum'.[499] Or, in other words, how everyday time intervenes in the space of what she calls museum time. She notes how museum time and the white cube have their own coding system that differs from the black box, the cinema box, political activism and popular culture. In these spaces, the body acts and understands itself differently. In understanding the workings of the museum and its 'autonomous' role, 'these big forces are at play and they're not necessarily complementary'.[500]

Head of collections Christiane Berndes observes that, with a collection that was already established, it was problematic for the museum to rethink curatorial strategies and reinvent the museum around this new understanding.[501] She remembers that, being part of the staff since 1997, the staff and new director had to deal with the inheritance of a collection and an organisation with a memory of how it was constructed and trained.[502] Looking at installations, video art, performances and concepts posed a problem for conservation in an environment where administrators were specialised in paintings, prints and sculptures. The museum was not only testing what could be acquired but also testing the limits of the organisation.

In the library these changes in the museum played out differently. Initially, the library was limited to the direction that was indicated in regard to the direct exhibition plans. Today, the library, going back to 1964, has a more inclusive history than the Van Abbemuseum collection because what was collected depended on the librarian rather than the museum management. Diana Franssen, Conservator and Head of Research at the Van Abbemuseum, started assembling the library in 1989 before the new building was constructed. When moving to the temporary building while construction was taking place, she started indexing and digitising the museum archive. Thinking about the collection, Franssen discovered that the books in the library collection were aimed at the artists who were once involved with the museum in one way or another. The collection lacked other artists that could contextualise the work that was done in the museum.[503] In line with the developments of the time, Franssen expanded the library with purchases in the direction of sociology and politics, turning the library into what she calls 'more of a cultural history library in which visual arts is the mainline'.[504] Because of the new artists that were added to the library

[498] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal [House of Representatives], *Aanhangsel van de handelingen, 627*, The Hague, 30 October 2008, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/ah-tk-20082009-627.html, acc. 9-08-2018.
[499] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[500] Ibid.
[501] Christiane Berndes, Interview with Christiane Berndes at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 08-12-2016.
[502] Ibid.
[503] Diana Franssen, Interview with Diana Franssen at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 08-12-2016.
[504] Ibid.

collection, there were more books collected relating to these artists and their direct context.[505] Effectively, the museum library became a collection in its own right and with its own policies. The library acknowledged different art networks and was collecting world art at a time when the museum itself was not yet ready for such acquisitions.

The Van Abbemuseum archive expanded in the *Be(com)ing Dutch* period when the funding for the Gate Foundation was pulled and they offered the contents of their building, including the full archive and library. While other institutions only wanted parts of what the Gate Foundation had to offer, Diana Franssen understood the importance of the fact that the archive had its own entity and its own comprehensiveness. She concluded that, if anybody wanted to research it, they should be able to do so as a comprehensive thing. She had to explain the motivation, in person with the board of the Gate Foundation, as to why she / the museum was interested in the archive. This motivation forced her to really think through how it would fit into the existing Van Abbemuseum collection, what could be done with it and what the status of the institution's archive and library would be.[506] Today, looking at the Gate Foundation's institutional archive, she cautiously concludes that the Gate Foundation may have suffered from what she calls 'a nostalgic attitude towards the Other, the appreciation of the exotic, and that because of this the institute manoeuvred itself into a sectarian corner [of the art world].'[507] This is confirmed on the *Be(com)ing Dutch* website where it is stated that, around 1998, little 'clubs' of art lovers evolved who were only interested in exhibitions about 'African' or Asian arts and the organisation struggled with presentation possibilities that would make sure that everybody was introduced to different sorts of works.[508] This observation is in line with Gitta Luiten's remark about exhibiting African art and the desire for diversity at the core of exhibition making that inspired the *Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit*.

Diana Franssen wanted to have a clear distinction of what came from the Gate Foundation in the system when the material was officially transferred in 2006. Both institutions had been collecting with their own 'conscious restrictions' that created blind spots. Considering the difference in appreciation of artworks coming out of a distinct location, the Gate archive and library included many South American artists, but did not include many other artists of colour, which were already in the Van Abbe library. In one blow the acquired archive provided a more nuanced image on the discussion on globalisation in the library and the lists of artists (the so-called artists-archive). However, Franssen has a critical note about

[505] Ibid.
[506] Ibid.
[507] Ibid.
[508] Tessa Free, 'Een seminar over The Gate Foundation' [A seminar about The Gate Foundation], *Becomingdutch.nl*, 22-11-2007, http://becomingdutch.nl/blog/?p=149, acc. 09-08-2018.

that, saying that it does not go back far enough (1989) and therefore misses a base in the existence history [*bestaansgeschiedenis*] of the museum.[509]

As a result of these considerations, this archive was incorporated into the collection but got its own catalogue numbers as well as library numbers from the Van Abbemuseum during *Be(com)ing Dutch*. With this double cataloguing, the Van Abbe technically offered scientific expertise in order to keep the archive in existence. The opening of the catalogue was supposed to be done by Sarat Maharaj who was on the board of the Gate Foundation. Annie Fletcher remembers that he decided not to come, 'because he was really annoyed with the idea that it had been integrated into a white museum'.[510] She speaks of it as 'a very raw moment. And so it was one of the first controversies around *Be(com)ing Dutch*.'[511] This incident also exemplifies the difference in understanding the idea of diversity between British discourses that had already established *Iniva* (1994) and the Dutch discourse of diversity that was undecided about the line between ethnography and art.

In 2017 the Gate Foundation archive is still not fully catalogued. Effectively, the Gate Foundation archive was catalogued into *Be(com)ing Dutch*. This opens up a set of thoughts around cataloguing as a method of incorporation into cultural citizenship that can be connected to the questions of hybrid subjectivities in chapter one. There one can exist as a cultural subject in several cultural and ethnic spheres simultaneously. Can the cataloguing method then be applied to cultural subjects in the process of becoming without reproducing the logic of modernity and the project of colonial categorising? In the context of the library, the answer would be that the Gate collection did have influence on what was being collected in the library, i.e. in the logic of collecting the other, but did not have a direct influence in the museum or its consequent acquisition policies, i.e. the logic of the axis of modernity in art.

3.2 Be(com)ing Dutch

In April 2006 the Van Abbemuseum handed in their proposal for the *Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit* (Development Prize for Cultural Diversity) with the title *Be(com)ing Dutch in the Age of Global Democracy*.[512] The application handled issues surrounding the core questions, structure and timeframe, curatorial projects, residencies, the Eindhoven Caucus and the *Be(com)ing Dutch* exhibition.[513] The project proposal situated the museum at a point where '[a]s the question of cultural identity becomes ever more of an issue in political and cultural debate [… it] seeks to renew the mission

[509] Diana Franssen, Interview with Diana Franssen at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 08-12-2016.
[510] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[511] Ibid.
[512] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19 April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 1.
[513] Ibid., 2.

of the museum in the light of the huge political and economic changes since 1989'.[514] Through an extended programme that promotes the vision of artists and their production, involvement of 'potential viewers', discussion and workshops, the proposal was 'intended to have a profound impact' on how the museum conducted 'itself, its relationship to audiences and its site, as well as its international vision'.[515] The Van Abbemuseum proposed making a consistent and prolonged attempt to build a diverse, geographically concentrated public that was engaged as producers, speakers, viewers and networkers.[516] The main question that was put forward was that of national identity and whether nationality was imposed by birth or was something that we can become.[517]

The application stated that at that time these issues needed investigation because 'our collective response is still up for grabs'.[518] The concept of the long-term project and commitment was 'to move the agenda of multiculturalism on from notions of toleration and difference towards building a shared but agonistic democracy on the cultural level through the use of one of the few remaining public sphere institutions left to us – the museum'.[519] Multiculturalism in the Dutch context should be understood as integration while maintaining (the) own culture. This fits in the culture of pillarization (ca. 1800 Abraham Kuyper – 1960s) where groups are separated on the vertical basis of ideological (religious) and the horizontal basis of socio-economics, which leads to the famous Dutch tolerance and what can be understood as the Dutch class system. The Van Abbemuseum method was to 'connect the more abstract discourse to specific local phenomena … [by] including the history of Dutch colonialism … [as well as the presence of people with a migration background from other regions and] … the indigenous Dutch communities… '.[520] Two years later, 'Esche claimed that discursive practices would always require a kind of non-metaphysical "leap-of-faith" – a secular belief that they will change our imaginations – and subsequently the way we look at the world and interact with other people. Furthermore, this leap of faith must be taken by artists, curators and public alike.'[521]

The Van Abbemuseum identified six core questions. Considering the scope of this research there are three I would like to highlight. The first is 'How can the policy of cultural multiculturalism be redefined as one that addresses the singularity of the public – the fact that two Turks may have less in common with each other than any other randomly chosen Eindhovenaar [person from Eindhoven] with any other random chosen inhabitant of the city?'[522] The second multi-question is 'What is the role of and

[514] Ibid.,. 3.
[515] Ibid.
[516] Ibid.
[517] Ibid.
[518] Ibid.
[519] Ibid., 3-4.
[520] Ibid., 4.
[521] John Byrne, 'Be(com)ing Dutch: From autonomy to Caucus & back again, International contexts', *The Visual Artists' News Sheet*, (Dublin: VAI, September/October 2008), p. 24.
[522] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 5.

expectations on artists in a global discussion? How is the intimate encounter of a viewer and an artwork sustained and given authority? Does art speak across boundaries of space and national culture? How is it effected or made possible by historic colonial relationships or a complete sense of otherness?'[523] The third question is 'How can artworks and / or exhibitions function as sites of discourse, education and the expression of alternative models of social change?'[524] The museum acknowledged that in the *Be(com)ing Dutch* project proposal these questions could only be answered provisionally but they would 'continue to inform the Van Abbemuseum research' in the future.[525]

The project had three phases planned between May 2006 and September 2008.[526] First, they planned research and a series of collaborations, *Plug-Ins*, residencies and commissions (May 2006 – March 2007). Second, the Eindhoven Caucus (January 2008 – April 2008). Third, the exhibition, including a reader (May 2008) and the book *Becoming Dutch in the Age of Global Democracy* (September 2008, not yet materialised).[527]

According to the proposal, the museum would use the caucus as a tool to navigate through the years 2009–11 after the project was finished. At the time of writing, they were putting all their resources, including 'the collection, library and the knowledge of the workers', at the service of the project.[528] The team proposed individuals in the museum as well as partners[529] from BAK (Maria Hlavajova), InterArts (Soheila Najand), Gate Foundation (Sebastian Lopez) and Goldsmiths College to serve in advisory roles and take up the proposed themes in parallel.[530] Individuals such as philosopher Gayatri Spivak and conservator Tirdad Zolghadr, among others, were on the wish list to be invited as advisors. In the Van Abbemuseum staff structure and its relation to policies of cultural diversity, a curator from Seoul, another from Warsaw, another from Almaty (Kazakhstan) and another from Istanbul were invited to come and do research and curate.[531] The Van Abbemuseum aimed to continue the tradition of radicalism and renewal that is part of Dutch museum history.[532] Between the arrival of Charles Esche and Annie Fletcher, this proposal and its eventual execution, the museum shifted from a collections- and object-based approach to one in which discourse and programming took a central place.

[523] Ibid.
[524] Ibid.
[525] Ibid.
[526] Ibid., 6-7
[527] Ibid.
[528] Ibid., 8.
[529] Full list of eventual Partners: http://becomingdutch.com/introduction/, acc. 10-08-2018.
[530] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 9.
[531] Ibid., 8.
[532] Vossen M., Bijlage 2, Aanvraag Stichting Doen – Ref. 07uit16754,, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 12-07-2007, 2007.

On Friday 26 January 2007, during the opening of the three-day *Gatherings*, Gitta Luiten (director, Mondriaan Fund 2001–11) explained the rationale behind supporting *Be(com)ing Dutch*. Each year € 26 million is spent on cultural projects in the Netherlands and outside and 'the subject of cultural diversity was pretty much absent from the debate in the modern art world'.[533] Large institutions did not propose this subject and the Mondriaan Fund wanted to make it visible on a larger scale and spend money on one big project.[534] Spending this amount was useful to get the attention of large institutions. Luiten notes that the ones that shared their critique 'said it was too much money for one project, but these same museums don't have any problem asking us for € 2 million to buy a Rembrandt'.[535] According to her, this critique did not take into account that the money spent on this project was a small part of the budget. She made a small disclaimer saying that, even though Mondriaan is happy with how it turned out, one should ask again in two or three years' time.[536] Importantly, Gita Luiten spoke about the criticism by the jury of the Van Abbe project and other proposals. This criticism included the observation that the advisory boards needed rethinking because there were better intellectuals available and more writers were needed. Those 'chosen are not at the forefront of the international discourse'.[537] She pointed out that 'This is important since there are highly sensitive geo-political and cultural issues' and a museum might not understand what implications their choices might have.[538] Luiten notes that there is 'Too little commitment to the participation of Dutch minorities. You should bring intellectuals from the communities you want to involve.' [539] In her general remarks she goes on to say that the institutions have not 'been inspired by the top intellectuals of especially Dutch emigrate countries. Because of this it's difficult to address issues that affect Dutch minorities. The means of expression are Western, the concerns Eastern and the aesthetics are a mix of both.'[540] Gitta Luiten does not stop there.

> The lack of diversity in main stream institutions is the result of institutionalized mechanisms of exclusion specific history in addition to intellectual and ideological orientation of the institution in question. It's therefore critical to conduct a rigorous self-examination to understand the lack of diversity in the own backyard before embarking in diversifying programs or conducting experiments on how to enhance cultural diversity. Examine the composition of the administrative curatorial staff and board and its ethnic or gender background. Examine the nature of the collection and whether it's reflective of the surrounding communities or the nation or the global art scene.

[533] Gitta Luiten, Gathering 26-01-2007, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch: The Gatherings, Algemeen, 2007.
[534] Ibid.
[535] Ibid.
[536] Ibid.
[537] Ibid.
[538] Ibid.
[539] Ibid.
[540] Ibid.

> Examine the ethnic or gender composition of the public. Examine the museums acquisition policy and whether it allows for serious revision in order to reflect diversity or … the art and artistic orientation of its direct communities, the nation at large or the global art scene. I would say you still have things to do.[541] [SIC]

Luiten made it clear that the danger of large institutions engaging in cultural diversity was that the museum directors thought the prize to be a tool to get more allochthonous people in the museum. In her own words, 'The prize is not a tool for that, the interest in public should be there anyway.'[542] This explanation is redefined and redirected in a review in the BKK journal as 'According to her [Gitta Luiten] it is not about getting allochthonous involved.'[543] This twist puts her talk in a different perspective and reiterates the understanding of work by 'allochthonous' artists being located between craft and art. At the same time, this redirecting of Gita Luiten's focus topples the Van Abbemuseum's intention to, as the proposal states, 'connect the more abstract discourse to specific local phenomena … [by] including the history of Dutch colonialism … [as well as the presence of people with a migration background from other regions and] … the indigenous Dutch communities'.[544]

When the Mondriaan Foundation and Fund BKVB set forth the prize, Charles Esche and Annie Fletcher already knew they wanted to do a caucus in Eindhoven and call it *Be(com)ing Dutch.*[545]. As noted earlier, they were responding to their own European question of 'what it was to try and take on this identity of being Dutch as a non-Dutch European'.[546] It was in line with their questionings around globalisation, what the public was and the notion of the civic role of the museum in a museum environment that was 'deeply regressive, deeply conservative'.[547] They understood how they could frame these questions in relation to the diversity question.[548] Fletcher thinks that even though the public understood *Be(com)ing Dutch* as a diversity question, following the murder of Pim Fortuyn (2002) and the 'first expressions of national essentialism', 'diversity was part of what was on offer with globalisation if we understand it in that way'. She argues that, back then, 'globalisation was about the opening up of other experiences about the insistence on a lack of nationalist essentialism'. [549] What was evident from both original archival material and interviews is that in the *Be(com)ing Dutch* programme, diversity was understood in the

[541] Ibid.
[542] Ibid.
[543] Hans-Joachim Schröter, 'Being Dutch?', BKK Krant, nr. 279 (Amsterdam: Beroepsvereniging van Beeldend Kunstenaars, February 2007) p. 1
[544] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 4.
[545] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[546] Charles Esche, Interview with Charles Esche at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 21-11-2016.
[547] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[548] Ibid.
[549] Ibid.

context of understanding European culture. Effectively, it meant 'mainly Europeans from different locations'.[550] In other words, diversity and globalisation were understood in 'super-white terms'.[551] The programme reiterated the Western art axis but expanded it to include artists who racially belonged to the same group but lived in one of the world art areas. Fletcher remembers this being problematic but also being 'told to shut up a lot about it, not aggressively but it was like race is not the issue'.[552]

This European culture modality of diversity was confused with racial/allochthonous diversity. Fletcher believes that deliberate obfuscation might be at play here. According to Esche, it was not that blackness was not talked about 'but it wasn't framed in terms of an Afro-Dutch consciousness. It was much more an Anglo or maybe an Anglo-American consciousness. It was directed at how can this inform what it means to build a society that is multicultural.'[553] He explains that *Be(com)ing Dutch* was constructed against the norms of European modernity and not from an 'imperial or colonial legacy in the Netherlands'.[554] Esche remarks that the programme was looking at art from 'a tradition related to conceptual art, a tradition related to a set of modernist protocols'.[555] In other words, *Be(com)ing Dutch* operated from the space set out in the previous chapter where the Western art idiom decides what is valuable in the Dutch art world. Even though Esche would now describe this as a spatial zone of colonialism, this was – paradoxically – one of the defence strategies against the backlash and the criticism.[556] I argue that what happened here is playing into the rules that dictate the Dutch art for art's sake principle, using the strategy of trying to avoid the quality argument by expanding the axis of modern art through whiteness. In this way, the issues can still be brought to the foreground while maintaining an aura of autonomy. What is also of consequence to this moment is that the terms of diversity changed in the period post-9/11 (2001) and specifically after the killing of Pim Fortuyn in 2002. After this moment the cultural focus on people of African descent and other migrant groups in the Netherlands shifted towards a religious focus, in the guise of a cultural one, on people with a Muslim background. From this moment on, Turkish and specifically Moroccan people and those from the Maghreb were culturally targeted. This shift centralised this 'problem group' in the process of integration and assimilation into the perceived qualities of Dutchness and confirmed the ex-colonial subjects, who are mostly brought up with Christianity, as more integrated. In this relative lee, the Afro subjects found more breathing space that would eventually support the growing Afro awareness, including Quinsy Gario's art project *Zwarte Piet is Racisme* (2011) in which he stated that 'Black Pete' accompanying Sinterklaas is racist, printed the slogan on a t-shirt and

[550] Charles Esche, Interview with Charles Esche at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 21-11-2016.
[551] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[552] Ibid.
[553] Charles Esche, Interview with Charles Esche at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 21-11-2016.
[554] Ibid.
[555] Ibid.
[556] Ibid.

peacefully protested during the arrival of Sinterklaas. Having said that, in the *Be(com)ing Dutch* project, the issue of an Islamic background that was in tandem with the Dutch and European nationalist developments was prioritised particularly in the perceived absence of Dutch Black radical visual arts. In the next chapter on Wakaman, we will see that it was present but ignored by art critics.

In its application for the *Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit*, the project mentions three phases. In the research phase of the project, a description is given of visiting (the predominantly Muslim destinations of) Istanbul, Diyarbakir, Izmir, Cairo, Beirut, Ramalla, Tel Aviv, Jakarta, Yogjakarta, North Africa and Surinam 'to connect to both artists and writers who may be appropriate for one or more elements of the project'.[557] Among other things, the curatorial team hoped to find partners in these places that could be part of the residency programme and contribute to the exhibition.[558] After this there would be a three-day gathering 'of curators, organisers, artists and thinkers to share models, examples and experiences' reflecting on the city, cultural identity, agonistic democracy in the age of globalisation and the museum as a public forum (the caucus).[559]

To launch the *Be(com)ing Dutch* project there was *Academy: Learning from the Museum*. This part was in collaboration with 'the Hamburger Kunstverein, the MukHa Antwerp, The Siemens Art Fund Munich, the Department of Visual Cultures Goldsmiths College and the "Make World Study Group"'.[560] In her writing on the *Academy: Learning from the Museum* (2006) project in the various institutions, Irit Rogoff tellingly remarks: 'The access that will be given is not aimed at producing institutional critique or exposing the true realities of the institution.'[561] As part of their engagement with these parties, the Van Abbemuseum partnered with *Kosmose* and local (Eindhoven) groups to reflect on how to learn from the museum. During this part the Gate Foundation archive was opened. The proposal made note of the Gate Foundation's aim 'to promote modern and contemporary art of migrant non-western artists from Africa, Asia Europe [sic], Latin America to a wider audience'.[562] Woven through this research phase and the continuing programmes were the curatorial research strands – the *Plug-In (2006–09)* and *Living Archive (2005–09)*.

The *Plug-In*, which opened its first display in April 2006, laid 'great emphasis on curatorial collaboration, asking a steadily widening circle of (diverse) artists, guest curators, theorists, activists and the public to

[557] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 10.
[558] Ibid., 14.
[559] Ibid., 10.
[560] Irit Rogoff, Appendix 2, London, March 2006, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19 April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 25.
[561] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 26.
[562] Ibid., 10.

participate […] in revealing new potential in the established collection'.[563] In the words of the proposal, the project aimed at 'replacing a single version of art history with a series of different viewpoints and histories.'[564] The *Plug-In* was used to reimagine the collection in the age of globalisation and to re-energise the museum, asking such questions as: 'What is the relationship between art and the context in which it is shown?'[565]

Plug-In was Van Abbe's curatorial strategy and museological experiment to work with the collection that came out of internal discussions between Charles Esche and the curators about the chronological order in which collections were generally shown. It was the new building, of which Annie Fletcher observes that it 'was built in a very post-modern and slightly ironic way which defied the possibility of just walking and having an embodied narrative happen'[566] that sparked this conversation. The consequence of these conversations and the new building was to let go of the 'canonical reading and forget the narrative'[567] – and to create a new way of showing, which became the *Plug-In*. Effectively, this meant being able to show or comment on a piece (of the collection), in a space, by itself, without fitting it into another narrative going on in the building at that moment. According to Fletcher, *Plug-In* begins from the idea that 'each piece has integrity of its own'.[568] She notes that what came out of the *Plug-Ins* was the question of 'what is the collection as a thing?'[569] Artists that were invited could combine their work with what was already in the collection. These proposals opened up the repository for different readings.[570] Fletcher concludes that, as a plurality of voices that is a re-organising of a power (deficit), the *Plug-In* is a totally political action.[571] She also notes that this 'a little bit self-indulgent'[572] way of working was appreciated by curators and peers, but estranged the local community and gave Van Abbe the reputation of not showing the collection anymore.[573] The audience, spending two hours on average in the museum, wanted to see their Mondriaan in a way they were and are used to seeing things in a museum.[574] She remarks that, because of the strength of the museum codes mentioned earlier, there was a moment when the *Plug-In* was quite alienating for people. It was then that the curator Christiane Berndes realised that people expected 'one story, one structure, one colossus that stands there and makes a statement'.[575] All these small presentations proved to be too difficult for the audience because they had to

[563] Ibid., 12.
[564] Van Abbemuseum, Appendix 3 – Re-Imagining the collection,The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 29.
[565] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 12.
[566] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[567] Ibid.
[568] Ibid.
[569] Ibid.
[570] Ibid.
[571] Ibid.
[572] Ibid.
[573] Ibid.
[574] Ibid.
[575] Christiane Berndes, Interview with Christiane Berndes at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 08-12-2016.

reinvest with every space to understand the story behind the presentation.[576] This forced the curators to rethink their strategy, surrender to the museum public and show the works slightly more chronologically while trying to bring in all of those other more polemical readings.[577] In totality the *Plug-Ins* were part of a larger curatorial dialogue in the museum. The paradigm shift that happened with Charles Esche's appointment provoked a lot of critique from people who had a longer relationship with the museum and in the circles of the museum association. The questions that were being asked were discussed openly with guest curators, among others. According to Christiane Berndes, this shift resulted in an organic process [of redistributing agency] in which the museum did not assume that it was the expert on all matters.[578] She observes that the museum became in effect 'a location for debate, exchange, experiment, radical experiment'.[579] Even though this thesis is not a comparative study on curatorial practices, it is worth mentioning that around the same time *Tate Encounters* (2007–10) was taking place in Great Britain. As my professor at RCA, Victoria Walsh, notes on the Tate Encounters page of the Tate website,

> [Goldsmiths Professor, Les] Back echoes a point also made by [art historian, Donald] Preziosi, that while much knowledge and debate has over the last twenty to thirty years been embraced and engaged with through conferences and public events, including within the museum, such discussions including those of postcolonialism in the 1980s, represented too much of a 'quick win' in the cultural realm, leaving the terms of reference essentially contained at the level of discussion, rather than producing change at the level of practice or institutional policy.[580]

It is important to understand that, at the time of *Be(com)ing Dutch*, the Dutch were also at this 'quick win' point, although with little (widespread) knowledge about the British developments. It was and is an environment with an underdeveloped Dutch internal discourse on the relation between Dutchness and visual culture. On a practical level towards changing institutional policy it was more obvious to go along the axis of gender. One of the ways the *Plug-In* did that was through the relation with Lily van der Stokker who researched the presence of women in the collection. From this collaboration emerged the idea of starting to collect 'some good feminist practices from the 1960s'[581] – of women artists, on a par with the 'big male artists' of the 60s and 70s, that were previously not part of the collection in its function as a cultural repository.[582] This was a way of countering 80 years of collecting that had resulted in what

[576] Ibid.
[577] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[578] Christiane Berndes, Interview with Christiane Berndes at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 08-12-2016.
[579] Ibid.
[580] Victoria Walsh, '[E]dition Five: Reflecting on Reflexivity and the Transdisciplinary', *Tate Encounters Britishness and visual culture*, Tate, http://www2.tate.org.uk/tate-encounters/edition-5/, acc. 10-08-2018.
[581] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[582] Christiane Berndes, Interview with Christiane Berndes at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 08-12-2016.

Berndes calls a 'bleak amount of female artists' in the collection.[583] This example shows how, in the Dutch context, speaking of the issue of gender in the arts is a very accepted and appreciated way of showing criticality. Even though the way it was done encountered its own difficulties, going through this step in the first years and during the be(com)ing process was necessary for the museum to eventually be able to tackle the issue of race in the museum years later.

In the light of the then 'current artistic and museum practices', Van Abbe reflected on its history and policies of the past with *The Living Archive* curatorial project that started in October 2005.[584] Diana Franssen, who has worked with the museum for over 30 years, ran *The Living Archive.* She used the archive (letters, images and artworks) and her memory of the museum's history as a critical 'virus' in the museum.[585] The format was to use the history buried in the archive as a tool to comment on the big statements the museum was making. Franssen did this through small interventions and by showing art, letters, archives and artworks together. This curatorial strategy was perceived as anarchist because up until then the archive had not been treated as part of the exhibition but merely as a point of reference or research. According to Fletcher, Franssen argued that the artwork is just part of the archive and that proved to be a great 'brain cracker' for the rest of the curatorial team. [586] Fletcher notes that setting out from this assertion also meant that much more was possible because this 'holier than thou fetishization' of the artwork and the 'pure relationship' to it did not have to be observed. [587] Christiane Berndes remarks that this approach would eventually have an effect on the questions about the collection and acquisition, such as: 'What is more important, the object or the context of the object? Can the object exist without the context and vice versa? The curatorial team concluded that it had to be seen as a whole. A thought they tried to disseminate.'[588] The collection consequently became part of the archive and individual artworks were given a personal biography connected to the museum. Berndes argues that this is in effect a reversal of the idea of the universal man and the pure experience and that a work can exist outside of context, or better said in the Dutch understanding, a reversal of the idea that the art is just the art.[589]

The *Living Archive* was executed by placing a crucial item such as a file, which was not supposed to be public, alongside the work. This posed a problem because, according to the Archives Act,[590] letters are not to be made public. However, based on Dutch laws on administrative transparency, Diana Franssen

[583] Ibid.
[584] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 13.
[585] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[586] Ibid.
[587] Ibid.
[588] Christiane Berndes, Interview with Christiane Berndes at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 08-12-2016.
[589] Ibid.
[590] Archiefwet 1995, Wetten, Overheid.nl, http://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0007376/2018-07-28#Opschrift , acc. 10-08-2018.

found the law to be on her side with this approach and won the argument.[591] The *Living Archive* also rubbed people up the wrong way by its 'leftist approach'[592] to history. Countering this, during *Be(com)ing Dutch* the project became more specific when the discussion moved towards the idea that the museum is 'value-free' and one can make anything happen there.[593] Of course this was more of a question about the position of the museum and how far Diana Franssen could go in changing things. The archival history proved that not everything is possible because of the law, prevailing local and national politics, or because the position of the museum is dictated by an influential artist.[594] I argue that during the period of *Be(com)ing Dutch* these same restrictions applied.

The *Plug-In* and the *Living Archive* happening at the same time were a bit too much for the everyday visitor. The curatorial team understood that public expectation becomes an economy of time issue vis-à-vis museum expectations, except in the case of repeat visitors who know the possibilities of engagement offered by the museum. As a result, importing into the museum other narratives that need more attention to understand can be seen as demanding a heavy investment on the part of the run-of-the-mill visitor.

The caucus – 'literally […] a gathering together in order to make a decision on something' – phase was the methodology and central principle of *Be(com)ing Dutch*.[595] The supplement to the proposal describes it as a 'visual art project […] which consisted of debates, workshops, artists' projects and other forms of collective participation' taking place between September 2007 and March 2008.[596] The description of this part starts with a quote attributed to Irit Rogoff: 'You can't have a position without a location.'[597] [598] The proposal describes the caucus as 'preoccupied with questioning the extent to which cultural and intellectual life can contribute to society and is based on the premise that significant art proceeds from a discursive and critical culture'.[599]

The *Eindhoven Caucus* was prepared through the activities in phase one and originated in workshops developed by Esche and local partners in South Korea (2002), Indonesia (2003) and in the *Cork Caucus* with Annie Fletcher in Cork (Ireland, 2005).[600] In relation to the list of provisional speakers,

[591] Diana Franssen, Interview with Diana Franssen at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 08-12-2016.
[592] Ibid.
[593] Ibid.
[594] Ibid.
[595] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 15.
[596] Vossen M., Toelichting Caucus Stichting Doen, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 22-08-2007, 2007.
[597] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 15.
[598] I cannot find the original and context of this quote.
[599] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 15.
[600] Ibid.

the application contained the disclaimer that 'Given the team's experience of working on this subject and in the areas of origin of the majority of Dutch immigrants in particular, we hope that it is reasonable to trust us as a group to make the final decisions based on the first five months of information gathering'.[601] This initial proposal suggested 18 speakers, 9 of whom were based in the Netherlands and 6 having an immigrant background. One dealt with the relation between Indonesia and the Netherlands (Delphine Bedel) and there was one of Surinamese descent (Gillion Grantsaan). The other four dealt with Turkey, the Maghreb and the so-called Middle East.[602] Later additional information makes mention of artists and sharing networks, including participants from Turkey, the Basque Country, Thailand, Italy, Croatia, Estonia and Morocco.[603] The supplement to the proposal elucidates that 'The specific aim of the Caucus is to position creative artistic thinkers as political thinkers – to mark the space of art as a space of political imagination and to suggest that art might be useful in suggesting future ways in which we can understand our increasingly diverse societies and to formulate a way in which we can live together better.'[604] In the attached dissemination plan, in addition to the website, press, participants and visitors, the museum proposed to organise 'multicultural museum nights' specifically aimed 'at those people living in the Netherlands but originating from other countries like Turkey and Morocco'.[605] In line with the previously mentioned focus on integrating people with a Muslim background, there is an absence of focus on Dutch Afro-ness in this plan. In the caucus the question about diversity was central. Fletcher states that in order to understand what diverse was, it was important to investigate what sort of subjectivities 'were left in and what's left out'[606] (think sans-papiers here). In our interview she points out that they were thinking about the idea of citizenship as an 'implicit social contract describing our subjectivity in the state'.[607] I would now like to add that this social contract has a legal, social and cultural component and that each aspect constitutes different terms.

The caucus intended to 'use that term [caucus] in its contemporary form as well as bringing together people to enact a political representation to suggest that artists and thinkers might be political citizens and political subjects and that they perhaps could talk effectively and propose solutions for the future'.[608] Fletcher explains that, at that period, it was an anomaly to suggest that an 'artist was supposed to be an engaged citizen who could comment on the politics of the day'.[609] Even though this had been part and parcel of art production in the past, this connection of being an artist and being an engaged citizen

[601] Ibid.
[602] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 16.
[603] Vossen M., Toelichting Caucus Stichting Doen, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 22-08-2007, 2007.
[604] Ibid.
[605] Ibid..
[606] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[607] Ibid.
[608] Ibid.
[609] Ibid.

was now connected to questions of race and identity in the Netherlands. She states that in this programme, the word caucus was used not 'in its pragmatic political sense but in its metaphorical political sense. The other way in which you can use the word caucus is like the verb to caucus, which is to take the measurement of the time to find out what's going on to discuss with each other.'[610] The long-term goal of the caucus was 'To transform the museum as a catalyst for actively rethinking our contemporary society and its agonisms and its diversities.'[611] One of the ways of doing this was the development of *Our Dictionary*[612] (2008). The aim of this (published) dictionary was to put critical pressure on normative terms and definitions.[613]

The expected outcomes at the time of handing in the proposal were the exhibition and the publication. The list of proposed artists is heavy on the unmentioned Islamic relation and does not include any Afro-Dutch artist, even though the proposal put 'the notion of national identity up for question but recognises its importance to many individuals'.[614] For the publication, the philosophers Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Rancière and Gayatri Spivak were considered 'to reflect on Dutch or North-West European cultural politics'.[615] Curator Pablo Lafuente, author and journalist Geert Mak (the only Dutch person) and curator Irit Rogoff were considered to look at 'the value of artistic production in claiming a multidimensional globalism that is not primarily driven by economic surplus'.[616] In effect, the critical analysis of the Dutch situation was put into the hands of non-Dutch thinkers who lacked knowledge of the specific sensibilities at play in the Netherlands. The reliance of Esche and Fletcher on Modernism prevented them from identifying the complexities of Dutch cultural diversity and limited the potential value of what they were doing by their framing through non-Dutch cultural discursive terms. Involuntarily, and as shown earlier in Gita Luiten's comments and not without being noticed, the proposal continues the Dutch habit of looking for answers outside of the group that is being talked about. By doing this it underlines not only the lack of confidence in Dutch museums to speak of diversity on its own terms but also the Dutch deflection of these conversations to a non-Dutch curatorial team.

There were 34 participants in the Eindhoven Caucus of which 19 were referenced as hailing from a Dutch city.[617] These 19 participants comprised 11 white Dutch, 7 white from Italy, Germany, the USA,

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[610] Ibid.
[611] Vossen M., Toelichting Caucus Stichting Doen, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 22-08-2007, 2007.
[612] Charles Esche, Annie Fletcher & Ivet R. Maturano, *Be(com)ing Dutch – Our Dictionary*, Van Abbemuseum, 2008.
[613] Vossen M., Bijlage 2, Aanvraag Stichting Doen – Ref. 07uit16754,, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 12-07-2007, 2007.
[614] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 17.
[615] Ibid., 18.
[616] Ibid.
[617] Van Abbemuseum, Annex 2, Persbericht Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven & Stichting InterArt Arnhem, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch: The Caucus, Persberichten, 2007.

Chile, Moldavia and Croatia, and 1 with a Moroccan background.[618] The exhibition had 38 artists of which 22 made a new work. The three guiding themes for the exhibition were 'imaginary past', 'imaginary present' and 'imaginary future'.[619] [620]

The question around what it means to be Dutch was organised in collaboration with InterArt, directed by Soheila Najand. As a person from an Iranian background, Najand wanted to speak to the entire staff, including the guards and people at the cash desk, 'to understand what their stakes in new cultural citizenship might be'.[621] According to the initial proposal, the aim was 'to develop a contemporary grammar of communal thinking and the active production of knowledge about new forms of cultural citizenship [… while providing] the valuable curatorial insight as a partner in accessing a variety of groups not traditionally involved in the museum and generating new methods of debate and artistic production'.[622] From this approach, the project *Creative Citizens*, addressing young people and *Glokalisering [Glocalising] – A New Impulse in Social Aesthetics* 'aspiring to create a new citizenship and reciprocal relationship with each other' in Arnhem and Eindhoven, was to emerge.[623] The proposal states that '*Glokalisering*, is where the relation between the central state, globalisation and local processes can be re-imagined for a new form of [cultural] citizenship […] in art'.[624] The writer Taiye Selasi reiterated that thought of *Glokalisering* in her 2014 talk 'Don't ask me where I am from, ask me where I'm a local'.[625] She says: 'What if we asked, instead of "Where are you from?" – "Where are you a local?" This would tell us so much more about who and how similar we are.'[626] InterArt's research aimed at developing 'a new grammar for mutual communication and shared solidarity in society'.[627] Their aim was to develop theory, as a form of action, parallel to the research, '[r]eflecting on already existing ideas such as democracy, identity shaping, policy and art, interculturality and (post)hybridity'.[628] The online *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes how 'Most users of the term [glocalising] assume a two-level system (global and local), citing phenomena such as hybridization as the result of growing interconnectedness. Local spaces are shaped and local identities are created by globalized contacts as well as by local circumstances. Thus, globalization entails neither the end of geography nor declining heterogeneity.'[629] By suggesting post-hybridity, I have argued elsewhere that InterArt shifts the attention from this cultural

[618] Ibid.
[619] Charles Esche & Annie Fletcher, Welkom bij Be(com)ing Dutch, Exhibition Guide, Van Abbemuseum, may 2008, Van Abbemuseum, 2008.
[620] APPENDIX 2.
[621] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[622] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 11.
[623] Ibid.
[624] Van Abbemuseum, Appendix 3 – Re-Imagining the collection,The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 33.
[625] Taiye Selasi, 'Don't ask me where I am from, ask me where I'm a local', *TEDGlobal*, 2014, https://www.ted.com/talks/taiye_selasi_don_t_ask_where_i_m_from_ask_where_i_m_a_local#t-6792 , acc. 20-09-2017.
[626] Ibid.
[627] Van Abbemuseum, Appendix 3 – Re-Imagining the collection,The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 33.
[628] Ibid., 34.
[629] Joachim Blatter, 'Glocalization', *Enceclopædia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/topic/glocalization, acc. 11-08-2018.

identity thinking in the arts to 'understanding both the artist and the context as inherently multi-layered contemporary and beyond the inevitable post-colonial discourse on hybridity into a space where they are evident to themselves'.[630]

Apart from Soheila Najand, the list of 23 proposed artists did not have any visually discernible person of colour.[631] This leg of the programme was part of the *Plug-In* series and was supposed to take place throughout the city where appropriate.[632] The internal seminars, the *Gatherings*, towards the exhibition were intended as self-reflective moments. In the first one, three curators were invited to speak about diversity. The Van Abbemuseum also invited Professor at the School of Culture and Communication at the University of Melbourne Nikos Papastergiadis to speak about nationalism and its refusal to die. As Annie Fletcher remarks in our conversation, this was done specifically because 'one of the things that people kept telling us at that moment was why are you talking about nationalism? Why are you talking about becoming Dutch?'[633] She points out that it was understood (also internationally) that the discourse was beyond that point and the idea of the nation state was considered 'a joke'.[634] However, as a key national Dutch museum with a history of promoting Dutch artists in the context of European and American Modernism, one is governed on the basis of these ideas. Several other meetings and talks were organised by the directors of Dutch institutions with (the non-native directors of) Witte de With (Nicolaus Schafhausen) and BAK (Maria Hlavajova), considering the relation between subjecthood, culture and nationalism. With these directors / curators, German, Slovakian, British and Irish, who were running major cultural spaces in the Netherlands at that moment, there was international (curatorial) diversity.

Esche was looking at 'how to educate the museum itself […] bending it into a different shape'.[635] He says that this was done by bringing in 'people who could talk from different positions' in the seminars.[636] These people were mostly from European practices and it included looking at Nordic colonialism, British postcolonial theories and Central and Eastern Europe. In an effort to think through the Dutch discourse, the project looked at other European models and discourses rather than internally reformulating it with what was present. The idea was to have these people talk about their practices and in that way introduce different forms of exhibition, making a way from solo exhibitions by confirmed artists into a more political dimension. This convergence moved the conversation from a local to an international perspective that would perpetuate the lack of development of a Dutch discourse on 'blackness'.

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[630] Charl Landvreugd, 'Notes on a Dictionary – a polemic approach', *Deviant Practice Research Programme 2016-2017* (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 2018) pp. 210-223 (p. 219).
[631] Van Abbemuseum, Appendix 3 – Re-Imagining the collection,The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, pp. 34-35.
[632] Ibid., 32.
[633] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[634] Ibid.
[635] Charles Esche, Interview with Charles Esche at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 21-11-2016.
[636] Ibid.

3.2.1 Reception Be(com)ing Dutch

For the entire project the Van Abbemuseum found a media partner in the magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer* that produced a free appendix in their May 2008 issue.[637] The supplement included an interview with Charles Esche and Annie Fletcher in which the interviewer mentioned the strict demands of the Mondriaan Foundation that the museum submit to rigorous self-analysis to see if its staff, board of directors and the collection were in accordance with 'diversity' today. Following this came the question: 'Does Be(com)ing Dutch become a sample of politically correct thinking because of this?'[638] Esche countered this by saying that he is not Dutch and does not understand this critique on political correctness as it fundamentally means being self-aware about the power dynamics that are at play so you do not walk around with blinkers and then claim not to know the effect you have on the world.[639] The appendix also contained an essay on photography that examined the 'Dutch eyes' of famous Dutch photographers in the exhibition, with the telling title *Looking outwards – The world as décor* (De blik naar buiten – De wereld als décor).[640] Next to that was an essay on the 'mysterious influence' on national identity through the eyes of non-Dutch-born artists living in the Netherlands. Here, the artists Mounira Al Solh (Lebanon), Tintin Wulia (Indonesia) and the duo Libia Pérez de Siles de Castro (Spain) and Olafur Arni Olafsson (Iceland) were asked the questions: 'Is there, in your experience or in your work, something that has a connection with "national identity" and Is there something of which you can comfortably say that it is part of a "national idea"?'[641] The supplement included one article on the imagination of Dutch artist duo BikVanderPol and an article about art being able to create a shared identity.[642]

The November 2007 Van Abbemuseum press release on the first weekend of the caucus spoke of 'thought provoking questions and mark[ing] the successful and energetic beginning of a four week long debate on cultural difference and the role of art by world renowned speakers in Eindhoven'.[643] As highlights of this first weekend are mentioned Professor Louk Hagendoorn's comment that 'If anyone offends them [the Dutch] or their country, the Dutch are quick to defend it. They do care but don't want to

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[637] Be(com)ing Dutch – Identiteit en nationaliteit in het Van Abbemuseum, ed. By Koen Kleijn, *De Groene Amsterdammer extra*, (Amsterdam: NV Weekblad De Groene Amsterdammer, May 2008).
[638] Koen Kleijn and Stefan Kuiper, '"Musea lopen verschrikkelijk achter" – Interview met Charles Esch en Annie Fletcher' [Museums are terribly behind – Interview with Charles Esche and Annie Fletcher], *Be(com)ing Dutch – Identiteit en nationaliteit in het Van Abbemuseum* [Be(com)ing Dutch – Identity and nationality in the Van Abbemuseum] , ed. By Koen Kleijn, *De Groene Amsterdammer extra*, (Amsterdam: NV Weekblad De Groene Amsterdammer, mei 2008) pp. 4-5 (p.4).
[639] Ibid., 45.
[640] Gustaaf Peek, 'De blik naar buiten – De wereld als décor' [The outward glance – The world as décor], *Be(com)ing Dutch – Identiteit en nationaliteit in het Van Abbemuseum* [Be(com)ing Dutch – Identity and nationality in the Van Abbemuseum, ed. by Koen Kleijn, *De Groene Amsterdammer extra*, (Amsterdam: NV Weekblad De Groene Amsterdammer, May 2008) pp. 6–7.
[641] Koen Kleijn, 'Geheimzinnige invloed – Nationale identiteit' [Mysterious influence – National identity] , *Be(com)ing Dutch – Identiteit en nationaliteit in het Van Abbemuseum* [Be(com)ing Dutch – Identity and nationality in the Van Abbemuseum] , ed. By Koen Kleijn, *De Groene Amsterdammer extra*, (Amsterdam: NV Weekblad De Groene Amsterdammer, mei 2008) pp. 8-9.
[642] Bert Mebius, 'Iets vreemds, iets moois' [Something strange, something beautiful], *Be(com)ing Dutch – Identiteit en nationaliteit in het Van Abbemuseum* [Be(com)ing Dutch – Identity and nationality in the Van Abbemuseum], ed. by Koen Kleijn, *De Groene Amsterdammer extra*, (Amsterdam: NV Weekblad De Groene Amsterdammer, May 2008), pp. 10–11.
[643] Van Abbemuseum, Press release November 2007, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch: The Caucus, Persberichten, 2007.

show it […] the collective urge to conform is greater than people believe. This is one of the explanations of why there was such a dramatic swing of notions of tolerance and multiculturalism in the Netherlands to a fear of the other and worry that Holland is full.'[644] The press release concludes that 'Be(com)ing Dutch applies to migrants and autochthonous Dutch equally.'[645]

The local *Eindhoven Dagblad* reported on the three-day symposium with 'a great many artists, curators, policymakers and people from the well-being sector' and asked whether the *Be(com)ing Dutch Gatherings* were not trying to reinvent the wheel after the *Actieprogramma Cultuurbereik* (Action Programme Cultural Range) (1999–2003) plan of former state secretary Rick van der Ploeg.[646] In the *Actieprogramma Cultuurbereik*, the state, provinces and municipalities came together in an effort to counteract obsolescence and promote 'colour' [*verkleuring* (changing colour)].[647] The author comments that 'even though this plan is on a different playing field', Rotterdam has already been working with culture scouts who instigate projects with allochtonous and autochthonous residents with beautiful results for seven years: 'A trip to Rotterdam can clarify a lot.' [648] The writer also observes that a remarkable question during the event was whether 'that famed *inburgeringscursus* (civic integration course)' also applies to the 'five hundred foreign technicians who work on the High-Tech Campus? [in Eindhoven]'.[649] This question fits into the understanding of being the winner of the Mondriaan Foundation contest of which the intention was distorted and became known as being the winner of the '*allochtonenprijs*' (allochtonous prize).[650] The reviewer remarks that the invited artists will immerse themselves in 'strange cultures' in preparation for the 2008 exhibition and that 'The expectation is that this art will automatically draw people from other groups than the current white retailer [*blanke middenstander* – middle-class person with a retail background].'[651] The leading Dutch newspaper *NRC* asked whether one should make place in a museum for work that does not meet a particular aesthetic or production standard. [652] This is a reframing of the quality argument but now applied to the theme of the works rather than the maker. (Also see contemporary Aboriginal political art as discussed in the previous chapter.) Taking into account the curatorial developments with *Plug-In* and the *Living Archive*, Esche and Fletcher respond in the same

[644] Ibid.
[645] Van Abbemuseum, Persbericht Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven & Stichting InterArt Arnhem, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch: The Caucus, Persberichten, 2007.
[646] Rob Schoonen R., 'Cultuur zoekt een weg in veelkleurige wereld' [Culture finds a way in a multicoloured world], *Eindhovens Dagblad*: Cultuur (Apeldoor: De Persgroep, Maandag 27 januari 2007) p. 9.
[647] Frank Huysmans, Olivier van der Vet & Koen van Eijck, *Het actieplan Cultuurbereik en Cultuurdeelname 1999-2003 – Een empirische evaluatie op landelijk niveau* [The action plan cultural range and cultural participation 1999-2003] (den Haag: Sociaal Cultureel Planbureau, 19 juni 2009) https://www.scp.nl/Publicaties/Alle_publicaties/Publicaties_2005/Het_Actieplan_Cultuurbereik_en_Cultuurdeelname_1999_2003 acc. 11-08-2018.
[648] Rob Schoonen R., 'Cultuur zoekt een weg in veelkleurige wereld' [Culture finds a way in a multicoloured world], *Eindhovens Dagblad*: Cultuur (Apeldoor: De Persgroep, Maandag 27 januari 2007) p. 9.
[649] Ibid.
[650] Dirk Limburg, 'Openbaar kunstonderzoek – Van Abbemuseum start met project 'Be(com)ing Dutch' [Public research – Van Abbemuseum starts with project 'Be(com)ing Dutch], *NRC*, 9 februari 2007, https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2007/02/09/openbaar-kunstonderzoek-11273490-a1212268 , acc. 13-09-2017.
[651] Ibid.
[652] Ibid.

article that the museum is a place where one 'should be able to have meetings where everybody walks in and out freely'.[653] What they did not take into account with this position is the invisible threshold of spaces such as the museum that prevent those deemed (lower than) working class to enter. (This is an argument that is nowadays well understood in museology.)

The Van Abbemuseum was broadcasting its position through curators, speakers and sometimes through the artists involved.[654] One of the ways this was done is in the *Imagined History* part of the *Be(com)ing Dutch* exhibition. Annie Fletcher specifically looked at artists like Ed van der Elsken (1925–90) and Johan van der Keuken (1938–90) who, as white men, were celebrating their internationalism and cosmopolitanism. In her words, they were doing this 'as very sophisticated and very tolerant and what that erased and how much the myth of that moment in the 80s and 90s up to when everything came crashing down was something that the Dutch traded on'.[655] In the seminal and still today much responded to essay *Het multiculturele drama* (The multicultural drama, 2000), the political scientist and publicist Paul Scheffer describes this crashing down as the 'staying behind of complete generations of allochtonous and the development of an ethnic underclass'.[656] Charles Esche comments on this 'sort of image of this happy hippie community which was somehow multi-ethnic but was entirely dominated by an idea of Dutch tolerance and so its ethnicity was kind of just a decoration. I mean it did not form the hard core of the identity and how did that transform itself through the present?'[657]

Another project that was considering 'blackness' as a subject was Fiona Tan's *Tomorrow* (2005). Art historian Lucy Cotter describes this as 'a video that pans around a circle of young urban Dutch of various ethnic origins. A smaller screen inset offers facial close-ups that reveal a mixture of pride, vulnerability, warmth, alienation and self-consciousness. The deep respect for the portrayed and the identification it promotes challenge reductive views.'[658] I asked Annie about that use of blackness and how artists, resulting in a distorted representation, can instrumentalise it. The question came up as to what 'blackness' is in the Dutch context. To simplify and put everything in one heap, in our conversation, I suggested blackness to be everything non-white. If considered like that, then according to Annie Fletcher, there was quite a lot going on in the process that was dealing with immigrant issues in the Netherlands or, in other words, people of colour as subjects of artists' works.[659] Except for Fiona Tan who, as is shown in chapter two, is granted personal artistic autonomy, there were quite a few works produced about the Netherlands but not by Dutch people of colour. Essentially the Dutch subjects which Paul Scheffer discussed as the ethnic underclass in his essay *Het multiculturele drama* were being spoken about but did

[653] Ibid.
[654] Charles Esche, Interview with Charles Esche at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 21-11-2016.
[655] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[656] Paul Scheffer, 'Het multiculturele drama', *NRC*, 29 januari 2000, http://retro.nrc.nl/W2/Lab/Multicultureel/scheffer.html, acc. 11-08-2018.
[657] Charles Esche, Interview with Charles Esche at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 21-11-2016.
[658] Lucy Cotter, 'Be(com)ing Dutch', *Circa – Contemporary Visual Culture in Ireland* (Dublin, Winter 2008), p. 62.
[659] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.

not represent themselves in the exhibition. This point about who is allowed to speak about what and under which circumstances is fully investigated in the final chapter of this thesis that is anchored in the Van Abbemuseum's 2017 caucus, *Becoming More*.

Another way of considering 'blackness' was the earlier mentioned project *Read the Mask. Tradition is not given* by Petra Bauer and Annette Krauss. They planned on doing a performance in public space on 30 August 2008, dealing with the protest movements of the past 50 years concerning the Dutch phenomenon of Zwarte Piet.[660] The worksheet mentions speaking to the Dutch actor Anne Stam, interested in making a public performance or speech, artist and curator Felix de Rooy, and cultural theorist Mieke Bal. The performance was supposed to take place during the exhibition, on the shopping streets of Eindhoven, mimicking a Sinterklaas parade.[661] The initial core question of this performance was 'What responsibility does an (artist) actor have towards image production?'[662] And it was intended as a springboard to discuss the idea of image production in a more general sense. *Art Monthly* reports that 'The museum was forced to cancel the event due to much public pressure and violent threats. Perhaps this is one of the "imaginary presents" where the debate will now have to begin in public.'[663]

At the opening of the Eindhoven Caucus, Annie Fletcher defined the research questions that led towards the exhibition as follows: 'How does increasing migration relate to the rise of nationalistic feelings, how come that religion is the dominating factor when assessing someone's identity while we have a secular capitalistic system, and how does autonomous art relates to socially applicable art?'[664] This line of questioning does not include the idea of race and is in line with the 'problem' of the then prevailing focus on Islam. In a 2008 interview Fletcher stated that she has 'always been very committed to openly performing research'.[665] And that 'In general, museums do not openly perform research; that is mainly done in universities or conferences […] it would be extraordinarily arrogant to just make a show about such a complex subject.'[666] Reiterating the 2007 November press release, she states that '"[B]ecoming" is not just intended for "minority groups" but for everyone – perhaps especially for those who consider themselves "really" Dutch'.[667]

All the major Dutch newspapers pitched in with their critique. The *Trouw* newspaper journalist Arend Evenhuis asked why we were still and yet again talking about identity 'as though our lives

[660] Van Abbemuseum, Worksheet deelproject – Project: Petra Bauer & Annette Krauss, version 08-05-08, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007.
[661] Ibid.
[662] Ibid.
[663] Paul O'Neill, 'Be(com)ing Dutch', *Art Monthly*, Issue 320 (London: Art Monthly Foundation, October 2008), pp. 22–3 (p. 23).
[664] Anneke Stoffelen, 'Wij kunnen juist wat meer experimenteren' [We can suitably/rightly experiment a bit more], *Volkskrant*: Cultuur & Leven 08-11-2007, https://www.volkskrant.nl/beeldende-kunst/-wij-kunnen-juist-wat-meer-experimenteren~a862442/ acc. 13-09-2017.
[665] Arnisa Zeqo, 'Dare to Imagine – A conversation with Annie Fletcher on the Be(com)ing Dutch project, Simulacrum', Jaargang 16, nr. 2, (Amsterdam: Stichting Simulacrum, March 2008), pp. 7–9 (pp. 7-8).
[666] Ibid., 9.
[667] Ibid.

depended on it'. [668] He claimed that a better title for the exhibition would have been 'Where were we again [*Waar waren we gebleven*]?'[669] The newspaper *De Telegraaf* commented that the 'gutsy'[670] Esche was reverberating from the pulpit. In the newspaper *De Volkskrant* Esche was quoted as saying that 'Discussion is important', but discussion in and of itself is not enough: 'Something is at stake. This is something that is oft forgotten in the Dutch art world.'[671] The newspaper *Het Parool* lifted out the part where Esche said 'I want the museum to be a lively institution, where people talk about contemporary issues.'[672] *De Volkskrant* noted that he wanted to change something and turn the museum into 'an arena for "conflicting democracy" where political issues are put forward that are not addressed anywhere else'.[673] As a critique to all of this, the newspaper pointed out that 'elitist and Western as it is, it is arrogant to think that a museum can make the world a better place […] some modesty [is in place for a museum] concerning the enormous complexity of the social [*sociaal-maatschappelijk*] issues and it would be better if it [the museum] concentrated on what it is established for, art itself, whether or not it [art] is socially engaged'.[674] This is the art for art's sake argument concealing the quality argument.

Critic Rutger Ponzen provided an analysis of the debate culture in which the caucus was situated.[675] He states that 'Where in the 1990s half-lit discussion rooms could hardly be filled with any interest, it has become clear that after years of relative quiet the Dutch art world is not only publishing one volume after another, but also wishes to extensively debate with one another.'[676] 'Because, well, according to the director of the Mondriaan Foundation, there was too little debate. The Netherlands did not have a discourse like abroad or an intellectual tradition before that. And if something like a debate emerged, her opinion was that "art museums don't get involved at all".'[677] He went on to say that the big development funds want the art world to play a more 'societal, multicultural role'.[678] Ponzen noted, 'Did Luiten not say during the awarding of the *Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit* to the Van Abbemuseum in 2006 that "museums must adapt to the fact that the Western world is not white [*blank*] anymore"'?[679] Explaining the situation, he remarks that the directors of the large museums are voluntarily organised in what is called the 'mini-convent' and do not get involved in these debates on a more 'engaged,

[668] Arend Evenhuis, 'Waar waren we ook al weer gebleven' [Where were we again], *Trouw* (Amsterdam: De Persgroep, 31 May 2008), p. 60.
[669] Ibid.
[670] Paola van de Velde, 'Kunstenaars over Nederlandse identiteit' [Artists about Dutch identity], *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam: Telegraaf Media Groep, 23 May 2008), p. 15.
[671] Domeniek Ruyters, 'Harteloos Nederland' [Heartless Netherlands], *De Volkskrant* (Amsterdam: PCM Uitgevers, 29 May 2008), pp. 14–15 (15).
[672] Charles Esche quoted in Kees Keijer, 'Kunst is niet aleen decoratie' [Art is not just decoration], *Parool* (Amsterdam: De Persgroep, 27 May 2008), p.22.
[673] Domeniek Ruyters, 'Harteloos Nederland', *De Volkskrant* (Amsterdam: PCM Uitgevers, 29-05-2008) pp. 14-15 (p. 14).
[674] Ibid., 14-15.
[675] Rutger Ponzen, 'Alles en iedereen in debat' [Everything and everybody in debate], *De Volkskrant:* Achtergrond (Amsterdam: PCM Uitgevers, 15 november 2007) pp. 2-3.
[676] Ibid., 2.
[677] Ibid.
[678] Ibid.
[679] Ibid.

international and multicultural' position.[680] Luiten calls this the non-intervention mentality and desire for consensus. They do not want anyone interfering with their financial or content policy.[681] Or, as described in *Museumtijdschrift*, 'primarily they want to draw many visitors with a budget not worth mentioning, hooking into the polonaise of the international art world',[682] with a post-WWII idea of what *De Telegraaf* called 'art that should be independent. Free from politics or society.'[683] According to *Het Parool*, the contest resulted in much commotion among museum directors because they felt they were being played off against one another in an assignment that could not be fulfilled.[684]

Rutger Ponzen called Gitta Luiten's policy a 'disguised political agenda' and claimed that it was no wonder that the foreign directors of De Appel (Ann Demeester), BAK (Maria Hlavajova), Witte de With (Nicolaus Schafhausen) and the Van Abbemuseum (Charles Esche) were the ones pushing this agenda forward.[685] 'These directors [coming from different knowledge and traditions and from different museum policies] are internationally grounded, socially engaged, are not afraid of academic debate and often possess a messianic missionary drive – exactly the qualities Luiten desperately misses in the Dutch museum directors.'[686] Having said all that, Ponzen concluded that there was a high causal level of consensus involved in all these debates and that they were more a matter of form than a discussion of which the answer was unknown.[687] (also know as the quick win)

In his 2008 essay *De Postkoloniale Puzzel* (The postcolonial puzzle), Wouter Welling states that many panel discussions and exhibitions are struggling with the notion of identity and political correctness and good intentions are always part of it.[688] '[B]ut is there actual acceptance of diversity? Or is it more compulsive assimilation which renders the otherness in others harmless?'[689] He says that critiquing the Van Abbemuseum's showpiece *Be(com)ing Dutch* could be done with the words Eindhoven: social workshop.[690] It is art that argues and questions and with which you cannot disagree.[691] Welling makes an observation that in a sense explains the binary of the quality argument by accusing Esche and Fletcher of being closely connected with statements made by the previous Van Abbemuseum director Jan Debbaut in 1985. He describes how

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[680] Ibid.
[681] Ibid.
[682] Kees Keijer, 'Museum in debat' [Museum in debate], *Museumtijdschrift* (Amsterdam: Museumtijdschrift B.V., juli / augustus 2008) p.27.
[683] Paola van de Velde, 'Kunstenaars over Nederlandse identiteit' [Artists about Dutch identity], *De Telegraaf* (Amsterdam: Telegraaf Media Groep, 23-05-2008) p. 15.
[684] Kees Keijer, 'Kunst is niet aleen decoratie' [Art is not just decoration], *Parool* (Amsterdam: De Persgroep, 27-05-2008) p.22.
[685] Rutger Ponzen, 'Alles en iedereen in debat' [Everything and everybody in debate], *De Volkskrant:* Achtergrond (Amsterdam: PCM Uitgevers, 15 november 2007) pp. 2-3 (p. 3).
[686] Ibid.
[687] Ibid., 2.
[688] Wouter Welling, 'De Postkoloniale puzzel' [The Postcolonial puzzle], *Kunstbeeld*, Jaargang 32, No. 12/1 (Utrecht: Veen Media, december 2008) pp. 58-61.
[689] Ibid., 58.
[690] Ibid., 59.
[691] Ibid., 60.

> During an infamous study day, called 'Modern art in developing countries' [1985] organised by the *Tropenmuseum*, Debbaut postulated explicitly that the art discourse is our art discourse: 'It is a very specific discussion, self-cultivating, rooted in a very specific Western tradition. What is relevant in this discussion is shown in museums. […] There are artists who are aimed at the Western discussion; others are looking inwards, to their own culture. This last [group] needs more information and is better suited in an ethnographic museum.'[692]

In other words, according to Welling, one can only play in 'our cold white temples when you exactly employ our visual language. A normative modernist point of view, complete with traditional dichotomy centre.'[693] Because contemporary art critics lack the knowledge, Welling argued that the pioneering work should be left to the ethnographic museums. Through this strategy, autonomous art with roots in the own culture [reiterating the concept of integration while maintaining (the) own culture and pillarisation] will automatically be part of the mainstream. He concludes that 'then true acknowledgement of cultural diversity will be reached: not an imposed multicultural theme but deriving from the art itself'.[694] Reacting to the 'not overwhelmingly positive' reception of the exhibition, art critic Carina van der Walt states that 'This politically correct rejection of political correctness prevents […] careful interpretation and analysis of the exhibition.'[695] Critic Dolf Welling, presumably agreeing with her, comments that 'Those taking the time for it could experience the whole layout as an assembled, contemporary and interesting art piece.'[696] John Byrne concludes 'as a whole, the show needs to be read in its entirety for its individual messages and engagements to coalesce into possibilities and propositions'.[697]

Recurring in several positive reviews was the 'intensity, impenetrability and heaviness'[698] of the exhibition which needed 'sympathetic consideration and patience of the visitor to fathom the underlying histories which are fundamental for a better understanding of the artworks'.[699] *Trouw* stated that 'Be(com)ing Dutch can hardly be compressed to a knacked tulip in a broken wooden shoe with yonder a flying herring.'[700] Simultaneously, the use of an English title for the event was criticised in the local

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[692] Ibid., 61.
[693] Ibid., 60.
[694] Ibid., 61.
[695] Carina van der Walt, 'Van Abbemuseum Be(com)ing Dutch – hoe doe je dat?' [Van Abbemuseum Be(com)ing Dutch – How do you do that?], *Beelden*, Jaargang 11, No. 43 (Venlo: Uitgeverij Smit van 1876, maart 2008) p. 26.
[696] Dolf Welling, 'Vechtlustig museum maakt drukte in Eindhoven' [Feisty museum makes a fuss in Eindhoven], Pulchri, Jaargang 36, nr. 4 (Groningen: Schilderkundig Genootschap Pulchri Studio) p. 15.
[697] John Byrne, 'Be(com)ing Dutch: From autonomy to Caucus & back again, International contexts', *The Visual Artists' News Sheet*, (Dublin: VAI, September/October 2008) p. 24.
[698] Ilse van Rijn, 'Be(com)ing Dutch', *Metropolis M*, Jaargang 29, No. 4 (Utrecht: Metropolis M, August / September 2008), pp. 85–6 (p. 86).
[699] Ibid.
[700] Arend Evenhuis, 'Waar waren we ook al weer gebleven' [Where were we again], *Trouw* (Amsterdam: De Persgroep, 31-05-2008) p. 60.

newspaper which remarked: 'As if the Dutch language were not adequate to describe the Dutch or Dutchness.'[701] And, before the exhibition, *Be(com)ing Dutch* was located 'on a theoretical high ground in the midst of a tough academic discussion'.[702]

At the same time the question of whether art was supposed to do something, a perspective in which Esche does not stand by himself, reminded Dolf Welling of, in his words, 'a creepy maxim of years ago, namely that art has to be "socially relevant". I think art should only be good. It then automatically becomes of social importance. As soon as it is used for an outside artistic assertion […] the quality is less important than the propagandistic output.'[703] After this, white fragility came into play and he claimed the works to be one-sided, showing (only) the 'malicious parts of our colonialism', which of course he sympathises with.[704] According to *Museumtijdschrift*, a series of Ed van der Elsken's photographic work from the 1950s and 60s opened the exhibition. Without exception, each of these images showed 'dark migrants or visitors', which immediately rejected the idea of an imaginary pure white Netherlands of the 1950s that was put forward by Wilders and Verdonk.[705] *NRC* declared that 'Vital and intuitive working artists such as Erik van Lieshout, Marc Bijl and Rachid Ben Ali are missing in Eindhoven. Confirmation of the old left thinking – allochtonous and refugees are victims of cold bureaucratic Dutch culture – seems to have been the criterion on which artists were invited. That "left" crevice not only makes many propositions uninteresting and predictable, it also hinders actual deeper perception and analysis.'[706] The Christian newspaper *Het Nederlands Dagblad* noted that the exhibition 'promises a lot, but is not really exciting. It is too shrouded, too soft, too difficult, too far removed from the questions that are central. […] There is nothing that knocks the breath from your chest.'[707] Volkskrant concluded that 'Nuance wins from artistic adventure in a stylish presentation which is remarkably determined in its tone […] The chosen artists confirm one another in the currently widespread prevailing communis opinio, which has turned away from the traditional Dutch image as an internationally orientated country which is open to other religions and cultures.'[708]

[701] Mieske van Eck, 'Dutch', *Brabants Dagblad*: Oss e.o. (Oss: De Persgroep, 31 May 2008), p. 19.
[702] Domeniek Ruyters, 'Harteloos Nederland' [Heartless Netherlands], *De Volkskrant* (Amsterdam: PCM Uitgevers, 29-05-2008) pp. 14-15 (p. 15).
[703] Dolf Welling, 'Vechtlustig museum maakt drukte in Eindhoven' [Feisty museum makes a fuss in Eindhoven], Pulchri, Jaargang 36, nr. 4 (Groningen: Schilderkundig Genootschap Pulchri Studio), p. 15.
[704] Ibid.
[705] Kees Keijer, 'Museum in debat' [Museum in debate], *Museumtijdschrift* (Amsterdam: Museumtijdschrift B.V., juli / augustus 2008) p. 27.
[706] Lucette ter Borg, Verkrampt door de Nederlandse identiteit, *NRC* , 31-05-2008, https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2008/05/31/verkrampt-door-de-nederlandse-identiteit-11547744-a822169 acc. 15-09-2017.
[707] Maarten Vermeulen, 'Onbegrijpelijke nationaliteit' [Incomprehensible nationality], *Nederlands Dagblad* (Amersfoort: Nederlands Dagblad B.V., 30-05-2008) p. 6.
[708] Domeniek Ruyters, 'Harteloos Nederland' [Heartless Netherlands], *De Volkskrant* (Amsterdam: PCM Uitgevers, 29-05-2008) pp. 14-15 (p. 15).

In 2008 Esche stated that it would only be known whether the project was a success in retrospect.[709] 'Be(com)ing Dutch had annoyed so many people, he hoped that it might mark a shift, and also provide an example of what art could be; an example which he hopes will be subsequently taken up by people who are interested in art having a real social role – "a discursive role rather than an aesthetic role as such".'[710] The sociolinguist Jan Blommaert's response[711] to that was that the project incorporated 'the implicit discursive order of the adversary [extreme right-wing politics] … [consequently in this way] one can construct a discourse of opposition but not an anti-hegemonic discourse'.[712] He elaborated on this point by stating that 'the concept of integration' as formulated at this time of Geert Wilders et al. 'is based on a problem definition of extreme right' which states that people can be sent back to where they came from.[713] This position found more resonance than reasoning inclusion. He claimed that Van Abbe was reiterating the dominant basic terms 'and power-line of the Wilders and Verdonk discourse, together with several of their *formats* guiding the debate: the website, the caucus, the driven "search" for *Neerlanditude*. The whole *format-repertoire* of late-modern populism.'[714] In other words, letting the people speak their mind on what they think Dutchness is.

3.3 Conclusion

There is a significant number of articles and exhibition archive on *Be(com)ing Dutch*, which I have retrieved at the museum. Together with the interviews, a picture emerges of a museum that was trying to deal with contemporary issues around diversity in art at the beginning of the century. With the appointment of Charles Esche and Annie Fletcher, a new period started that was dealing with Dutch cultural policy towards diversity in the arts. Looking at the environment in which they landed, I argue that it was precisely because they were foreign and from a different knowledge and curatorial tradition that they could explore reorganising the museum towards a more inclusive policy on all levels. In an environment that did not support the idea of art made by artists with a migrant background as native to the Dutch environment, the radical Afro artists would not appear on their radar. Consequently, thinking diversity along the axis of whiteness was unknowingly accepting this blind spot while conforming to the critical backlash. In effect, the art world in which the museum was located accepted European diaspora and gendered arts, but did not view Dutch Afro artists as belonging and / or contributing to the established

[709] John Byrne, 'Be(com)ing Dutch: From autonomy to Caucus & back again, International contexts', *The Visual Artists' News Sheet*, (Dublin: VAI, September/October 2008) p. 24.
[710] Ibid.
[711] Jan Blommaert, 'Op zoek naar Neerlanditude' [Looking for Netherlanditude], *De Witte Raaf*, Jaargang 23, No. 135 (Brussels: De Witte Raaf, September / October 2008), pp. 18–19.
[712] Ibid., 18.
[713] Ibid.
[714] Ibid., 19.

Dutch art world. Translating this back to Dutch museums that are now struggling with the black diversity question, this meant that struggling with the white diversity question was actually quite an easy thing to do. But how do you diversify the arts with other diasporas?

In July 2009, Van Abbemuseum curator (2006–11) Remco de Blaaij and director Charles Esche wrote a retrospective view on the *Be(com)ing Dutch* project.[715] The consequences of the programme were that, through the *Gatherings*, *Creative Citizens* and *Art Beyond the Walls*, for the first time in the museum's history a direct connection was made with 'young people, local politicians and economic leaders'.[716] The programme also resulted in the museum turning into a place where knowledge is produced, an online platform and catalogue, the museum as producer of art through commissions, involvement of artists in the exhibition processes, and gaining a position in reflection on contemporary social developments resulting in *Play Van Abbe*.[717] Through the collaboration with Soheila Nahand (InterArt), they were reaching a youthful audience of between 15 and 18 years old, from different school types and cultural backgrounds.[718] The piece offers more insight into the diversity reach of the project by recollecting conversations with project leader of *Kosmose* Warner Werkhoven on what diversity means in our society and whether it should be employed as an instrument.[719] The project also brought together people of different (50) national backgrounds in the gatherings and the caucus. The authors stated that 'cultural, geographical or societal borders' are not the only binds of diversity.[720] They looked for a broader view of the diversity construct and consequently 'did not only reflect on the construction of the "other" but included everyone in the development of the programme'.[721] Public interest in the programme varied from judgement 'of the removal of the aesthetic position, to complaints about its political prejudice to the appreciation of the integration of a socially relevant debate with the possibilities of visual arts'.[722] *Frieze* magazine named *Be(com)ing Dutch* the best exhibition of 2008.[723]

In the Mondriaan Foundation policy paper 2009–12 that followed this period, the intention was expressed to have an annual prize to alternate between a heritage institution and an art institution. According to the

[715] Charles Esche & Remco de Blaaij, Terugblik Be(com)ing Dutch, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, july 2009.
[716] Ibid., 1.
[717] Ibid., 2.
[718] Ibid., 3.
[719] Ibid., 4.
[720] Ibid., 5.
[721] Ibid.
[722] Ibid., 6.
[723] Ibid.

jury report, 'it is certainly challenging to all Dutch museums in the area of modern and contemporary art. It is a call for them to self-reflect and think hard about their institutions vis-à-vis cultural diversity.'[724]

This chapter has shown how, with the *Be(com)ing Dutch* project, the supposed Western axis of art autonomy of Dutch museums was called into question. Eventually, this question of autonomy resulted in *The Autonomy Project* (2010–11) that set out to understand what that word actually meant and whether curators and the public understood how systemic it was in Dutch art education. Fletcher states that the project went down the route of what autonomy meant in relation to being politically engaged. It was autonomy versus political engagement and the question of what that meant.[725] The museum itself, heavily dependent on the market to assign value to artworks, was located in the Dutch art world and its perceived neutrality was called into question and its bias exposed.

In 2016, when I held the interviews for this doctoral research, ideas about the role of the museum had not changed. According to Fletcher, this was because museums are 'money-making machines' – meaning that capitalism 'is brilliant at consuming political subjects and ideas and converting them, monetising them and consuming them, and certainly not changing anything'.[726] She notes that the art world and museums did not change because we have never experienced anything since the marketisation of art at the level and the scale at which it came in. She points out that 'The art market is extraordinary and dramatic and it is completely invested in the discrete object that has no political implications. It is completely invested in the universe of white men.'[727]

By 2017 the Van Abbemuseum's position is that the (ethnically Euro axis) 'art market' is no longer leading in their decisions. With this development they challenged the so-called 'autonomous position' of art museums in the Netherlands. What this means is that over the years the museum developed into an institution that, with state funding, managed to keep a foothold in the 'high art' world, while becoming part of different networks which are also frequented by the (Afro) artists whom the cultural policy aimed to support. The consequence of the knowledge that was acquired during the Van Abbemuseum's curatorial and discursive programme *Be(com)ing Dutch* is that over the years the curatorial team managed to attract Afro artists' engagement and (diverse) audience participation, eventually resulting in the programme *Becoming More* (2017), which is discussed in the final chapter of this thesis.

[724] Wouter Welling, 'De Postkoloniale puzzel' [The Postcolonial puzzle], *Kunstbeeld*, Jaargang 32, No. 12/1 (Utrecht: Veen Media, december 2008) pp. 58-61 (p. 60).
[725] Annie Fletcher, Interview with Annie Fletcher at Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 28-10-2016.
[726] Ibid.
[727] Ibid.

Charles Esche's approach of questioning a local and / or European belonging is very similar to the questions I examine in the first chapter. Effectively, as a European citizen, Esche was already exploring issues of belonging on the basis of affinity through the lens of his white Europeanness. Through conversations with him and other white artists with a migrant background, I came to realise that the questions and the apparent paradox of performing otherness while claiming cultural nativeness are the same. As I always and already knew that Afro-ness was a way into a much larger problem, this opened up the problem of speaking Blackness in the Dutch context and speaks of an aesthetic of belonging coming out of a migrant experience. In the case of the Van Abbemuseum, this meant that, with the *Be(com)ing Dutch* programme, this experience was being explored in an institutional framework with a theoretical approach. The next chapter will show how, in tandem with the *Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit*, through the *Intendant Culturele Diversiteit* this migrant experience was explored from the point of view of the artists whose networks did not provide a connection to these institutional discourses.

4. Inhabiting: Alakondre Wakaman (he who moves in all spaces).

> Only a curatorial practice that highlights aesthetic articulations rather than ethnic origin or cultural background might resist creating exclusive exhibition spaces and transport artistic positions in a way that reflects our contemporary realities.[728]

Introduction

In tandem with the *Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit*, the Mondriaan Fund and Fonds BKVB also initiated the *Intendant Culturele Diversiteit* (2006–09), (effectuating affirmative action for minorities in the arts). Through this programme, the *Wakaman* project (2005–08) became a way for Dutch Afro artists to explore their position in the Dutch artistic landscape in the context of activated cultural policy. This chapter demonstrates the actual presence of what was perceived as 'the absence of Dutch Black radical visual arts' by Charles Esche in the previous chapter while looking for local connections during the Van Abbemuseum's *Be(com)ing Dutch* project.

From explicitly dealing with issues that come out of the Afro-Dutch experience to works that deny racial, ethnic and cultural background, artists employ different strategies by either embracing this predicament or denying it at all costs and everything in between. The work that comes out of these strategies covers all the shades in the spectrum. Can these Dutch artists claim the title of Artist[729] in a cultural environment that is seen as one of natives and immigrants? While the previous chapter demonstrated the perspective of the Dutch national museum in relation to questions of diversity through European models and frameworks of interpretation and discourse, this chapter examines the perspective of the Dutch Afro artist as arguably related to the American artistic post-black movement as is discussed in the *Freestyle*[730] catalogue by Thelma Golden. The difference is that where post-black is invested in going beyond being labelled as black while inhabiting blackness, this Dutch subjectivity is invested in possibly becoming and refusing to be 'black' simultaneously. This happens, in an effort to do away with the space that is set out for Afro subjects inhabiting this apparent paradox of refusal and becoming, in an effort to escape history. It is an idea that takes the freedom to explore or develop a gesture / artistic freedom that takes flight and creates a culture with a different horizon and future. For this to happen, new spaces in which to engage are necessary.

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[728] Nana Adusei-Poku, 'The multiplicity of multiplicities – Post-Black Art and its intricacies', *Darkmatter*, 29 November 2012, http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2012/11/29/the-multiplicity-of-multiplicities-%E2%80%93-post-black-art-and-its-intricacies/#foot_1 , acc. August 2014 paraphrasing Darby English in How to see a work of art in total darkness (2010).
[729] Capital A in Artist is used here to refer to not having the burden of representation.
[730] Thelma Golden, *Freestyle*, (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 2001) p. 14.

4.1 Wakaman context

Knowing about this paradox produces an understanding of how art production as a language locates the Afro-Dutch artist in the Dutch art world. Speaking this language means that artists who never express their Afro heritage or are recognisable as such in their work do often find recognition and representation with a 'good' gallery. The Dutch artist of Surinamese descent Stanley Brouwn (1935–2017) is an early example of an artist who defied the idea of ethnicity by being absorbed into the prevailing art scene of the moment. As an autodidact he unfailingly fitted into the conceptual arts of the Netherlands from the 1960s onwards before the term allochthonous was invented to describe non-native Dutch people. He exhibited in *Documenta V* (1972), *VI* (1977) and *VII* (1982) and won several Dutch art prizes. Unlike the artists coming out of the *Srefidensie* gallery that was established in 1971 in Amsterdam, he did become successful with the work he made. In his work, the push and pull between making subjectivity subordinate, ethnicity unimportant and fitting into the themes of the art scene of the time resulted in appreciation of the work on its own merits.

His work fitted into the space of *Blankness* which, responding to the *Be(com)ing Dutch Dictionary*,[731] I formulated in *Notes on a Dictionary: a polemic approach*[732] (2018). It is derived from the word 'blank' that comes up in many of the texts and is often casually used by the Dutch-speaking interviewees. Akin to Richard Dyer's 'white', 'blank' constructs a (artistic) subjectivity 'of such a "natural" transparency that it becomes hardly visible'.[733] Understanding how 'blank' and 'white' interplay underscores the potential of local concepts because 'white', and not 'blank', is used as a racial denominator in Dutch English-language catalogues and reviews. However, these two words do not mean the same thing nor do they have the same emotional word value. In Dutch dictionaries *blank(e)* is defined as 'bright white, unsoiled, uncoloured: the blank race, submerged under water'. For Dutch white people it is the 'preferred denomination, one that is continued in the media. *Blank* as unsoiled and objective is a metaphor for *Western* that is a constant in art critique in the Netherlands. NRC's chief editor in 2005:[734]

> According to our style guide, when using 'blank' or 'white' we stick to general social use. We do not write about white people but about blanks. […] The style guide associates

[731] Charles Esche, Annie Fletcher & Ivet R. Maturano, *Be(com)ing Dutch – Our Dictionary*, Van Abbemuseum, 2008.
[732] Charl Landvreugd, 'Notes on a Dictionary: a polemic approach', Deviant Practice Research Programme 2016–2017, Van Abbemuseum, 2018, pp. 210– 23.
[733] Ibid., 220.
[734] Ibid.

> the term ‘white’ with the world of welfare in which everybody who is not specifically blank is referred to as black.[735,736]

In *Notes on a Dictionary: a polemic approach* I unpack this idea and the problem of translation further:

> Here it becomes apparent why direct translation from English-speaking context obscures particularities in the Dutch context and why investigating the Dutch particularities can lead to new insights. Taking the word blank out of its native Dutch context to look for meaning in English becomes a tool to unpack a seemingly harmless way of speaking. With ‘empty or clear, or containing no information or mark’.[737]
>
> Going back and forth between Dutch and English provides the opportunity to give new meanings to words. Due to the social meaning of the word, ‘Blank’ can acquire a meaning as an artistic tool in English texts that would be hard to theorise in Dutch.[738]

In English this means releasing *Blankness* from the racial connotation it has in the Dutch language. In the visual arts this opens up thinking about a space that is racially and ethnically decontextualised, a so-called blank space. The ultimate result is that in this space ‘white’ artists would also have to recognise their ethnicity and not assume the emptiness of *Blankness*. On this equal playing field every artist would then have to contemplate how blankness relates to ideas of Western-ness.

For Dutch Afro artists such as Stanley Brouwn, by entering an already established context of Dutch artists on the terms of ‘blankness’, as understood in the context of the Netherlands as white Western-ness, the work is released from the person who made it. *Blankness*, or the absence of *Blackness* in the arts, is then the moment when there is not a hint that the work is driven by ethnic concerns and comes from a so-called ‘neutral’ (blank) space. Using this strategy does have certain agency as it results in critical language about the object and its relation to the prevailing art discourse rather than a focus on its maker’s ethnic relation to the discourse.

Alternatively, for the Dutch Afro artist, taking an ethnic position may be a matter of principle based on its usefulness. In relation to access to the market, historically this meant connecting to a small

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[735] Folkert Jensma, Zwart/wit en de website [Black/White and the website], *NRC.NL* Archief, 24-09-2005, http://vorige.nrc.nl//opinie/article1638169.ece/Zwart/wit_en_de_website acc. 07-05-16.
[736] ‘Volgens ons stijlboek houdt de krant zich bij de keuzen ‘blank' en ‘zwart' aan heersend maatschappelijk gebruik. „We schrijven overigens niet over witte mensen, maar over blanken. … De term ‘wit' associeert het stijlboek met de welzijnswereld waarin iedereen die niet specifiek blank is, als zwart wordt aangeduid.’
[737] Cambridge Online Dictionary.
[738] Charl Landvreugd, ‘Notes on a Dictionary: a polemic approach’, Deviant Practice Research Programme 2016-2017, Van Abbemuseum, 2018, (pp. 210 – 223) p. 221.

niche with low visibility on the general local art market and barely any interest coming from the diaspora art world. By way of tackling the niche problem, artists could and can respond by not making 'ethnic' art while holding onto the ethnic position. Here, then, the produced language does not 'sound' as it is supposed to in the general art discourse, but often results in a 'new' perspective. The other option is to take the ethnic position and foreground the issues connected to the Afro-Dutch condition as natively Dutch. This last position is what the *Wakaman* artists, who are the subject of this chapter, did. Their efforts bring me to the paradox of the imagined normal space in the Dutch art world, which is to speak Dutch Afro-ness without making a point out of ethnicity. The crux of the problem is not the desire for the work to culturally pass, but rather having the agency to be recognised as native without being limited or directed by the structures of blankness that make up the existing Dutch art world.

Martin Hewson describes agency as 'the condition of activity rather than passivity'.[739] He distinguishes three main types of agency – namely, individual agency, agency by proxy (meaning on behalf of another) and collective agency.[740] Hewson also mentions three main bases of human agency, being: a purposive or intentional basis; one that comes through the power of resources and capabilities; and a basis of rationality which, for it to 'act with effect, it is necessary for agents to reflect upon their circumstances and to monitor the on-going consequences of their actions'.[741] For the contemporary artist, being subject to the Afro-Dutch condition, this means that these different types of agency, explained as activity in relation to the Dutch art world, are inhabited differently depending on the horizon for the future that currently is the apparent paradox of refusal and becoming Black simultaneously.

Before going into the *Wakaman* project (2005–08) and its curatorial outcome, it is useful to go back in time again and look at several exhibitions and moments that contextualise their efforts. This history links the artists' practices to curatorial attempts at normalising Afro-ness in the Dutch art context and underscores the influence of African-American-ness on this process. Contemporary Dutch thinking through (visual) language leapt with an event that had more impact on the cultural scene in the Netherlands than the much-cited *Magiciens de la Terre* (1989). Being around the corner rather than in faraway Paris, the exhibition *Wit over Zwart* (White about/over Black) (December 1989–August 1990) by artist-curator and founder of *Cosmic Illusion* Felix de Rooy (b. 1952) in the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam was extremely well-visited with 28,000 people in the first month.[742] The Dutch word '*over*' in the title has a double meaning that translates as 'over' and as 'about'. Each translation would provide a

[739] Martin Hewson, Agency, Encyclopedia of case study research, eds. A. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2010, p. 12.
[740] Ibid., 12-13.
[741] Ibid., 13.
[742] NRC Handelsblad, 'Aantal bezoekers Nederlandse musea gestegen' [Amount of visitors to Dutch museums increased], Amsterdam, 17 January 1990, https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/1990/01/17/aantal-bezoekers-van-nederlandse-musea-gestege-6921606-a126352 acc. 16-08-2018.

different meaning in English but in the Dutch context the double entendre is deliberate. Also, the choice of the then relatively new words 'Wit' (White) and 'Zwart' (Black) is a deliberate attempt to depart from the use of the words 'neger' (negro) and 'blank' (blank, white). As author and scholar Jan Nederveen Pieterse (b. 1946) explains in the book *Wit over Zwart* (1990), the denominations were a result of the exhibition. He noted that 'Black is relatively neutral […] it is a political colour […] Because of symmetry the term white is chosen as counterpart to black, instead of the commonly used blank in the Netherlands.'[743] The exhibition *Wit over Zwart* made a big impression on those who visited and had a large impact because it did a great job at indicating the issues of blackness in the context of the Netherlands. According to Rob Perrée, 'This exhibition had a lot of effect, it was kind of revealing because of course you knew this sort of stuff, but he (Felix de Rooy) knew how to illustrate it.'[744] Felix de Rooy's curatorial work in the early 1990s makes him the original contemporary Dutch artist-curator subject to the Afro-Dutch condition. By centralising the relation between white and black as the topic for the exhibition, he forecast, or was the prelude to, discussions in the next century. By pointing out the obvious, he managed to produce a language that was unknown to the Dutch at that time. Famously, the then minister of culture and acknowledged feminist Hedy D'Ancona, while being escorted past all the racist images worldwide, exploded, saying: '… but this isn't racism', when shown the image of the Dutch blackface figure Zwarte Piet.[745] Her denial of the racial stereotyping and the underlying racism in Dutch society indicates why (with the policy of assimilation in the guise of integration into the rejected pillarisation model of tolerance) the direction of this exhibition could not become an institutional curatorial model in the 1990s. With this exhibition, Felix de Rooy was personally heavily criticised and placed himself outside of the general art discourse in the Netherlands. He shared this faith with Philomena Essed who before him published the book *Alledaags Racisme*[746] (Everyday Racism, 1984) following her now equivalent to MA in cultural anthropology at the University of Amsterdam in 1983. At that time, in 1984, she noted that black researchers choosing racism as their topic were scrutinised on their methodology.[747] Further developing her thesis, Essed received her PhD (cum laude) with the title *Understanding Everyday Racism* in 1990 and published it in 1991. Again, she was closely examined by the Dutch press and the academic world who cast doubt on the content and methods. This refusal to face the fact that there is racism in the Netherlands and therefore attacking the work and calling it unscientific still goes on today, as can be seen in the vicious attacks on, for instance, Gloria Wekker's book *White*

[743] Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Wit over zwart: beelden van Afrika en zwarten in de westerse populaire cultuur [White over/about black: images of Africa and blacks in Western popular culture], Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1990, p.8.
[744] Rob Perrée, Interview with Rob Perrée via Skype, Rotterdam/New York: 06-03-2016.
[745] NRC Handelsblad, Het beeld Ook als het anders is bedoeld: stereotypering is racistisch, nrc.nl, 19 october 2013, http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/2013/10/19/het-beeld-ook-als-het-anders-is-bedoeld-stereotypering-1304504 , acc 14-03-16.
[746] Philomena Essed, *Alledaags racisme*, Feministische (Amsterdam: Feministosche uitgeverij Sara, 1984).
[747] Het Vrije Volk, 'Zwarte schrijfster: prinses Irene is een echte bondgenote', 19 September 1984.

Innocence[748] in 2016. It is the quality argument applied to academic research or, as Sebastian Lopez observed in 1996, intellectual discrimination[749] coming from a patronising Dutch position.

In the Netherlands the idea of racism (in the arts) is always located outside of the country.
To exemplify this, around 1990, when Afro-Dutch art production was mainly produced by what Stuart Hall named the 'last colonials', the Dutch language about Afro art production came into existence by looking at art from outside of the Netherlands. *Overholland*, an exclusive private museum, located in an old villa next to the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and owned by the collector Christiaan Braun, opened in 1987. The museum closed its doors in 1990 with the final exhibition, *Black USA*. This exhibition was the first Dutch museum exhibition of African-American art. The review in *NRC Handelsblad*, by art critic Janneke Wesseling, starts with a quote by one of the participating artists, Benny Andrews (1930–2006):

> I fight against the image of the black artist because it is too limited. It means that they are only interested in your work because of your race, and not for the quality of your art.[750]

In the whole article, this idea is the basic assumption about this exhibition. The potential visitor was asked the same question of whether they should approach the work on view as art measured by one's own Western standards or whether the theme of race discrimination and skin colour of the artist is more important than the quality of the work.[751] The writer goes on to say that measuring by one's own Western (read blank) standards is the most objective and fair towards the artists, but wonders whether Western standards are sufficient and whether this is not a different sort of art, 'negro art', with its own norms and world of imagination.[752] This quality argument logic and line of thinking not only posit Afro-ness as different from blankness but also place it outside of Western standards. This position is validated through a black authoritative voice by quoting 'June Kelly, the only black gallery owner in five hundred gallery owners in New York, that the "black imagination only speaks to blacks".'[753] This method of questioning the validity of art made by African Americans is an example of how art made by Afro people, which is concerned with Afro subjectivity, was and would be questioned in the coming decades. It is in line with the question of validity that is apparent in the critique on the scholarly work by the earlier mentioned

[748] Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence; Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).
[749] Kunstbeeld, 'Vanwaar je dacht te vertrekken sta je geplant' [Whence you thought you were leaving you are rooted], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 2, Jaargang 20 (Utrecht: Veen Media, februari 1996) pp. 34-35 (p. 35).
[750] Janneke Wesseling, 'Black USA' laat vragen open over de zwarte identiteit ('Black USA' leaves questions open about black identity), NRC, 16 May 1990, http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/1990/05/16/black-usa-laat-vragen-open-over-de-zwarte-identiteit-6930066 acc. 08-04-16.
[751] Ibid.
[752] Ibid.
[753] Ibid.

Dutch Afro academics and curators when it comes to the treatment of race and racism in the Dutch context.

Of other participating artists like Romare Bearden (1911–88), Robert Colescott (1925–2009) and David Hammons (b. 1943), the review states that 'all their work has little expressiveness' and that there is only one artist who also works figuratively but whose work 'transcends the anecdotal' which is Benny Andrews.[754] With this statement the writer authorises Andrews' excellence and consequently his right to speak, and casts judgement from the position of her Western standard. Aided by the one who is lifted from the group, not only the quality of the work, but the group and its themes as a whole are critiqued. It is a metaphor for blackness, by excelling according to the Western idiom (cultural passing) and being authorised to be part of it, transcending into the (blank) mainstream. Just like the gallery owner June Kelly, Benny Andrews as the black voice confirming the validity of this position is quoted as saying: '"visual arts, other than music, has not been part of black culture", a visual tradition is lacking here'.[755]

Arguably, *Overholland* with the *Black USA* exhibition was part of a larger worldwide conversation. Postmodernity, being receptive to Afro artists, opened up another layer of artistic engagement with blackness in the Netherlands through the American lens next to the local transcultural appreciation. Taking the exhibition *Black USA* and the critique towards it as a point of departure, an image arises of Western as the standard from which to objectively look. Race discrimination and skin colour are brought up as possible mitigating factors when it comes to the quality of the work and transcending the anecdotal. The idea of 'negro art' is presented as distinctively different because apparently the black imagination speaks only to blacks. To reiterate this places blackness and Afro-ness outside of Western (in the Dutch case meaning blank / white) standards. In the development of the rhetoric there seems to be confusion here, which arguably is a residue of colonial times. Putting it into the timeframe and local Dutch historical knowledge about the colonial project, the resulting disorientation is equating Western with whiteness (and blankness) which in turn colours the understanding of Afro art production. Janneke Wesseling's review of *Black USA* expresses this generally held position and speaks of the push and pull between racial identity and quality of the work. With the work being placed outside of the West, it is apparent why, for Dutch Afro artists such as Wakaman, thinking through a new space becomes a vital question.

It was and is so vital as the quality argument and, when dealing with Afro-ness, not being recognised as part of the Dutch visual language have a history. In the context of Dutch colonial relations, this way of coding was exemplified when the Surinamese artist Erwin de Vries (1929–2018) had a solo exhibition

[754] Ibid.
[755] Ibid.

(1998) in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam. He stated that before he went to the Netherlands he had never seen a real painting in Suriname.[756] By using the sentence 'Eén echt schilderij had ik in Suriname nog nooit gezien' (I had never seen one real painting in Suriname) as the title of the article, the writer continues to produce the discourse of the quality argument that could be seen nine years earlier during *Black USA*. The technique of having this narrative coming out of the mouth of a 'native' is used to bypass responsibility for the point of view that art from Suriname does not have the same artistic validity as that in the Netherlands / West. Again, for the artist, expressing this difference keeps him apart from the artists in his native Suriname and affirms his passing into Western cultural standards, albeit through the mechanism of ethnic cultural discrimination. Combined with Rudi Fuchs' remarks on the exhibition *Twintig jaar beeldende kunst in Suriname* (Twenty years of visual arts in Suriname) (1996–97) that Surinamese art is a 'sluggish stuck-in-the-mud variety of Dutch painting',[757] these examples point to ways in which the language around Afro-Dutch art production is constructed through the idea of cultural passing, the African-American lens and attitudes based on colonial superiority.

The agency in 'cultural passing' can also be tied up with a particular sense of performing the Afro-Dutch condition within the Western art idiom. The Curaçao born Avery Preesman (1968) moved with his parents to the Netherlands in 1970. In 1994 he won the second prize in painting in the prestigious *Prix de Rome* competition, with his abstract paintings. Even though he expressed in 1995 that 'Identity bound to borders doesn't mean anything to him',[758] in the essay *De bevrijder van de schilderkunst* (The liberator of the art of painting) he is said to have impressed with his

> ferocious paintings in which eggs, coconuts, coffee beans and pebbles – references to his exotic native soil – […] Preesman paints in a very intuitive and free way, almost comparable to the way the American action-painter Jackson Pollock flung down paint on the canvas without a preconceived plan.[759]

In 1998, the then director of the Boijmans van Beuningen museum and chairman of the Theo Wolvecam prize for painting Chris Decron praised Preesman for liberating Dutch painting from 'pure optical

[756] Bart Kamphuis, Eén echt schilderij had ik in Suriname nog nooit gezien' Trouw archief, 14/12/96, http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/5009/Archief/article/detail/2661295/1996/12/14/Een-echt-schilderij-had-ik-in-Suriname-nog-nooit-gezien.dhtml acc. 07-05-16

[757] Frénk van der Linden, 'Museumdirecteur Fuchs: "Het ergste van vreemdgaan is de ontrouw aan jezelf"' [Museum director Fuch: 'The worst thing about cheating is the disloyalty to yourself.'], *NRC*, 2 november 1996.

[758] Nicoline Baartman, De dingen moeten verotten (Things should decay), *De Volkskrant*, 3 March 1995, http://www.volkskrant.nl/archief/de-dingen-moeten-verrotten~a413570/ acc. 11-04-16.

[759] Sandra Smallenburg, De bevrijder van de schilderkunst (The liberator of painting), *NRC*, 31 October 1998, http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/1998/10/31/de-bevrijder-van-de-schilderkunst-7420825? Acc. 11-04-16.

seduction and a nostalgic desire for the past'.[760] Underscoring the art for art's sake argument, Preesman was depicted in the press as a true artist. The fact that he was a young autodidact inspired by Joni Mitchel, Natural Born Killers and Dutch youth icons,[761] with only two years' training at Ateliers (1996–98) and a three-month residency at the Rijksacademie, appealed to the imagination. Taking into account the 1999 moment when Dutch Afro artists who were already doing well were made allochtonous, by 2001, when he had a solo exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, the critique on his work changed, saying it had become too old-fashioned Dutch modern art, which

> in the tradition of Mondriaan prescribes sober art in which light, bare forms and the line of the landscape play the principal part […] Preesman returned to the womb of the Dutch tradition […] in short, entered into the painterly illusion.[762]

The critic Hans den Hartog Jager concludes that Preesman

> doesn't have enough affinity [with] this Dutch limitation to come to an original resolution [… and is] a searching artist who has become over conscious of the world. […] the spirit, the sparkle that made him into a great talent, has been crushed under this violence [of Modernism].[763]

Going by the press articles, the mixed-race Avery Preesman was heralded as a true intuitive abstract artist referencing his native soil and not his cultural heritage *per se*. Alluding to earlier generations that looked at African artistic expressions for liberation and catharsis, closer reading of the critique suggests that Preesman possessed a primal force that was able to transform the landscape. When his work changed, it lost its appeal for the critics. Saying that he does not have enough affinity with the Dutch limitations in painting is code for his primal instinct (Afro-ness) getting in the way of his objectiveness (Europeanness). Reading these reviews, alternatively I propose that Preesman was working through his subjectivity as culturally passing for Dutch through his paintings while being perceived as allochtonous. The example of Avery Preesman and the complicated relation that the artistic discourse in the Netherlands had with him is just one example of artistic agency when subject to the Afro-Dutch condition in the twenty-first century.

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[760] Ibid.
[761] Nicoline Baartman, De dingen moeten verotten (Things should decay), De Volkskrant, 3 march 1995, http://www.volkskrant.nl/archief/de-dingen-moeten-verrotten~a413570/ acc. 11-04-16.
[762] Hans den Hartog Jager, Worstelen in plaats van sprankelen (Struggling instead of sparkling), *NRC*, 19 December 2001, http://vorige.nrc.nl//dossiers/stedelijk_museum/tentoonstellingen/article1570693.ece acc. 11-04-16.
[763] Ibid.

Another example is Remy Jungerman who, even though he was from the 'second generation' of artists in the Netherlands, was not like Britain's second generation born locally. Having first studied in Suriname and being educated in Western and non-Western art history provided him with a sense of agency that his peers who were born and educated in the Netherlands may not have experienced in the same way. He acknowledges that (Surinamese) cultural upbringing played a large part in how he developed as an artist.

The book *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rainforest*[764] by Richard and Sally Price was one of the few books available in the academy library in Suriname and inspired his way of thinking. As he says, in those days at the academy in Suriname, this book proved to him and his peers that the Modernists 'stole' the visual language that was actually their heritage. The Modernists thus created their own language from the language that was available in Afro aesthetics. By using the image on the front of the Price and Price book as the source for a large wall painting, Jungerman took the visual language back in 1987. In hindsight it is here that he becomes aware of the form as an aesthetic tool and later realises that it wasn't 'theft' but rather a different development. It became clear to him how the visual aesthetics Africans took with them to Suriname could be used as a tool for communication in an international context. Essentially, he recognised this part of his cultural background as something that can be materialised in a global context as a way of exerting individual and collective agency. Having his cultural background acknowledged through the work of Price and Price exemplifies how recognising oneself in art and theory is useful for personal and artistic development. Years later it would allow him to create a (visual and theoretical) language that has agency of its own rather than agency provided by proxy.

During his studies in the Netherlands, Jungerman established contact with an older generation of Surinamese artists such as the celebrated Erwin de Vries (1929–2018) who by acting 'with effect' had access to resources and had confirmed personal agency in the art world. In addition, Jungerman had close contact with artists from the *Srefidensie* gallery Frank Creton (b. 1941) and Jan Telting (1931–2003) who, through collective effort, intentionally exerted their agency by carving out a space in the Dutch artistic landscape. The important thing in these contacts was being able to be in someone's studio and see that it was possible to be and become a 'real' artist in the Dutch art environment. In other words, and staying with the idea of agency, Jungerman was finding out how, on the basis of rationality (i.e. reflection), he could further shape and apply his artistic agency. These interactions fostered how Jungerman came to see himself in relation to the art world and what might be possible in terms of the role to play. He concluded that every artist assumes a position and that this has consequences for how the visual work evolves and the type of agency the artist gains. Altogether this combination becomes a conscious agency that develops in tandem with the cultivation of a visual language, paired with the refusal and acceptance of a socio-political role. His interactions with an older generation of artists made Jungerman very aware of the kind

[764] Richard & Sally Price, *Afro-American Arts of the Suriname Rainforest* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1980).

of example he sets for younger artists and he recognises how, with the power of resources and capabilities that he has, this can function as a purposeful collective form of agency towards the Dutch Afro artistic position.

We return to the political change in the Netherlands in 1999 that would change the Afro-Dutch condition and its artistic output, how it was talked about and how it was curated. Rick van der Ploeg (Secretary of State for Culture and Media 1998–2002) chose to explicitly use the word 'allochtonous' in relation to artists.[765] As explained in chapter one, when talking about the population, a distinction is made between 'native' and 'non-native' or, as it is called: *autochthonous*, originating from this country; and *allochtonous*, originating from another country.[766] The categories are a result of immigration due to decolonisation, invitation of migrant workers and the influx of asylum seekers. The allochtonous are further divided into Western[767] and non-Western.[768] The reason for this division is the socio-economic and cultural position of the two groups.[769] In general parlance, the word allochtonous has come to indicate all those whose culture is dissimilar from Dutch culture.

Before this moment Jungerman had risen to prominence because he was identified as being from Suriname but created installations and deviated from what was known by Surinamese artists. His position was different from that of Avery Preesman, who also rose to prominence before state policy directed attention to artists from 'other' regions. The result of this 1999 developments was that, according to Jungerman, invitations to participate in exhibitions stopped coming in. The argumentation for this change was that the Afro artists were good because of the preference they received from the state. The consequence of this measurement and this logic was that the quality of the work was questioned.

> People forgot that you were already bought by the Stedelijk and had quite some exhibitions to your name. […] However, in their experience, you were acquired because you were allochtonous.[770]

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[765] Rick van der Ploeg, *Cultuur als confrontatie* [Culture as confrontation], (The Hague: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 1999).
[766] The word allochtonous is used for immigrants and their descendants. The law makes a distinction between first- and second-generation allochtonous. A first-generation allochtonous is someone living in the Netherlands but born in another country with at least one parent born in a foreign country. A second-generation is someone born in the Netherlands with at least one parent born in a foreign country. The country of the mother is the country of origin when both parents are from abroad but in the case of the mother having been born in the Netherlands the father's country of origin becomes the country of origin for the child. When both parents are born in the Netherlands the child is considered autochthonous.
[767] If a group strongly resembles the Dutch population in socio-economic or cultural aspects they are considered Western Allochthonous; all countries in Europe except Turkey, North America, Oceania, Japan and Indonesia, Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Central Agency of Statistics), Standaarddefinitie Allochtonen, August 1999, p.1.
[768] Non-Western Allochthonous are Turkey, all African countries, Latin America and Asia with exception of Japan and Indonesia., Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Central Agency of Statistics), Standaarddefinitie Allochtonen, August 1999, p. 1.
[769] Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (Central Agency of Statistics), Standaarddefinitie Allochtonen, August 1999, p. 1.
[770] Remy Jungerman, Interview with Remy Jungerman in his studio, Amsterdam: Kruitberg 15-03-2016.

> We were stunned because we were already in the picture. We were already taking part in Europe and had exhibitions in the Stedelijk and suddenly you noticed that all of a sudden you had nothing left.[771]

This cultural policy was geared towards advancing the position of 'allochtonous' artists, but had an adverse effect on those such as Jungerman and Preesman who were already participating in the general art scene. They were now being racialised, which made their work secondary to their ethnicity. Even though their ethnicity had played a role before in relation to what was expected of them as artists, this point of departure raised an extra obstacle to overcome. As a consequence, the visual language that had been successful up to that point was scrutinised. References to personal cultural background were now suspect, as they could be considered tools used to gain public financial support stemming from the fact that the artist was just not good enough to participate in the general art discourse.

The change in political position forced Remy and his colleagues into a position where they had to fight the created (stereo)type evolving from affirmative action. They operated as agents in the existing Dutch art world and, as Hewson notes, a main basis of human agency is one of rationality which, for it to 'act with effect, it is necessary for agents to reflect upon their circumstances and to monitor the on-going consequences of their actions'.[772] Unfortunately, I have not been able to interview Avery Preesman as he stopped making work at the beginning of the century and refuses to speak about what happened in his career. It is not unthinkable that this development made him 'over conscious of the world'[773] and drove him to return 'to the womb of the Dutch tradition […] the painterly illusion'[774] rather than working with 'eggs, coconuts, coffee beans and pebbles'.[775]

The Afro-Dutch artists started questioning whether they and their visual language were faltering or whether it was the other people who had dropped the ball. For Jungerman this question turned the gaze inwards towards what it was that they had actually developed and could put forward as an original / personal contribution to the art world. He concluded that they were there, meaning they had a personal visual language but, due to the visual language they used as artistic reference material, they were not connected to the wider world or at least that connection was severed through the new policy.[776] At the same time, due to the increased separation, the larger art world in the Netherlands did not understand their

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[771] Ibid.
[772] Martin Hewson, Agency, Encyclopedia of case study research, eds. A. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc., 2010, p. 13.
[773] Hans den Hartog Jager, Worstelen in plaats van sprankelen (Struggling in stead of sparkling), NRC, 19-12-2001, http://vorige.nrc.nl//dossiers/stedelijk_museum/tentoonstellingen/article1570693.ece acc. 11-04-16.
[774] Ibid.
[775] Sandra Smallenburg, De bevrijder van de schilderkunst (The liberator of painting), NRC, 31 oktober 1998, http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/1998/10/31/de-bevrijder-van-de-schilderkunst-7420825? Acc. 11-04-16.
[776] Remy Jungerman, Interview with Remy Jungerman in his studio, Amsterdam: Kruitberg 15-03-2016.

extra frames of reference as personal input but as a different (cultural) language that they did not understand and did not invest(igate) in enough. The stage that was offered after this political change based on ethnicity was too small. Jungerman concludes that it made him sharper. It created a detour into creating work that fitted into the narrative of the larger stage.[777]

Jungerman notes, 'The images I was producing at that time were almost a reaction to be understood. It was like: I can also create an image that you can comprehend. An image that you literally understand. An image about current affairs.'[778] This strategy worked well for exhibitions outside of the Netherlands but in the Netherlands he (just like Preesman) was no longer recognisable as a Surinamese ('other') artist. The new route did not change his position in the country much. He did not fit the mould anymore with his work, but was still from elsewhere, the colonies. His newly found (international) culturally passing position confused curators who were grappling with the new environment that had arisen from the state policy and assimilation gone too far. I argue that it is here that the absurdity of assimilation into blankness, in the guise in the Netherlands of cultural integration, is in full effect. In other words, where culturally passing is sabotaged when the racist construct of the quality argument cannot be applied. When Jungerman returned to using his Surinamese background in his work, he regained attention within the Dutch niche of 'diverse' art. During this period, it was the Gate Foundation, founded by Els van der Plas, specifically established to interact with non-Western artists, who still seemed interested. Jungerman considers the positive effect of these changes and feelings of rejection to be that the Afro artists already working in the Dutch art environment came together.[779]

Dealing with the switch in position in the landscape, Jungerman sought to create a curatorial frame in which his work could be understood from a curatorial perspective outside of the niche market. By 2001, Remy Jungerman (b. 1959), the younger artists Gillion Grantsaan (b. 1968) and Michael Tedja (b. 1971) had seriously started to discuss their artistic position amongst themselves and with other (Afro) players in the field. They asked what they were missing and what extra effort could be made. Should one create one's own stage on which to operate? And, if so, how would such a stage function?

With the 'last colonial' Felix de Rooy (b. 1952) exposing racism in the cultural archive, the 'second generation' born and raised in the (ex)colony Remy Jungerman (b. 1959) exploring 'modernism' from different cultural angles, and 'second generation' raised in the Netherlands Avery Preesman (b. 1968) dealing with cultural hybridity, an image arises of how artistic agency coming out of the Afro-Dutch condition is realised. To recap, the exhibition histories and art critique here and in chapter two show that

[777] Ibid.
[778] Ibid.
[779] Ibid.

the language about Afro art production confirmed ideas about the validity of Afro-Dutch art through African-American art and colonial superiority. On the one hand, there is this idea in the Netherlands that art is art and its rules are equal for everybody, which means that there should be no need to separate a group. On the other hand, there is the notion that artistic and qualitative relevance comes from the ability of the work to participate in the existing discourse and not from the ethnic background of the maker. The difference between the two seemingly similar ideas is based on who decides what is relevant. For the Dutch, African-American artistic relevance was established outside of the Netherlands and therefore has authority. African-American culture is perceived as distinctively different from American / European culture. Therefore, culturally passing and blankness is not required in the Dutch context. Meanwhile, the Dutch are in control of deciding whether other (non-white) narratives and visual references are relevant to the Dutch art discourse. In the process from transcultural to diversity and with the cultural policy of assimilation in the guise of integration, appreciation of artistic expression that does not pass the cultural standard in the Netherlands seemed to be out of reach for Dutch Afro artists.

4.2 Wakaman (2005-2009)

The artists understood the political change of the late 1990s as a linguistic and visual problem pertaining to their subjectivity. The effect was that the predicament of being an artist subject to the Afro-Dutch condition, and aiming to produce a discourse that considers the hybrid nature of one's subjectivity, demanded the finding of a (visual) language to speak about the self. It became a language that derived from the desire to be integrated into the existing Dutch art world on its own terms, at a time when the alternative of establishing and maintaining a relation with the larger Afro diaspora art world was not yet common. With those restrictions, the result in that generation of artists was what in hindsight can be called the Wakaman moment.

Michael Tedja, Gillion Grantsaan and Remy Jungerman wanted to get issues surrounding visual arts with a Surinamese background into the public domain, and they combined forces under the name Wakaman.[780] They chose the name Wakaman as it has many different connotations, such as stroller, wanderer, traveller, drifter, loafer or tramp. In Surinamese vernacular, it is 'a man who goes from one woman to the next or, a hustler, street philosopher, someone cool'.[781] In their early years they chose the interpretation of Wakaman as 'someone who intentionally stays on the

[780] Remy Jungerman, Wakaman walks, Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots, Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 8.
[781] Ibid.

side-lines in order to be in a position to campaign behind the scenes [… because] a major discussion point was that a *Wakaman* is impartial!'[782]

Wakaman definitions:

Wakaman

literal translation: walking man; figurative translation: he who deliberately places himself offside (play) in order to, from that position, operate (*ageren*) against and reflect on that which he resists.[783]

Wakaman

The Wanderer[784]

The Wakaman

forms a theory about how large, elusive thoughts melt together.[785]

The first Wakaman exhibition in 2005 was supported by the exhibition space TENT in Rotterdam where Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern was the curator from 1999 to 2006. He had a mandate since 1990 from the Arts Council Rotterdam, and later from the state, to promote local artists. His fascination with the art coming from the Caribbean moved him to expand that assignment to include Antillean and Surinamese artists.[786] In his contact with Jungerman and Tedja, who were Dutch artists with a Surinamese background, he thought their Wakaman concept would fit perfectly into what he had been programming and thinking about in recent years. When they contacted him, he recognised it as a new perspective coming from black artists. For Meijer zu Schlochtern, the first Wakaman was part of the developments concerning the relation between the Netherlands and the former colonies and the relation between the Netherlands and promoting their artists. It was part of a larger framework to incorporate allochthonous into society since the late 1980s, as discussed in the previous chapters.

Wakaman were Dutch artists with a Surinamese background starting a discussion in the Netherlands. In my interview with Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern, I argue that the artists

[782] Ibid.
[783] De Wakaman maakt geen hapsnap, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 19-10-2005.
[784] Suriname deelnemers, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 21-09-2005.
[785] Michael Tedja, Wakaman geredigeerd, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 19-10-2005.
[786] Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern, Interview Charl Landvreugd with Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern, 24-07-2017.

involved in the first Wakaman were demanding cultural citizenship through their art practice. Meijer zu Schlochtern agrees and supplements this by saying that Michael Tedja, who was born in the Netherlands, emphasised his Rotterdam-ness. Tedja thought it very important to emphasise this, while Jungerman, born and raised in Suriname, did the opposite. As Meijer zu Schlochtern notes, 'When someone looks at them, they would not see that these two perspectives are very different because they see two black guys.'[787]

During this first Wakaman exhibition, a 'multi-evening' was organised on 24 November 2005. During this event there was an expansion of the already installed Wakaman exhibition with female artists. The expansion consisted of drawings, paintings, installations and video-projections.[788] After the opening there was an interview under the heading 'I am black, rich and … Dutch'[789] – (Ik ben zwart, rijk en Nederlander)[790] – conducted by Stephan Sanders speaking to the male initiating artists, art historian Adi Martis (Aruba, 1944), artist Felix de Rooy (Curaçao, 1952) and the curator Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern. In the announcement, several quotes were written down to support the conversation.

> **Jungerman:** 'I do not need to be submerged in Dutch culture, but I do want to be part of the financial system.'
>
> **Grantsaan:** 'I did not come here to continue Dutch traditions, but because of the survival of the fittest.'
>
> **Tedja:** 'All art is black.'
>
> **Dwight Marica** (Vlaardingen, b. 1973): 'Art doesn't ask a thing, why is it then that we have so much to say?'[791]

The conversation raised a set of questions, such as: 'Why polarise? Are we, perhaps, radicalizing? Is it about power? Money and Power?'[792] After this discussion, the video *a/k/a Mrs. George Gilbert* (2004) by

[787] Ibid.
[788] info voor website uitbreiding Wakaman, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 29-12-2005.
[789] programma multiavond 24 november, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 29-11-2005.
[790] alg zaaltekst, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 24-11-2005.
[791] programma multiavond 24 november, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 29-11-2005.
[792] Remy Jungerman, Wakaman walks, Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots, Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 8.

Coco Fusco was shown. Initially, the documentary *Louis Doedel* (1999) by Nina Jurna was planned for viewing.[793] The evening ended with Dwight Marica playing live dub reggae.[794]

The text accompanying the invitation read: 'Black Art is not the exclusive domain of people of African origin. As a fact Black Art has nothing to do with the skin pigment of the artist.'[795] It continued:

> WAKAMAN does not produce scattershot (hapsnap) that hardly needs effort. His art is not a game, no quickie, no blarney, not an appetising story and no standard romance. The Wakaman produces his art with high concentration while he fantasises what it would feel like to be a thousand prospective faces. He does not like L'art pour l'art. He has a deeply felt affinity with on level art that is steeped in values.[796]

The shared skin pigment of the first Wakaman edition that started on 3 November 2005 meant that they could not walk through the metropolitan globalised 'Umwelt', which they considered their reference point, as 'white boys' (*bleekscheten*).[797] To confirm their position, they invited five female artists to complete the show. They were Miek Hoekzema Judith Heinsohn, Fabiola Veerman, Rose Manuel and Juliette Tulkens.[798] The accompanying text on the wall stated:

> This expansion of the Wakaman exhibition is more than the sum of its parts. By not taking skin pigment as its subject, but also consciously applying the gender debate to one another's work, an exhibition emerged in which artists and artworks attended to and criticised the communal reference point of the metropolitan, globalised 'Umwelt'.[799]

In an effort to contextualise the Afro-Dutch condition and create a stage from which to operate, a side programme that included debate, watching the film *Bamboozled* (2000) by Spike Lee and showing *Anton de Kom* accompanied the exhibition. While explicitly positioning themselves as black artists, understanding that they needed to (re)present themselves to the world, the main question during this event was what their position was in the visual arts landscape of the Netherlands. They responded to the language about their Afro-Dutch condition as artists by presenting a diaspora framework in which they wanted to be understood. Even though the opening was well attended, there was no reaction to their

[793] Wakaman achterkant flyer1, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 10-11-2005.
[794] info voor 24 nov. Website, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 31-08-2006.
[795] alg zaaltekst, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 24-11-2005.
[796] Ibid.
[797] Ibid.
[798] Ibid.
[799] zaalbrief Wakamanuitbreiding probeersel, TENT, Wakaman, Archief, Programma, 2005, 23-11-2005.

position (as explicitly black) in the press or anywhere else. This may be one of the reasons why their presence and point of view was not well known in the larger Dutch art environment. Arguably, because it was 'militant black' and did not adhere to the adage that art should be independent and free, there was no market in place to assign value to this position.

According to Roel Meelkop who has been with TENT since 1999, the organisation did not have a PR and communications team. Texts about exhibitions were written in the magazine *Tentplaza*. Exhibitions lasted four to five weeks in that period and the press thought that to be too short. He says that there was never any press coverage about the exhibitions. It was with the director Mariette Dölle (2006–16) that for the first time a professional PR team was established and exhibitions began to last longer than four or five weeks.[800] According to Anke Bangma, who was part of the curatorial team at Witte de With centre for contemporary art at that time, it was polyrhythmic programming which was quick and fluid; this was the policy in the art world in Rotterdam back then. Things happened by chance.[801]

This may be part of the explanation why there was no significant reaction to the Wakaman exhibition and event, by which the organisers were 'unpleasantly surprised'.[802]. This made the artists look into ways to develop their project further and investigate the 'lukewarm reception'.[803] They thought that one of the possibilities that made them less visible, understood or accessible for the Dutch public was that there were 'almost no publications at the academies in Suriname and the Netherlands that examine the theories, methods and spheres of influence for artists with a Surinamese background'.[804] This spawned the idea of 'THE BOOK' – 'which would have to be in every academy and institute library, both national and international, [and] would put things into an international perspective and draw parallels with other cultures'.[805]

Not long after the first Wakaman event, the artists were invited by the Fonds BKVB (The Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture) to submit their ideas for the *Intendant Culturele Diversiteit* (2006–09) (effectuating affirmative action for minorities in the arts) and were accepted onto the two-year programme.[806] The *Intendant Culturele Diversiteit* worked in tandem with the 2005–08 Mondriaan Fund *Stimuleringsprijs voor Culturele Diversiteit* (Development prize for Cultural Diversity) for Dutch modern art museums, which was won by the Van Abbemuseum and was discussed in the

[800] Private conversation with Roel Meelkop on 08-11-2017.
[801] Private conversation with Anke Bangma on 08-11-2017.
[802] Remy Jungerman, Wakaman walks, Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots, Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 8.
[803] Ibid., 9.
[804] Ibid.
[805] Ibid.
[806] Ibid.

previous chapter. Wakaman presented a solid plan that was taken very seriously. They were concerned with

> the problems of categorization, recognition and interpretation that they encounter as non-Western artists living in the West.[807]

The plan included an encyclopaedic work with artists of Surinamese descent, with theoretical support provided by Dr Adi Martis (Aruba, 1944), associate professor of Art History at the University of Utrecht (1978–2009). They wanted to tackle the (mis)reading of works that were produced while being subject to the Afro-Dutch condition.

Exemplifying their predicament, there is the tension between the Wakaman questions and the circumstances that put them in the spotlight. The Wakaman artists, even those born in the Netherlands, were not seen as Dutch, but as Surinamese artists living in the Netherlands. Their background made them eligible to receive part of the € 500,000 budget that was cleared for diversity in 2005. Rob Perrée and Remy Jungerman point out that there were many cynical reactions and questions about why, all of a sudden, so much money had been made available for this idea. This had never happened before (or after) on this scale.[808] This *Wiedergutmachungs Geld* (Compensation Money) overwhelmed even the artists who benefitted from this turn of events. In this case of state involvement trying to assist agency, it was not the Afro-Dutch condition of the artists that was recognised as having artistic agency but their Suriname-ness. In effect, the Afro-Dutch artistic agency of the artists was nullified by geographically locating them in another part of the world, specifically an ex-colony. In exchange, they were granted a colonial form of economic agency, akin to development aid. At a time when, internationally, ethnicity no longer seemed to be a driving concept, Wakaman could not claim ethnic variation in the local arts that only recognised blankness as valid. However, when diversity was framed in the context of art from other regions (world art), their concept became workable in the Dutch context.

This second Wakaman converged with the exchange project *ArtRoPa* (2007–11) that arguably was executing artistic development aid. The Centrum Beeldende Kunst (Centre for Visual Arts) in Rotterdam and the Republic of Suriname initiated *ArtRoPa* as a four-year project aimed at strengthening the cultural infrastructure and enhancing the cultural dialogue.[809] Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern, who had provided the space to Wakaman in 2005, led this project between Rotterdam and Paramaribo (Suriname) after the first Wakaman process.

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[807] http://www.intendant.nl/intendant/english/projecten/02/project.php Fonds BKVB, acc. 20-07-2016.
[808] Rob Perrée, Interview with Rob Perrée via Skype, Rotterdam/New York: 06-03-2016.
[809] ArtRoPa, http://www.artropa.nl/, acc. 26-11-2017.

In this environment, the presentation (2007) of the *Intendant Culturele Diversiteit* took place in the cultural centre *Podium Mozaïek* in the west of Amsterdam. Perrée's critique on this event is that the whole setup was to physically underline diversity and in reality, this only emphasised the 'otherness' of the presented plans. He observes that the same Mondriaan Fund, who several years earlier had been absolutely uninterested in diversity but was now encouraged through state policy, gave the impression of now making up for something. Through these mechanisms, agency by proxy was provided to the artists and to the cultural centre as a place of 'importance' while the administering party held on to the language of government policy. I argue that this racialising cultural policy language overshadowed the language of the cultural producers. It neutralised the collective purposeful agency of the group through the power of resources that were controlled by the government's proxy, the art funds. The eventual consequences of this approach can be seen in how the Wakaman group evolved.

Understanding this undermining of their agency, the approach towards tackling their concerns about categorisation, recognition and interpretation became a point of internal debate and the initial plan fell apart. As the Wakaman project became part of a wider conversation, the route to follow became a source of friction between the founding members of Wakaman. At the Rietveld Academy, where they all studied, they had not been friends. Just because they were all Afro guys in the school was not a reason to click together during lunch or at other times. The political situation brought them together in conversation, action and networking to overcome the position they were manoeuvred into and this was the source of their collaboration. Now, being brought back into the fold, even though it was via the (negative) mechanism of being explicitly racialised and its consequential affirmative action, they realised that something was not quite right and decided to part ways.

In August 2008 the three Wakaman presented a new plan based on the separation that had taken place. Among other things, the split was based on a lack of clear agreement over responsibilities in the project.[810] This led to disagreement about how funds were to be allocated[811] and curatorial disagreement about inclusion of foreign (non-Dutch or Surinamese) artists in the project.[812] The consequence of this was that Michael Tedja created a curatorial plan of his own that did not include Grantsaan or Jungerman.[813] The Mondriaan Fund divided the funds equally, so that each artist could spend it on their part of the project. The Jungerman / Grantsaan project delved deeper into the 'allochthonous' role in an effort to excel through the mechanism of being racialised. This approach basically acknowledges the

[810] Remy Jungerman, Plan Remy extra, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 25 February 2008.
[811] Remy Jungerman, brief Fbkvb, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 31 January 2008.
[812] Michael Tedja, plan Michael, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 11 February 2008.
[813] Remy Jungerman, brief Fbkvb, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 31 January 2008.

quality argument and tries to undo it. Tedja fully rejected this social and linguistic frame that was set up through policy and proposed to *Eat the Frame!* Effectively, both parties were engaged in producing a language about the language that framed them. They questioned their own Otherness and its relation to Blackness and Blankness. The fundamental difference in how to approach this new situation is apparent in the first few sentences of Tedja's book *Eat the Frame!*[814]

> When the Dutch government stimulates a multicultural art project, it is not her intention that the supported Dutchman with a different background than the so-called authentic Dutch returns to where he originally comes from. That he shall find his roots if he descends far enough into the jungle of his history, that he has to be in the same place, the ground on which his parents were born (or he himself) to truly know and understand who he is – this is a condemnable idea. Those who claim that black artists living and working in the West are derivatives of western thinking are making a grave error in thinking.[815]

Due to the split, *Wakaman gaat lopen* (Wakaman starts walking) became the working title under which both projects proceeded with their own budget and autonomy.[816] The introduction to this new plan stated that the works of the artists are very different. However, 'their Wakaman projects are concerned with the same element of art by non-Western people who live in the West, and the problems they face when it comes to categorization, recognition and interpretation'.[817] Among other things, the two Wakaman projects investigated these questions in a different way. Grantsaan and Jungerman focused on the artist relation between Suriname and the Netherlands, while Tedja aimed to place questions around diaspora and displacement in an international context.[818]

4.2.1 Michael Tedja / Eat the Frame!

In the run up to his concept for the exhibition to come, Tedja held an event called *Teach in* at the Boijmans van Beuningen museum in Rotterdam. He published a one-page newspaper-style leaflet called *The Daily Fucked Up Intendant* with the subheading 'We are the garbage collectors of the mind. We air

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[814] 'Als de Nederlandse regering een multicultureel kunstproject stimuleert, is het niet haar bedoeling dat de gesteunde Nederlander met een andere achtergrond dan de zogenaamde authentieke Nederlander terugkeert naar waar hij oorspronkelijk vandaan komt. Dat hij zijn roots zal vinden als hij maar diep genoeg afdaalt in het oerwoud van zijn geschiedenis, dat hij op dezelfde plek moet zijn, de grond waarop zijn ouders geboren zijn (of hijzelf) om werkelijk te kunnen weten en begrijpen wie hij is – dit is een verwerpelijk idee. Degenen die stellen dat zwarte kunstenaars die in het Westen wonen en werken derivaten van het westerse denken zijn, maken een ernstige denkfout.'
[815] Michael Tedja, *Eat the Frame! A polymorphic essay as the catalogue of an international art exhibition in the Netherlands anno 2009* (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2009), p. 11.
[816] Remy Jungerman, programma details rj+mh-2, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 17 October 2008.
[817] Remy Jungerman et al., Wakaman gaat lopen nieuw plan, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 5 August 2008.
[818] Ibid.

our dirty laundry.'[819] In the article 'It is like, It is like' he explains his thinking towards what was to become the notion of Eating the Frame.[820] In this new plan, Tedja spoke about a Wakaman as being a *Hosselaar* (Hustler) and by doing so created a new name for his part of the project.[821] His project took Suriname as its point of departure but was in search of the whole world. He argued against what he called 'trendy us / them thinking' and as a cosmopolite he was in search of questions that were larger than his person.[822] Tedja put forward that this us / them thinking results in a provincial attitude towards the strange and unpleasant. In his words, it is a time 'in which art is degraded into a folkloristic disposable article […] and contemporary artists move like trapped *allochtonenmuizen* (allochthonous mice)'.[823] Tedja imagined a newspaper called *The Daily Fucked Up Intendant*, which could be read online. The plan stated that it was conceived as an imaginative framework around the exhibition that mixed fact and fiction and was produced by a mishmash of nationalities.[824] The exhibition took as a given that engagement in the arts is omnipresent. Rather than wither away, the artists looked for 'existential ligatures' with 'artists beyond the Dutch and Surinamese borders through which the idea of a "vision for the future" widens'.[825] For this he planned on inviting the art collective Otabenga Jones and aimed to create what he called a polymorphic exhibition that denounced nationalistic sentiments.[826] The intention was that the exhibition would explicitly criticise the 'danger of the Blut und Boden rhetoric' that resulted in one-issue parties such as *Trots op Nederland*, *Vlaams Belang* or the *PVV*.[827] He argued that these parties, including the idea of being proud of ethnic Surinamese heritage, are attractive for people who are 'psychologically or morally neglected'.[828] They 'then go search for an identity on the internet, (and) specifically this search for an identity based on occurrences from the past or a faraway country seems to become a characteristic of the information society'.[829] According to Tedja, the exhibition wanted to show that such identities are fragile and cannot handle the confrontation outside of cyberspace.[830] He insisted that these developments are a 'negative exaltation', a 'societal disaster which corrodes the arts from the inside out and willingly imposes a practical function so that it cannot carry out straightforward cultural criticism'.[831] He called this a 'slave-mentality that is employed by some artists, civil servants, policy makers, directors and traders'.[832] Quoting Jean Paul Sartre, he mentioned that what is important is not what others do with us but what we

[819] Michael Tedja, The Daily Fucked Up Intendant, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 21 February 2008.
[820] Ibid.
[821] Ibid.
[822] Ibid.
[823] Ibid.
[824] Ibid.
[825] Ibid.
[826] Ibid.
[827] Ibid.
[828] Ibid.
[829] Ibid.
[830] Ibid.
[831] Ibid.
[832] Ibid.

do with what others do to us, and he wondered 'where this massive want for historical identities – often victim-identities, particularly with people who are not victims – comes from'.[833] Tedja's project had a vision rooted in 'diversity'. It involved including black and white artists who were concerned with ideas about diversity and it became an international project by a 'Surinamese' artist.

According to a review in the Surinamese newspaper *De Ware Tijd*, it was not easy for Tedja to find a location for his exhibition.[834] In his creation of the exhibition *Eat the Frame!* that dealt with cultural diversity, he put forward his plans to several institutions who initially reacted very positively. However, showing their involvement with the issues raised, they did not think that an exhibition on cultural diversity should include white artists and wanted to amend the line-up.[835] Tedja did not take this well, as it did not embrace what he was trying to do. In his words, 'It reduced the content of my plans to identity politics, while I wanted to make an internationally orientated exhibition that wanted to make connections between complex questions.'[836] The end result was that Tedja staged the exhibition, with artists from the USA, Suriname, the Netherlands and South Africa, at the commercial gallery *Nouvelles Images*. The artists in this exhibition were René Tosari, Carl Pope, Gean Moreno, Jean Bernard Koeman, Anton Vrede, Hamid el Kanbouhi, Dwight Marica, Miek Hoekzema, Mirjam Kort, Kaleb de Groot and Moshekwa Langa.

The tangible result of Tedja's process today is *Eat the Frame! A polymorphic essay as the catalogue of an international art exhibition in the Netherlands anno 2009*[837] (2009) and the book *Hosselen: een diachronische roman in achtenvijftig gitzwarte facetten over beeldende kunst in identiteitsdenkend Nederland anno 2009*[838] (2009) (Hosselen: a diachronic novel in eighty-five jet-black facets about visual arts identity-thinking Netherlands anno 2009). The connection between the two publications is explained in the first pages of the Dutch / English catalogue *Eat the Frame!*:

> As the exhibition was developing, Michael Tedja wrote the fictitious story 'Hosselen' […]. The main character is a young curator busy preparing an international exhibition. His path through life is marked by various twists and turns. The novel is written in facets. And just like a diamond, a brilliant, which has 58 facets, the book is composed of 58 chapters, each telling a story about art and the art world in the Netherlands. By the end of the book, the young curator steps out of the

[833] Ibid.
[834] Stuart Rahan, Wakamanproject: Surinaamse kunstwereld is twee naslagwerken rijker, Cultuur, De Ware Tijd, 11-07-2009, p. B9.
[835] Ibid.
[836] Ibid.
[837] Michael Tedja, Eat the Frame! A polymorphic essay as the catalogue of an international art exhibition in the Netherlands anno 2009 (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers, 2009) p. 11.
[838] Michael Tedja, Hosselen: een diachronische roman in achtenevijftig gifzwarte facetten over beeldende kunst in identiteitsdenkend Nederland anno 2009 (Amsterdam: KIT Publishers Amsterdam, 2009).

> framework of the story and so exits the fiction. […] the catalog of the exhibition is the final chapter of 'Hosselen'. Eat the frame! is now a reality.[839]

The catalogue was co-published by KIT Publishers, which at that time was part of the large Dutch colonial institution het Tropenmuseum and the new publishing house The DFI Publishers (The Daily Fucked Up Intendant Publishers), established by Michael Tedja during the process of writing *Hosselen*.[840] Here again it is stressed that

> The DFI is an imaginative framework. It places art in an international perspective. Parallels are drawn. It represents a way of thinking which, like a writhing snake, develops organically and naturally. A poetical view born of a multicultural spirit.[841]

Through writing and theorising, Michael Tedja established the context in which the exhibition had to be placed. With *Eat the Frame!* he pushed back against the Afro-Dutch artistic position that was disabled through policy and would place him outside of the Dutch artistic context. As a curatorial practice, he actively resisted the existing narrative by suggesting eating the frame. Sticking to his principles, this also meant that a commercial gallery rather than a museological environment was the space in which his perspective could find resonance.

4.2.2 Remy Jungerman & Gillion Grantsaan / Wakaman drawing lines- connecting dots

Remy Jungerman and Gillion Grantsaan aimed to question the Suriname / Dutch diaspora and shine a light on underexposed perspectives.[842] With the title *Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots*, they aspired to produce an essential contribution to the 'gnashing cultural and social discussions'.[843] In their action plan they stated: 'As artists we can and want to exert influence on some relevant and returning elements: categorisation, recognition, acknowledgement, frame of reference, and interpretation in art and the discussion on art.'[844] As curators they did not set out to make a difference between the local and the global context because they embody both.[845] They imagined a participatory and public character for the project and, to make this happen, they set themselves the task of actively looking for critique away from

[839] Ibid., 5.
[840] Ibid.
[841] Ibid.
[842] Remy Jungerman & Gillion Grantsaan, Plan van aanpak Remy Jungerman en Gillion Grantsaan, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 5 August 2008.
[843] Ibid.
[844] Ibid.
[845] Ibid.

the beaten track and making intensive use of the internet to reach this goal.[846] One of the ways they imagined doing this was by establishing a website and by publishing a book.

While developing their thoughts, Remy Jungerman and Gillion Grantsaan decided to hold the Wakaman exhibition in Suriname. The idea for the exhibition was that couples were formed between an artist of Surinamese descent living in Suriname and an artist of the Suriname diaspora living elsewhere. Jungerman and Grantsaan established the artist couples Marcel Pinas (SR) and Charl Landvreugd (US/NL),[847] Kurt Nahar (SR) and Iris Kensmil (NL), and Ory Plet (SR) with Patricia Kaersenhout (NL). The instruction was that each artist would make an autonomous work and a work towards a collaborative piece. The budget did not allow room for transport of artworks to Suriname. It was therefore advised to communicate in advance what would be needed for the production of the pieces and bring as much material as possible from abroad.[848] In the exhibition the process towards the collaborative piece was to be shown. With the geographical distance between the artists, the process consisted of email and postal mail exchanges that were to be curated into the exhibition. In the process the journalist Nina Jurna and producer Ada Korbee supported the artists in Suriname, and the project leader Manu Hartsuyker supported those in the Netherlands. Art historians Adi Martis and Rob Perrée, author and curator Chandra van Binnendijk, and writer Marieke Visser worked on the book that was to be published.

In the process many thoughts about being black in the visual arts were emailed back and forth. During the meetings the question was asked as to whether 'black art' existed or not.[849] These thoughts developed in the vacuum of the Dutch art environment around the same time as the *Be(com)ing Dutch* project by the Van Abbemuseum. For the artists, theories on the subject and, for example, information about the Black Arts movements in the United States and Great Britain were not readily available. With this in mind, it is clear why Jungerman observed that it would be great if a 'Black Art' movement had emerged 'in the vein of impressionism or surrealism or any other ism. It would mean that a group of black artists had produced an idea that would give black art a place in an art-historical context.'[850] This thought occurred to him because he googled the term 'black art' but could not find any significant result but some 'bad art'.[851] Jungerman asks how this is possible and 'why black artists are more concerned with their identity and surviving in a white art scene before coming to the development of an art movement'.[852] Then there is

[846] Ibid.
[847] At that time, I was doing my BA (2005–08) at Goldsmiths in London. While looking for other artists of Surinamese descent, I found Remy Jungerman and Marcel Pinas on the internet and sent them both an email. They both replied very enthusiastically. In 2008, the year that I moved to New York to pursue an MA, I was invited to come to join the Wakaman project.
[848] Remy Jungerman R., Brief aan Wakaman Koppels, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 4 January 2009.
[849] Patricia Kaersenhout, brief Patricia, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 31 October 2008.
[850] Ibid.
[851] Ibid.
[852] Ibid.

also the 'phenomenon of black artists who do not want to be identified with black art whatever that may be'.[853] They were working in an environment of a cultural policy that was invested in blankness and was so prevalent that it prohibited a new language from emerging. In this moment Jungerman speaks the ambition to come to a 'universal form-language that carries with it all the elements of his blackness. After all, art is also economy.'[854]

The election of Barack Obama as the first black US president (2008) also had an impact on the sense of self in artists such as Patricia Kaersenhout. She felt relief around the acceptance of self as a black woman living in white society. In her words,

> The constant balancing on a tight cord and trying to keep the balance between different worlds in which I seemingly move effortlessly. It feels like for a moment I don't have to but can finally just be.[855]

To just 'be', as a state of being, opens up critical space to question her practice. She wonders whether her work has evolved to what Chris Ofili apparently called 'Ghetto Art' when criticising the British Black Art movement.[856] She asks,

> Can we as blacks still hang on to the blues? Is Black Art progressive enough? Or do we, as black artists, get inspired to see ourselves through different eyes (now that Obama is president)? Is there going to be an enormous shift of roles on the world stage? Are we going to be looked at differently and in which way will this influence our work?[857]

Kaersenhout does not have a real answer to these questions at this time but reminds us that, if the roles were to change, it is known that 'the oppressed become the worst perpetrators' and that is a chilling thought.[858] Conclusively, the thoughts that developed during the project happened with an awareness of what was happening in the global art world in relation to identity thinking while being unaware of the big Black diaspora art movements of the past. The artists understood their Afro-ness in the limited space of the Dutch art environment, which included the ex-colonies.

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[853] Ibid.
[854] Ibid.
[855] Patricia Kaersenhout, The Poetry of Being, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 7 November 2008.
[856] Ibid.
[857] Ibid.
[858] Ibid.

The invitation for the opening of the exhibition *Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots* in Fort Zeelandia, Paramaribo, made a point of centralising Suriname as a point of departure and establishing the exhibition's international character by naming New York, Copenhagen, Paramaribo and Amsterdam as the places where the artists work. It was promoted as a surprising dialogue between the artists, setting out from the question: what is contemporary Surinamese art?[859] By framing this question internationally and in accordance with Dutch logic on Afro-Dutch artistic production, the Dutch artists were firmly located outside of the Netherlands. This implied that validation of their artistic practices originated in a different environment.

During his opening speech, Remy Jungerman expressed some of the questions that inspired the artists as a way of giving context to this Surinamese framing. To what extent are the artists' works influenced by their past, present and place? What is the function and position of their art in Suriname, the Netherlands, the Caribbean and the international art world? How can they position Suriname in the international art world through their actions? And, lastly, to what extent can Paramaribo serve as a centre for visual arts?[860] The side programme included several talks with local artists on artist initiatives in Suriname, a lecture by Adi Martis on Caribbean art, and the viewing of Tessa Boerman's documentary *Zwart Belicht* (Black Illuminated, 2008) which looks at the hidden story of black figures in the paintings of Peter Paul Rubens and his surroundings.[861] Even though Gillion Grantsaan had left the project by then, he is listed as one of the organisers.

In contrast to Michael Tedja's idea of eating the frame, Jungerman and Grantsaan took a 'back to the roots' approach, meaning that they took Suriname as their starting point to 'find out where inspiration comes from and to gain insight into ourselves'.[862] In the form of a dialogue, they wanted to, in their words, 'tell the story of contemporary Surinamese art and thereby clarify any possible enigmas in our work for all Surinamese, the Dutch and the rest of the world'.[863] With a lack of intimate knowledge about methods used in previous Black Art movements, they were trying to decode a Black source from which to theorise contemporary Dutch Afro aesthetics. In this process, Jungerman and Grantsaan aimed to centralise the artists living in Suriname and prepared this by setting up meetings in Suriname with relevant parties.[864] I argue that this

[859] Wakaman, Uitn. Wakaman tekst, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 6 februari 2009.
[860] Remy Jungerman, opening FZ, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 20 februari 2009.
[861] Wakaman, Uitn. Wakaman tekst, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 6 februari 2009.
[862] Remy Jungerman, Wakaman walks, Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots, Fonds BKVB, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 9.
[863] Ibid.
[864] Ibid., 10.

strategy was in line with the Dutch transcultural approach of mutual influence that recognised both groups of artists as culturally different from each other. Simultaneously, by centralising Suriname, the approach took on a world-art view to locating the artists involved, including the Dutch Afro artists, which underscored their difference from cultural Dutchness. For the Dutch Afro artists, this was arguably a move into a diaspora space of engagement (world art) that could position them on the world stage, away from the Dutch cultural environment. Because of the international working field of the Dutch Afro artists, the Surinamese artists could benefit by proxy. It was a bold move in which Jungerman and Grantsaan effectively aimed at moving the centre of gravity to South America and locating the source of agency for the Dutch Afro (Surinamese) artists there. This approach was the opposite of what Jungerman had noticed in 2007. He explained that at that time many Dutch institutions had done collaborations with Suriname and that these had often been one-sided, meaning that groups of Dutch artists got the opportunity to work in Suriname, but the favour was only returned to a handful of Surinamese artists.[865]

Adi Martis argued that

> Improved communication, increased mobility and changes in the art discourse mean that they are part of an informal, international network that also includes their fellow artists in the Diaspora. The contacts between Gillion Grantsaan, Remy Jungerman, the *Wakaman* pairings and others involved in the projects reflect this cooperation in miniature; the lines of communication run from Accra, Boxtel, Amsterdam, Cairo, Cape Town, Copenhagen, London, New York, Paramaribo, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Vermont.[866]

To underscore this move towards relocating the source of agency, the initial book concept for the whole Wakaman group was to create a book in the form of a 'standard' work about the development of Dutch / Surinamese art in a global context: *From 1700 to Wakaman*.[867] This book would be able to place contemporary (Afro-Dutch) art production in a historical context by rewriting Surinamese art history and mentioning

[865] Remy Jungerman, Culturele uitwisseling / plan Suriname, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 5 October 2007.
[866] Adi Martis, 'Wakaman goes Caribbean'*, Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots* (Amsterdam: Fonds BKVB, 2009), p. 22.
[867] Remy Jungerman, Van 1700 tot Wakaman, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 11 February 2008.

people like Leo Glans, who was admitted to the Rijksacademie in 1930 and was the first person of Surinamese descent to graduate from this institution.[868] The final book *Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots* (2009) became less encyclopaedic. Adi Martis writes,

> This book is not an account of a nostalgic return to the past and to the source. It is the account of a process of collaboration between different artists of Surinamese origin who have made a breakthrough during the last two decades and comprises field notes, the lines of art they are setting out for the future.[869]

The book starts with the phrase

> 'Yesterday I met Wakaman.'

on a single page before it opens with the story 'Redi musu' by Gillion Grantsaan (Accra, Tamale, Amsterdam).[870] This parable has a protagonist who is guided to the centre of the (art) market by Little Red Riding Hood. The title of the story 'Redi musu' translates as Red hat / Scarlet cap and is understood as the Sranang Tongo (lingua franca of Suriname) translation of Little Red Riding Hood. However, Redi musu is also the name given to the cruel and ruthless eighteenth-century enslaved Africans in Suriname who were deployed to hunt the runaways in the forest of Suriname and is synonymous with the word traitor. She, Little Red Riding Hood / Redi musu, leads the protagonist into the market / public domain and shows him all the stalls / art institutions. Wondering about the big bad wolf, the protagonist wonders when the story will end. She answers him by saying that everybody has already asked [in German] 'Wo ist mein Zuhause? Oder; was ist das Zuhause? Heimat?'[871] (Where is my home? Or; what is home? Homeland?) The protagonist continues,

[868] Remy Jungerman, Vergadering 17 december Café de Jaren, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 18 December 2007.
[869] Adi Martis, Wakaman goes Caribbean, Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots, (Amsterdam: Fonds BKVB, 2009) p. 25.
[870] Gillion Grantsaan, 'Redi musu'*, Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots* (Amsterdam: Fonds BKVB, 2009), pp. 1–3.
[871] Ibid., 3.

> ‘Yesterday I met Wakaman and asked why they had come, what they wanted to see. From their clothes and the way they talked I deduced that some were not from around here and yet were not strangers. Or maybe they were, since they were not here to look at anything, they were here to be looked at, not to buy but to sell. […] even the jester has his place in a story.’[872]

But Little Red Riding Hood is telling the protagonist that ‘More Money More Money [Marlene] Dumas [Capetown, b. 1953] is not from these parts, but belongs now, just like you. And she's doing just fine!’[873] Which is exactly what Wakaman wants too.[874] Grantsaan continues,

> Because of the way they perceive this fairy-tale, Wakaman’s trade has almost no quantifiable effect on the public domain or the market as they wander round. Their thoughts drift like stray vendors who only occupy space and set up their stalls after closing time and hastily dismantle them when the mainstream customers flood back again in the morning. Wakaman is not a countermovement but a movement; a visual sinuosity between the lines of the market and the interpretation of the storyline of our fairy-tale. […] Therefore, Wakaman explains nothing. In this market Wakaman tells stories in its own language about the stratification of people as a collage of worlds. Wakaman is like the fairy tale of the invention of the can before there was a can opener, or of the compass before anyone knew the magnetic pole was by Greenland or the use of nuclear power before we know what to do with the waste..[sic.][875]

The protagonist ends by asking Little Red Riding Hood whether she is asleep. Even though arguably the project mimicked earlier transcultural projects in the Dutch arts, the book thus starts with an accusation against the ‘well-meaning’ people and a critical approach towards the Dutch art system in which the Wakaman artists operate.

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[872] Ibid.
[873] Ibid.
[874] Ibid.
[875] Ibid.

In the book *Wakaman – Drawing Lines Connecting Dots*, Gillion Grantsaan's initial 15 positions forming the first Wakaman exhibition become more solidified. In an effort to theorise a notion of what could become a Dutch Black Art Movement, he asks:

> isn't there anyone out there genuinely hot for that real black thing? And am I, a black visual artist, capable of generating that drive that gave birth to Calypso, Funk, Hip Hop, Bleus, Mambo and of translating this drive into visual art?[876]

> Black Art.
> Black art is a product of black consciousness.
> Black art is elitism and there to be judged on its quality.
> Black in Black art means to be political.
> Black art is an innovative synthesis of two or more Weltanschauungen. [world views]
> Black art is not the exclusive domain of people of African origin. As A fact Black art has nothing to Do with the skin Pigment of the artist.
> But with the dreams that keep following me: Dream A, B and C.
> Dream A is for producing images for my political ideals and black socio-cultural information.
> Dream B stands for shocking the world with innovative images.
> Dream C wants to inscribe my fellow immigrants in the course of European history.[877]

As one of the invited artists in this project, I articulated the idea of the imagined normal space, which would eventually lead to this doctoral thesis, as

> 'Alakondre (i.e. Surinamese for 'all lands')'.[878] It is contextualised as being 'centred and decentred at the same time, located in the space outlined by Rhizomatic lines of flight […] A fragmented whole like a broken mirror with many pieces reflecting Alakondre back into space. The reflection is in all-different directions except for where one would expect it to take root. For taking root in one place is ending the route.[879]

> I challenge the impossibility of taking roots in the fragments, taking roots in the lines of flight, taking root in the route and proclaim myself Wakaman.[880]

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[876] Gillion Grantsaan, Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots, (Amsterdam: Fonds BKVB, 2009) p. 25.
[877] Ibid.
[878] Charl Landvreugd, 'Waka Waka Waka #1', *Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots* (Amsterdam: Fonds BKVB, 2009), p. 50.
[879] Ibid.
[880] Ibid.

Effectively, the whole book was about imagining different spaces and strategies from which to operate. The Surinamese artist Luciel E. Becker speaks about *WildcoastArt* and defines himself as a Wild Coast Man who 'is a product of the creative force inherent to our [Surinamese] cultural diversity'.[881] Rob Perrée makes a connection between Suriname and the USA, questioning the idea of black artists in various stages of Obamazation.[882] Stanley Brouwn is recognised and included with a blank page stating his name in the bottom-right corner.[883] Chandra van Binnendijk writes about the 1980s' Surinamese artists' collective *Waka Tjopu*:

> The name Waka Tjopu is derived from an old-fashioned Surinamese marbles game where the aim is to reach a new and more distant target with each turn. The players try to touch – to 'tjop' –and gather as many of their opponents' marbles as possible.[884]

The rest of the book is an overview of the participating artists' communication, background and the result of the exhibition. After the book was released, the project group made an effort to get it into the hands of art historians and librarians in the Netherlands, Suriname, the USA, Jamaica, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire, France and the UK.[885] For the presentation of the book in the Netherlands, they invited the Dutch press: *Volkskrant*, *Trouw*, *Kunstbeeld*, *Parool*, *NRC*, *AD*, *Financieel Dagblad*, *Metropolis M*, *Museum Tijdschrift* and *Vrij Nederland*.[886] None of them replied to the invitation. In the end the book was reviewed in *Museum Tijdschrift*. The author states:

> The strength of this book is that the artists speak for themselves and are not afraid of self-criticism. They have cast off the role of the victim and show that there is not a simple univocal solution.[887]

In addition to this article, the Wakaman project and book made by Grantsaan and Jungerman received some attention, particularly online and on the radio.[888]

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[881] Luciel E. Becker, 'WildcoastArt. A New Concept, a New Result', *Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots* (Amsterdam: Fonds BKVB, 2009), p. 28.
[882] Rob Perée, 'Suriname and the USA: Black artists in various stages of Obamazation?', *Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots* (Amsterdam: Fonds BKVB, 2009), pp. 30–4.
[883] Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots, (Amsterdam: Fonds BKVB, 2009), p. 35.
[884] Chandra van Binnendijk, 'Waka Tjopu visual artists' collective', *Wakaman drawing lines – connecting dots* (Amsterdam: Fonds BKVB, 2009), p. 38.
[885] Wakaman, Distibutie boek Wakaman 2 feb 2009, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 5 July 2009.
[886] Wakaman, Uitnodigingen en aanmeldingen, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 4 Juli 2009.
[887] Pieters D., Passant, Museumtijdschrift, Wakaman archive Remy Jungerman, 21 October2009
[888] Unfortunately [in 2018] the links to these online reviews are now dysfunctional and cannot be accessed.

4.3 Conclusion

From the research thus far, I would argue that passing the cultural standard or, even better, creating a new one, begins with undoing the name that was given to immigrant background subjectivities in the assimilation process and finding ways to name the self. For the artist and curator Remy Jungerman, who is one of the founders of *Wakaman*, there has always been a conflict within naming oneself. When he is presented, one museum speaks of the Dutch-Surinamese artist while the other speaks of the Surinamese-Dutch artist. He believes, being born and raised in Suriname, that this is always part of him, but that the naming strategies that are used do not cover the precise feeling he has about his position as a human subject and artist within the system. He notes that, even if one wanted to fully embrace Dutchness, the cultural climate in the country does not allow it. Being linguistically (re)produced as Other is a large part of this. In our interview, it becomes obvious that this question about naming and, through naming, declaring a cultural and political position is an extremely difficult exercise problematised by the push and pull between head and heart, private and public. To the question of whether he would prefer a situation of naming beyond ethnicity, he fully confirmed. Self-naming is a set of strategies depending on cultural, political, personal and economic involvement and desires. For artists born and / or raised in the Netherlands it is not a matter of cultural passing because they know that Dutch culture is their culture and feel that they have a say in what it looks like. The feelings of entitlement connected to their cultural Dutchness and, if you will, perceived blankness or Dutch neutrality, complicate the political, personal and economic. Even though there is a generational difference in cultural ownership of what it means to be Dutch and different feelings of entitlement, all generations are approached as the same and are forced to take a position based on the same mechanisms of possible exclusion. These choices seem easier for other Afro artists who live and work outside of the Netherlands but operate in the Dutch and European market. To think the self through language then becomes an exercise in balancing out all these different interests.

The Wakaman artists came into existence by being specifically categorised as allochtonous/Other. Through curatorial practices, they tried to produce a language that addressed their subject positions as Afro-Dutch artists. It was precisely through the difference in how this position was experienced and negotiated that the group fell apart. The Jungerman / Grantsaan duo embraced the otherness and tried to unpack the Afro-Dutch condition from a geographical stance, effectively discussing the in-between space, decolonising it in an effort to balance out the status quo. Tedja immersed himself in the in-between and, in an effort to transcend it, proposed to *Eat the Frame!* His effort was to destroy the frame that makes the status quo possible. Both tried to artistically negotiate their subject position in the Afro-Dutch condition through curatorial practices. Their different approaches were both actively geared towards changing their

positions in the landscape and had different effects on the Dutch artistic environment and the artists involved.

Jungerman and Grantsaan created a self-supported Surinamese art project where Surinamese diaspora artists were coupled with local Surinamese artists. This approach created a unity that proved to be its quality in relation to creating a community of artists. Simultaneously, taking the affirmative action stand a bit further and focusing solely on artists with a Surinamese background became a disadvantage. Apart from the policy makers, within the general art scene, this move was perceived as singling out a group within the Dutch context. As the Wakaman groups rightly state, they all encountered the problems of categorisation, recognition and interpretation. Each group used different methods to work through their subjectivity that is rooted in the Afro-Dutch condition in one way or another. Where Jungerman and Grantsaan delved deeper into the Surinamese roots, Tedja echoed Preesman's position that '"Identity bound to borders" doesn't mean anything to him.'[889] Each position responded to the problematic relation with the general Dutch art discourse from the position of being subject to the Afro-Dutch condition.

With the three publications – the Wakaman book (2009) by Jungerman and Grantsaan, *Hosselen* (2009) and the *Eat the Frame!* catalogue (2009) by Tedja – Wakaman succeeded in centralising Afro artists' subjectivity and work. They established a trilogy that needs to be read and analysed as contemporary Afro-Dutch art theory. Michael Tedja's contribution was in writing the book *Hosselen* (2009) that is presented as a novel. The word novel is misleading, as it is a collection of 'texts and images somewhere between fiction, non-fiction, poetry, pamphlets, reproductions of artworks, picture stories, collages, diagrams and drawings'.[890] In the words of the critic Albert Hagenaars,

> cast in many different shapes, it specifically deals with identity, art and the numerous connections and discrepancies between the two. Subjects such as ethnicity, shattering existing structures and the relation between form and content are reviewed. Tedja's provocative style is as diverse as his themes; concepts such as 'diachrony' and 'Kantian accuracy' are mixed with street language and group jargon. The perspective constantly changes on the basis of 'facets', without losing the red thread and the reader is left with a lot to interpret.[891]

In his critique of the book, Perrée adds that Tedja's 'perspective on art, the art world and societal incidents' can be distilled from the essays and these 'will be experienced by many as exaggerated, but this

[889] Nicoline Baartman, De dingen moeten verotten (Things should decay), De Volkskrant, 3 march 1995, http://www.volkskrant.nl/archief/de-dingen-moeten-verrotten~a413570/ acc. 11-04-16.
[890] Rob Perrée, Michael Tedja – Hosselen, Kunstbeeld 2009, http://robperree.com/articles/702/michael-tedja-hosselen, acc, 23-08-2018.
[891] Hagenaars A., Michael Tedja – Hosselen, Werkgroep Caraïbische Letteren, 27-04-2010, http://werkgroepcaraibischeletteren.nl/michael-tedja-hosselen/, acc 23-08-2018.

is because before him, others did not have the courage to express them'.[892] He adds that, when Tedja speaks about *Eat the Frame!* he is referring to Dutch art funds that have to invest in politically correct projects or lose their state funding, and consequently are forced to make a distinction between white and black artists, thereby stigmatising the black artists who comply by performing blackness in the compiled frame.[893] The *Wakaman – drawing lines connecting dots* book does exactly that – by performing blackness, diving into the frame and suggesting options from within the existing structure. Read together, these publications function as witnesses of the moment and lay a basis from which to start to understand the current situation. As a consequence of these developments, and from a Dutch Afro position aiming at establishing a different normal space, the Afro-Dutch condition now has two distinctive Afro examples of curating contemporary art in the frame of the Dutch context. Both have to deal with the narrative that is based on the developments in the Netherlands through thinking about African-American art and the development of state policy and its consequences. One way of curating is by inhabiting the institutional discourse that has developed over the years about the position of the Afro-Dutch artist in the landscape and trying to change the position of the artists from the inside out. Secondly, the self-initiated exhibitions that have as a goal to establish Afro-Dutch artists' production beyond ideas of the quality argument and away from the existing framework – in other words, to eat the frame. From an Afro perspective, both aim to further the Dutch Afro artistic position in the Dutch art landscape by means of a curatorial practice, which I call action curating. The issues around this idea are further explored in the next chapter.

Before going into the next chapter, it is worth mentioning here that Gillion Grantsaan was on the radar of the Van Abbemuseum and was named in their initial proposal.[894] Remy Jungerman, Michael Tedja and Iris Kensmil were also on the radar of the art critics, as the interviews with them in *Kunstbeeld* demonstrate. Even so, as is discussed here and in earlier chapters, the concerns surrounding their Afro-Dutch conditions problematised their route into the established art environment. Wakaman, as a response to this predicament, underscores the need for and efforts towards the imagined normal space envisioned in this thesis. It is also worth mentioning that, except for Grantsaan who withdrew from the arts scene during Wakaman, all the Dutch Afro artists from the Jungerman group are successful Dutch artists working on the position of Afro artists in the Dutch landscape. Except for Michael Tedja, all the Dutch Afro artists that worked on his 'diversity' exhibition have disappeared.

[892] Rob Perrée, Michael Tedja – Hosselen, Kunstbeeld 2009, http://robperree.com/articles/702/michael-tedja-hosselen, acc, 23-08-2018.
[893] Ibid.
[894] Van Abbemuseum, The Van Abbemuseum Proposal for "Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit" 19th April, 2006, Museum archive Van Abbemuseum, Symposia; Be(com)ing Dutch, Voorbereidingen, Algemeen, 2007, p. 16.

5. Conclusion – Projecting: Krutu / Action Curating.

Introduction

The thesis consists of four chapters to be read as individual case studies on Dutch Afro artistic subjectivity – how it can be imagined, how it is produced, how it is conveniently overlooked and how it produces itself. The thesis unearths how racial discrimination is disguised by the national self-image of a non-racial equivalence meritocracy of cultural difference. This research has led to my search for a curatorial model that includes the lived experience of Dutch Afro and migrant-background artists as native to the Dutch landscape. It results in the imagining of a normal space through actively moving beyond the end of essential black subject without ever having to be post-black.

As the thesis has detailed, this imagining in the Dutch landscape is hindered by national cultural policies that moved from transcultural to diversity and assume that integration is effectuated through these measures. What this effectively does is foster a Dutch understanding of globalisation and diversity in 'super-white terms'. Based on my findings, I argue that for Dutch Afro and other migrant-background artists this means that creating a different cultural standard begins with undoing the name that was given to their subjectivity and finding ways to rename the self. Considering the specificity of the Dutch context of culture thinking, this means that it is about engaging with the paradoxes in Dutch society towards a cultural norm in which performing race does not occupy a central place.

Gloria Wekker named the strong operative Dutch paradox that is, as she notes, at the heart of the nation. It is the 'forcefulness and even aggression that race, in its intersection with gender, sexuality and class, elicits among the white population, while at the same time the reactions of denial, disavowal and elusiveness reign supreme'.[895] This paradox cannot be untangled from the Dutch self-image of tolerance that feeds the idea of non-racial equivalence and the strong belief in meritocracy. This sense of self is so strong that it inevitably brings us to a central paradox common in how nations present themselves in exhibitions and through art. According to Brian Wallis, 'in order to establish their status within international community, individualized nations are compelled to dramatize conventionalized versions of their national images, asserting past glories and amplifying stereotypical differences'.[896] Working in this environment of supposed non-racial equivalence, meritocracy and tolerance, Dutch Afro (and other migrant) artists who have the desire to forward their subjectivity as native to the Dutch landscape have to deal with the paradox of speaking their Dutch Afro-ness without highlighting ethnicity. These three

[895] Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence; Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016) p. 16.
[896] Brian Wallis, 'Selling Nations: International Exhibitions and Cultural Diplomacy' in *Museum Culture: Histories, Discourses, Spectacles,* ed. by Daniel J. Sherman and Irit Rogoff (London: Routledge, 1994) pp. 265-82 (p. 270).

paradoxes result in the final and most central paradox to this thesis which is the simultaneous becoming and refusal to be (artistically) black.

During this doctoral thesis the central question was whether it is possible to read Dutch Afro artistic production as native to the Netherlands. Focusing on the Dutch particularities, my intention was to move towards a language that takes as its starting point the subjective experiences of Dutch native artists, curators and critics as a tool to balance out the current institutional language on inclusive museum practices.[897],[898] My proposed method, based on my research and to test my proposition, was to depart from 'the prevailing British and Americo-centric discourse'[899] and concentrate on the production of language that considers the specifics of local Dutch sensibilities. Bringing the questions and concerns to the community of interest, by way of the Krutu, provided insight into the way artists, curators and directors position themselves in relation to this question and method in 2017.[900]

A Krutu is a gathering where issues of governance (*bestuur*) and issues of law are brought before the members of society. The Krutu sets out from the assertion that we belong to one society or unified tribe and therefore in this context should not be interpreted as an intercultural meeting, but a meeting that embraces the inherent cultural multiplicity as its default position. The head of the Krutu is normally the leader in the specific society who listens to all parties and then retreats with the advisors / elders to consider all the facts and opinions brought before the Krutu. In this case, I considered the leader to be the current Dutch art world with its need to diversify and the advisors the communities present. Essentially, I considered the Dutch art world to be a subjectivity whose decisions are advised by, informed through and executed by the cultural producers. It was conceived as a method that had the possibility of departing from the usual abstract conversation in the Dutch visual arts landscape that circles around the effect of the perception of race and ethnicity, when discussing diversity and quality in the arts. Taking my cue from action research, I argue that understanding the Krutu as a contemporary discursive curatorial project coming out of a migrant experience, with the specific aim of changing the status quo, is action research transformed into action curating. The eventual aim was to develop 'tools that can be used in artistic circles where the relation of multiple subjectivities to broader institutional contexts is prevalent'.[901]

In the open session of the Krutu, the 26[902] invited artists, curators, directors and critics individually presented a three- to five-minute response to the question: What would your considerations be towards

[897] R. Charl Landvreugd, Deviant Research Proposal, 25 August 2016.
[898] APPENDIX 3.
[899] Paul Gilroy,' Foreword: Migrancy, culture, and a new map of Europe', *Blackening Europe; The African American Presence*, ed. Heike Raphael-Hernandez (New York and London Routledge, 2004) pp.xi–xxii.
[900] APPENDIX 4.
[901] R. Charl Landvreugd, Deviant Research Proposal, 25 August 2016.
[902] APPENDIX 5.

developing a language that considers work made by Dutch artists with a migrant background as culturally Dutch? The question aimed to uncover thoughts that could lead to useable language while reimagining the Dutch art landscape. As expected, the answers in this open session were not radical and stayed within the lines of respectable diversity rhetoric.

In the closed second part, the same question was addressed in a private and focused session through multiple smaller questions. Like the open session, it was set up as a multilogue, meaning that one was encouraged to listen to what was being said, without trying to internally or verbally produce a response. The way to make this happen was that one was only allowed to respond to the question and not to the previous speaker. Taking my cue from action research, the idea behind this was that, when contemplating the question, actively listening and postponing any thoughts about what someone else said, a (minor) shift could occur in how the Dutch (visual) arts landscape is perceived through a multitude of voices (the multilogue). The questions that were asked followed the primary setup of this thesis and considered tracing historical conditions, unearthing how these developments were experienced and considering how the participants inhabited the current situation and might imagine the future.[903] What came out of this session, which provided more engaged answers than the open session, is what the previous chapters have shown: namely, that language is one of these discursive spaces where what is considered Dutch culture has become racialised.

It was in this verification process of culture as racialised that the closed session of the Krutu in particular was different from other public programming around diversity. It brought all the research into place in one consolidated forum by rearticulating longstanding issues around race and culture in 2017. In so doing, it became apparent how invested all participating subjects were in the Dutch self-image and consequently demonstrated the cultural nativeness of all participating subjects, including the Dutch Afro ones. Testing the key questions, understanding how they were reformulated by the community and, through that, confirming the legitimacy of the research underscored the need and demand for a different type of discourse and curatorial practice. In effect, the findings of the research and the conclusions of the chapters were reiterated by the participants throughout the whole Krutu. In this sense, it was a case study of all the research that had led up to that curatorial moment.

[903] In line with the agreed confidentiality the remarks of the closed session will be referenced through respondent numbers (R-1 to R-26).

5.1 Imagining

As the invitation to the participants stated, the Krutu was set up to focus on artistic 'linguistic and curatorial strategies surrounding art made by Afro subjects in the Dutch context',[904] and 'used to unpack the concepts, sensitivities and artistic expressions that are typical of the [Dutch] region'.[905]

> The Krut'krutu (Krutu) provides a way of thinking through this difficulty because one can listen without having to formulate an answer. This gives the space to listen to what is being said without having to place it within one's own frame of reference.[906]

Speaking about local Afro-ness in Dutch was a deliberate method as it underscored the inability of the Dutch discourse to speak race in the arts. This approach was in contrast to most Dutch gatherings that, when considering diversity and inclusivity in the visual arts, are held in English because of the invited guests or (presumably) non-Dutch audience present. For the purpose of the Krutu and mining for specifically Dutch concepts and words, the questions that emerged from my research and in the English language were translated into Dutch. This highlighted the problem of my theoretical knowledge originating in English and my lack of Dutch theoretical training to translate the questions properly. This imbalance attracted attention among the participants. In effect, my inability was a metaphor for the larger Dutch conversation on race. However, the awkward phrasing and looking for Dutch words encouraged the participants who were mostly also not trained in Dutch theoretical language, the audience and myself to think in local language and express our sensitivities by speaking our native tongue. The change that occurred in me and the participants and came out of this discursive curatorial project, driven by a migrant-background experience, underscored the significance of action curating while demonstrating the need for Dutch-specific language. Both are needed in the Dutch art world to create a different environment that is capable of analysing the visual production of Dutch Afro artists as native to the Dutch artistic landscape.

Having said that, the terminologies that emerge as useful in this doctoral thesis arise from that same space as the imagined normal space. It is the space between languages, an inherently hybrid space that emerges from the fold where different meaning arises in the derailment between languages.

What I suggest is that there where, in its original form the meaning of a particular word cannot be directly transferred from one language to another, the agency it has in one language also cannot be transferred. As a consequence agency and meaning are left in the fold to be appropriated and describe the

[904] Van Abbe museum, Invitation email Krut'krutu, 29 April 2017.
[905] Ibid.
[906] Respondent nr. 16, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.

inherently hybrid space. As a referent to the meaning the word has in the language from which it originated it then expands on it to create the conditions in which the imagined normal space can be conceptualized.

Terms such as 'cultural nativeness' and 'blankness' therefore should not be read as new invention, but rather as linguistic flashes, born out of inherent hybridity that suggest the existence of the imagined normal space that is proposed.

5.2 Tracing

As chapter two demonstrated in relation to Dutch art critique, cultural policies and an understanding from exotic to diverse, the current landscape does not provide space to establish Afro nativeness. In this experience the contemporary Afro-Dutch are arguably comparable to the post-WWII Black British and the African Americans of the first great migration (1916–30). Colonially inspired beliefs and the subsequent differing treatment of Afro subjects are so virulent that imagining any sort of (Dutch) Afro subjectivity has to take this into account in one way or another. The presence of this structure permeates all communication about an Afro-Dutch subjectivity as culturally native to the Netherlands.

To open up this communication, close assessment of the Dutch language is a method to unearth obscured problems and bring to light underlying cultural sentiments. The impact of this method is so strong that during the Krutu it was suggested that one of the problems of being

> forced to speak and hear everything in Dutch [is that it] reeks of nationalism.[907]

The assumption of nationalism, which is strongly tied to the notion of WWII racism, was that it would neglect looking outside of the Netherlands and learning from it. What I have argued in this thesis is that it is precisely this looking outside of the Netherlands that has hindered the development of local concepts and language about Dutch pain connected to its histories. The looking outside, specifically to the United States, involuntarily negated the crucial differences in views on race. Art critic and curator Ferdinand van Dieten observed that the American situation is a

> colonial society in which the colonisers are still in charge. A society where the white underclass is an associate-coloniser. Dutch racism does not go to this extent of mortal fear but is one of exclusion and disadvantage. [908]

[907] Respondent nr. 23, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.

He stated that the challenge is to keep wondering whether our language is capable of speaking that difference when the Dutch underclass does not have a group under them but one that is imagined against them.[909] Supporting the work that is done in this thesis, Van Dieten remarked that those who experience this difference and can indicate how it is experienced on an emotional level must first do this work in the development of language. He concluded that

> the underclass racism is not that important for the Dutch art world. It is mainly colonial superiority, which can be found at the top layers of society, which includes the arts. It is constitutive of the elite culture which does not account for its role in world history but looks at a formal analysis of its own living environment. [910]

In the words of Marcus Balkenhol,

> What counts as Dutch is considered to be what white people do. [911]

Curator and director of TENT in Rotterdam, Anke Bangma, questioned whether conventional language could be a tool to actualise who belongs to Dutch culture.[912] In the participant group, it became clear that language and the visual should move to a modus of relations, away from this societal racialised view that favours whiteness – a view that is demonstrated through the archival research in chapter two.

Coming out of this is that the idea of the cultural Dutch that is Afro belongs to the present and the future of Europe and the Netherlands. To get there, Ferdinand van Dieten wondered whether there is a language in Dutch, with a consciousness of the future, such as Du Bois' double-consciousness.[913] Curator and critic Vincent van Velsen imagined it as a consciousness that disavows the polar system of Western / non-Western – one that moves away from hyphenated identities that mathematically imply that the second part is subtracted from the first. In his words,

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[908] Ferdinand van Dietten, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[909] Ibid.
[910] Ibid.
[911] Marcus Balkenhol, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[912] Anke Bangma., Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[913] Ferdinand van Dietten, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.

> a language that forwards the togetherness of these words that is closer to the truth meaning Surinamese + Dutch.[914]

This sort of +language, not yet existing in the Dutch context, creates a new symbolic meaning with a future. This is the sort of language that is needed to give shape to the imagined normal space. For this language to come into being, curator and scholar Chandra Frank put forward the questions:

> how to create a language that puts language at the centre and is not confined to white Dutch-ness. How do we describe, analyse and what aesthetics do we see and acknowledge? How do we organise (exhibitions)? What does it mean to be here, which includes a 'there' that is brought here?[915]

Chandra Frank's questions unintentionally addressed the illusion of the there-dream of cultural influence discussed in chapter two. More importantly, they pointed to the problem of language that is at the heart of this English-language thesis. This means that this text undermines the intention of the Krutu to use the Dutch language as a tool to penetrate the Dutch discourse. Rather, as it stands now, this thesis re-establishes the dominance of English, which is used as a tool to decentralise Dutch Afro-ness in the Dutch discussion.

A case in point is this example that highlights the importance of action curating as a strategy rooted in a migrant-background experience. The question of the open session was: What would your considerations be towards developing a language that considers work made by Dutch artists with a migrant background as culturally Dutch / native? Translating this into Dutch was problematic. The translation of the word native to Dutch is literally the word '*inboorling / inheems*'. These words allude strongly to the colonial history, which is still a painful and ignored issue, and has heavily negative connotations. During the process, I translated culturally native in a way that I thought would position it in the contemporary Dutch discussions about belonging by using the term 'cultural autochthony'. Where autochthony is already claimed by whiteness and connected to geography, cultural autochthony as a contemporary construction in contemporary art could be located in the art and cultural world of the Netherlands. However, as Nira Yuval-Davis states, autochthonic politics are about claiming 'We were here before you, and therefore we

[914] Vincent van Velsen, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[915] Chandra Frank, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.

belong and you do not!'[916] Consequently, the term became a new, albeit problematic, term, which we could fill up with meaning and give shape to what it means to be 'black' in the Netherlands. Now, in hindsight, the Dutch notion of '*cultureel eigen*' or '*cultuureigen*' (culturally own) seems more appropriate as it signifies being inherent to a culture and is separated from the (racial) 'politics of belonging'[917] project that is signified by the word autochthony. In Dutch, Dutch Afro art as *cultuureigen* makes sense and can be explored while the idea of 'culture-own' does not exist in English. (For the record, *cultuureigen* differs from culturally specific because being part of, as *cultuureigen* denotes, does not equal being specific to.) With this proposition, the question asked by Chandra Frank on 'how to create a language that puts language at the centre and is not confined to white Dutch-ness'[918] is exemplified through action curating as a discursive exercise. It is an exercise in language that goes against the grain of the Dutch tendency to simplify art speak in order to appeal to large audiences. As curator and critic Ferdinand van Dieten noted,

> Maybe dulling language is a tool in the Dutch elite to mask differentiation in consciousness.[919]

Following on from this premise, it can be argued that looking for Dutch language and concepts to discuss the issues raised is, due to the assembly of art professionals, essentially maintaining this differentiation. Alternatively, the Krutu undid this differentiation by working towards an inclusive linguistic model based on the input rooted in the diversity of the group rather than in the art-historical narrative. Exchanging an international word such as autochthonous for '*cultuureigen*' in the artistic discourse evidences the Dutch language as a method to conceptualise local sensibilities. In an effort to eventually locate Dutch Afro artistic output as native, addressing historical linguistic and curatorial Dutch tropes through this form of conceptualisation proved useful.

5.3 Experiencing

How museums experienced the changes in the cultural field and historically interpreted diversity in such a way that it excluded Dutch Afro-ness as a native subjectivity is discussed in chapter three. Demonstrating that this is still a problem and supporting my proposition that a new artistic environment is vital, the curator Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen mentioned that in 2017 there was little discussion about what cultural

[916] Yuval-Davis N., The Rise of Contemporary Autochthonic Political Projects of Belonging, https://www.tba21.org/journals/article/The-Rise-of-Contemporary-Autochthonic-Political-Projects-of-Belonging acc. 12-01-2017.
[916] Ferdinand van Dietten, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[917] Yuval-Davis N., The Rise of Contemporary Autochthonic Political Projects of Belonging, https://www.tba21.org/journals/article/The-Rise-of-Contemporary-Autochthonic-Political-Projects-of-Belonging acc. 12-01-2017.
[918] Chandra Frank, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[919] Ferdinand van Dietten, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.

difference means in Dutch museums.[920] He argued that since the 1960s the Dutch art canon has not been written anymore and hiring curators with a migration background and finally rewriting it could make a difference in perspective.[921] Curator and director of Framer Framed, Josien Pieterse, noted that this could be done by 'developing a way of working that is based on a diversity of narratives with different curators'.[922] She also stated that getting the work into the institutions is made difficult by the current theories that are the basis for institutions and education.[923] In her words,

> After analysing these, the question is how do new practices develop by providing autonomy in the exhibition space? Bureaucratic frames of new public management in an organisation, value frames in exhibitions and communication frames. How do you arrive at a language that deconstructs the top-down development of language?[924]

Writer and organiser Simone Zeefuik who is one of the initiators of the *Decolonize the Museum* project pointed out that taking this into account means reconsidering 'partners when trying to define stuff such as neutrality. Not creating space but redistribute the space of which we know it exists.'[925]

These remarks respond to my questions about the museums, the canon, cultural perspective, current theoretical frameworks, language, heritage, neutrality, objectivity and redistribution of space that are discussed in the previous chapters. They are rephrased through the voice of the community and, by highlighting narratives and space rather than race, arguably support the argument of embracing Dutch culture thinking as a tool towards the imagined normal space. Getting there means constructing a different language based on close examination of local sensibilities, such as our investment in the idea of a non-racial equivalent meritocracy society.

5.3.1 Institution

The role of the Van Abbemuseum in this process was that, as a sequel to the *Be(com)ing Dutch* programme (2006–08), they organised the ten-day *Be(com)ing More* caucus and the Deviant Research in 2017.[926] For *Becoming More*, they invited artists, organisers and thinkers working in the Netherlands to author distinct days and moments. The museum believed that at this 2017 critical juncture of unrest

[920] Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[921] Ibid.
[922] Josien Pieterse, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[923] Ibid.
[924] Ibid.
[925] Simone Zeefuik, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[926] Annie Fletcher, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.

(which includes the ever-growing Dutch Afro awareness) it is vital to listen, consolidate and share. The eventual *Be(com)ing More* programme was the museum asking how art could provide a productive, critical space where solidarities are formed and political visions rehearsed. In other words, it asked: 'How can we become more?'[927]

With *Be(com)ing More*, rather than speaking their opinion as they had done during *Be(com)ing Dutch* ten years earlier, the museum decided to see which cultural producers in the visual arts, with a Black or migrant background, could be involved in the process. The decision was made not to speak as the museum but rather share to the institution with people who are important for them and have something urgent to say and discuss through intervention.[928] In the final programme the museum acknowledged the changed environment where migrant-background critics were demanding their cultural citizenship. The programme included Gloria Wekker, Iris Kensmil, Bijmerpark Theater, Hip-Hop Huis, University of Colour and myself, among others. In the process the museum provided space and extended museological legitimacy to different forms of knowledge and experiences and redressed the arrears that became visible in the (general) critique on the *Be(com)ing Dutch* caucus ten years previously. The idea of the Krutu as action curating was to collaborate with the Van Abbemuseum in an exploration of how 'an institute could contribute more holistically to the production and empowerment of plural subjectivities'.[929] What it did was 'redistribute the space of which we know it exists',[930] as Simone Zeefuik proposed during the Krutu, and made an effort to 'arrive at a language that deconstructs the top-down development of language',[931] as Josien Pieterse suggested.

For Anke Bangma, director of TENT in Rotterdam, making a step in the direction of [the earlier proposed +language] being self-evident in art institutions also means looking at where that institution is located and wondering what it should be or could become.[932] Pointing out the problem of language and explaining it when making an exhibition is key in an institutional surrounding where the audience is mainly white. Therefore, according to the director of the National Opera and Ballet Els van der Plas, explicit use of current language is a way of creating a new language.[933] In line with my argument in chapter one, on an imagined normal space that leaves the structures from which it comes intact, the young curator of colour at the Amsterdam Museum, Imara Limon, added that

[927] Van Abbe museum, Invitation email Krut'krutu, 29 April 2017.
[928] Annie Fletcher, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[929] R. Charl Landvreugd, Deviant Research Proposal, 25 August 2016.
[930] Simone Zeefuik, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[931] Josien Pieterse, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[932] Anke Bangma., Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[933] Els van der Plas., Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.

> this language should not be constructed as a reaction or addition to the white Western idiom but rather a language that stands on its own and show the inadequacies in the current institutional language.[934]

From Anke Bangma's position as a director based in the most diverse city of the Netherlands, Rotterdam, an institutional and curatorial position should therefore not be fundamental but situated and practical:[935]

> It is not about discussing stuff but concrete actions towards settling the semantic difference between Dutch [white], foreign and artists with a multiple background [Dutch with a migrant background].[936]

The development of this terminology or language makes explicit the imbalance in collections and curatorial decisions. Respondent 20 added that speaking it is a way of making a start to change the normal-values (*normaalwaarden*) that are in place, but from an institutional perspective such a language is often considered too niche and problematic in informing and attracting (the mainly white) visitors.[937] With this remark, the respondent alluded to the 'innate incomprehensibility' of work dealing with Dutch Afro 'life-feeling' (i.e. Negro experience) that is an impregnable fortress for Dutch art critique and the curatorial, as discussed in chapter two.

In popular culture, however, this making explicit (of whiteness) already happens. The language used by musicians is inspiring but has not found a translation towards the visual arts environment. Mariette Dölle stated that this inclusive language originating in the music industry is an energetic one that should be incorporated to speak about art.[938] Josien Pieterse noted that this popular culture language is looking for 'renewed commonality'.[939] It creates what Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen called 'elephant paths'[940] that disrupt the rigid system and construct free zones that do not acknowledge the formats in the institutions. They are a meeting ground for artists with different backgrounds. Here, new formulae for artistic criteria can be encountered without being put in a category. I argue that these elephant paths are the in-between space where this subjectivity is shaping the new normal space, which at this time is still imagined.

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[934] Imara Limon, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[935] Anke Bangma., Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[936] Ibid.
[937] Respondent nr. 20, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[938] Mariette Dölle, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[939] Josien Pieterse, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[940] Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.

It is in this space where white cultural workers (researchers, etc.) can recognise that whiteness is also a colour and a position from which to do research and create art. It results in recognition of the self as a racialised and not a neutral position.[941] From the current point of institutional view, when racial background poses as culture, whiteness is passing for Western culture. Cultural passing implies that one element (ethnicity / race) can be disregarded because there is a space surrounding it in which an articulation can be formed. Respondent 14 argued that, in that sense, the contemporary populist Dutch self-image is culturally passing for Western universalism and Blankness with a disregard for its colonial past.[942] When this is recognised, the museum can become a space of histories, rather than a space for one universalist view.[943] This space of 'histories' that the museum became with the Krutu was rightly critiqued by respondent 9. They stated that this context of the museum was forced upon the participants and was not necessarily a context that is essential to achieve appreciation for the discourse on Afro-ness in the Dutch arts.[944] However, as redistributed agency by museum proxy, it did answer to the cultural, social and spatial entitlement that is experienced by Dutch Afro artists and consequently inscribes itself in the Dutch national self-image of non-racial equivalence.

It is the tension between this entitlement and inhabiting the national self-image that spawns the question of whether Dutch Afro art can be located as native to the Dutch artistic landscape. The question is thus a consequence of the question as to whether migrant-background Dutch subjects can be located as native to the local environment. This opportunity of the Krutu resulted in returning the existing research and the questions back to the institutional context – a context that, as chapter three shows, was part of working through similar questions in the past. A past in which Dutch art criticism moved from exotic and mystical in the early 1980s to a postcolonial context that included world art at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In this process there was a (internationally orientated) focus on the contrast between so-called traditional art practices and Western art practices, a cultural difference between black and white. The critique centred on 'identity' and the perceived inability of non-Western (particularly Afro) modern artists to attain the same quality standard as their Western (white) counterparts.

This trajectory of Dutch art criticism from exotic and mystical to postcolonial produced the key argument in the appreciation of works, which is the false binary between ethnicity and quality that is defined as the quality argument. As a curatorial question, Okwui Enwezor tackled this issue in *Documenta XI* (2002)

[941] Respondent nr. 5, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[942] Respondent nr. 14, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[943] Ibid.
[944] Respondent nr. 9, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.

with its theme of 'cultural identity'[945] in the postcolonial era, when he insisted that issues faced by African artists are similar to those faced by artists in the West.[946] And that 'it is totally imaginable that Documenta is not the right platform for many artists'.[947] In chapter two, I argue that, with this line of thinking, Okwui Enwezor destabilised the quality argument by proposing that Western art institutions are insufficiently equipped to grasp the full complexity of current cultural identities.

By creating a different curatorial argument and forum that addressed the issues of language, subjectivity and agency, I was able to test the findings of the research, the production of language and discuss it in the institutional setting in an open-ended way with the community of interest. The verification exercise in the form of the Krutu tested the issues and historical research with these communities for whom this confirmed analysis can serve as a tool to change the environment. Through this verification process, this thesis can now serve as evidence to counter the aloofness and questioning of the validity of the lived experience of Dutch Afro and other artists with a migrant background in the institutional setting. The anecdotal knowledge around racial and ethnic dynamics which are carefully circumvented in the museum and made opaque through the use of the English-based discourse is now proven through researched fact.

5.4 Inhabiting

Factual evidence, however, does not compensate for the lack of concepts and language to speak about the Dutch Afro experience and paradox of simultaneously becoming and refusing to be (artistically) black. In the *Small Axe* interview 'On the self-evidence of Blackness' (2014) with the Head of the Research Center for Material Culture in Leiden, Dr Wayne Modest, I proposed a privilege of existing in normal space where blackness exists not as referential to whiteness.[948] Back then I understood this as stemming from a subjectivity that conceives itself as self-evidently privileged, regardless of the construction of the dominant society in which they are judged on the basis of race. It is this kind of imagining that became a problem in generations for whom, according to Yuval-Davis, 'belonging is about feeling safe, feeling entitled to particular rights and roles, [and] is composed of emotional, cognitive, and normative dimensions'.[949] Over the years I came to understand this as the earlier mentioned entitlement that is rooted in Dutch colonial cultural nativeness. It took me so long because the Dutch language does not have a

[945] Rob Perrée, 'Directeur Okwui Enwezor geeft visie op zijn Documenta –"Ik dans niet voor geld"' [Director Okwui Enwezor gives vision on his Documenta – "I don't dance for money"], *Kunstbeeld*, No. 5, Jaargang 26 (Utrecht: Veen Media, mei 2002) pp. 6-9 (p. 7).
[946] Ibid.
[947] Ibid., 9.
[948] Wayne Modest, 'On the Self-Evidence of Blackness: An Interview with Charl Landvreugd', *Small Axe*, Volume 18, No. 3 (Durham: Duke University Press, November 2014, (No. 45)), pp. 133–4.
[949] Yuval-Davis N., The Rise of Contemporary Autochthonic Political Projects of Belonging, https://www.tba21.org/journals/article/The-Rise-of-Contemporary-Autochthonic-Political-Projects-of-Belonging acc. 12-01-2017

word for this feeling in common parlance. In Dutch, entitlement translates as the 'right to' and, when we start speaking about cultural rights, the debate quickly takes on an ethnic (/ religious) motif and moves in the direction of the dreaded nationalist rhetoric.

Looking at this being confirmed and discussed during the Krutu suggested that the level of cultural entitlement depends on the extent to which a sense of belonging to and being part of Dutch culture is experienced. Cultural critic Markus Balkenhol who works with the Meertens Institute noted that, since the 1980s when minorities came under pressure to integrate into Dutch culture, culturalisation has had a large role in speaking about the multicultural society.[950] Critic, curator and crown member of the National Culture Council Board, Ozkan Gölpinar, added that culturalisation meant that there has been a red line going through art projects in the past 20 years. It is the line of, and confrontation with,

> 'Keep your hands off our traditions!'[951]

He went on to say that consequently, for people with a migrant background,

> A place in tradition is not obtained easily as one is never invited in wholeheartedly.[952]

He stated that, as a way of circumventing this predicament, one could

> wholeheartedly embrace Dutch culture, the culture of one's lifelong surroundings, and totally inhabit it, in a way that it is in your pores and cannot be washed off.[953]

As chapter one and four show, becoming, or self-evidently being, encultured brings with it entitlement in social interactions (social entitlement) which is not automatically acknowledged. Lived experience shows that being encultured and the resulting social entitlement do not equate to a position in deciding what tradition is or what the Dutch visual art landscape may become. What is needed to make that happen is what the scholar Gaye Theresa Johnson conceptualised in 2013 as spatial entitlement. Speaking about postwar Los Angeles, she describes this as

[950] Marcus Balkenhol, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[951] Ozkan Gölpinar, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[952] Ibid.
[953] Ibid.

> the spatial strategies and vernaculars utilized by working-class youth to resist the increasing demarcations of race and class […] spatial entitlement entails occupying, inhabiting, and transforming physical spaces, but also imagining, envisioning, and enacting discursive spaces that 'make room' for new affiliations and identifications.[954]

When read through this argument the action research done with the Krutu, as a (discursive) curatorial project coming out of a migrant experience with the specific aim of changing the status quo, was curatorially executing spatial entitlement – in other words, action curating. From this perspective and specific problem space, then, using the cultural to locate Afro-Dutch subjectivity as culturally native to the Netherlands can be done through different forms of spatial entitlement. For me it was organising the Krutu at the Van Abbemuseum, which is an echo of the previous time I organised discussion around these issues with *Am I Black Enough For You?* (De Unie, 2010) and *Am I Black?* (SMBA, 2013). During the Krutu, artist and activist Quinsy Gario simply created a visual and performative image of eating a mango with the skin still on, as is done in certain parts of the Caribbean.[955] By doing so, he challenged the discursive practice of presenting a statement about Dutchness in the institutional setting of a 'symposium'. The power that lies in non-verbal communication forced the viewer into a different frame of reference. It was moving into what, according to artist Antonio Guzman, 'Yoruba tradition teaches us, namely that language is a matter of symbolism'.[956] This can also be internalised through inhabiting the performance. The artist and curator Remy Jungerman proposed putting the mouse (thick part of the hand just under the thumb) of the hand on the ear and closing it down. Having done this, one taps on the back of the head several times. After taking the hands off the ears, he mentioned several names of habitats of Surinamese Maroons and asks the audience to imagine what these places look like. What happened is that, because the language was not understood by the majority, the names of the places became sounds to them. Ending with the name 'Libatongo', which means 'the language of the river', one wonders what the sounds then do to the imagination and what sort of language this river produces. In the context of the Krutu, these two challenges were examples of how Afro-Dutch artists could exert influence on the Dutch art scene through linguistic, visual and sonic confusion that sharpens the mind while conjuring questions of doubt and inconvenience / nuisance. With this doubt, the artist moved into what artist and womanist Patricia Kaersenhout called

[954] G.T. Johnson, *Spaces of Conflict, Sounds of Solidarity: Music, Race, and Spatial Entitlement in Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), p. 1.
[955] Quinsy Gario, Performance, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[956] Antonio Guzman, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.

> worlds of the swinging paradox where one is considered blacker and sometimes less black depending on circumstance.[957]

It is this doubt that arrives through executing and inhabiting the spatial entitlement. It comes from entering unknown and uncomfortable terrain by means of the imagination. It is necessary for the construction of the imagined normal space that is desired by the cultural entitlement.

During the Krutu, opening up these avenues to change the racialised view to a cultural one corresponded with my claim that in this research Afro-ness should be considered a way of thinking about the larger Dutch visual art environment. Depending on the social history and historical connection to the Netherlands, the way cultural and spatial entitlement is experienced is different for the various Dutch migrant groups. Respondent 22 made a point out of noticing that parallel to the majority group question of diversity is the question of self-reflective inclusivity for people of Afro descent (and / or migrant backgrounds) when thinking about becoming self-evident in the Dutch art world.[958] Culturally passing as Black Dutch, which entails being considered encultured enough for cultural stereotypes to be relatively mitigated, often means being equated with Surinamese Dutch. According to respondent 15, this means acknowledging that Surinamese ethnic privilege, granted by white Dutch society at large based on the level of assimilation, puts forward the question of how Blackness is populated in the Dutch community.[959]

> Is it even possible to be considered part of this (Afro) artistic community when one is not part of the Afro community coming out of the Dutch colonial past?[960]

With a non-existing coherent social or political community among people of African descent, the question was asked how trust can be built and who is being exploited when, for instance, Afro Caribbean subjects use the African body to establish a back to the roots feel in the arts while not having compassion for the refugees of African descent and voting PVV?[961] (This remark refers to the city of Venray, which has a large community from Curaçao and is the largest PVV stronghold in the Netherlands.) With me having a Surinamese background and enjoying this Surinamese privilege, suspicion was rightly cast on my motives. In other words, what efforts were being made by Dutch Afro artists and curators of specifically Surinamese descent to produce an Afro-inclusive image of Dutch Blackness in the arts? What this interaction demonstrated is that, partly due to different privileges granted to different Afro ethnicities, a

[957] Patricia Kaersenhout, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[958] Respondent nr. 22, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[959] Respondent nr. 15, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[960] Respondent nr. 4, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[961] Respondent nr. 15, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.

general Dutch Afro cultural citizenship cannot be achieved solely based on feelings of entitlement or racial identification. Afro ethnicity linked to cultural background is the defining factor in acknowledgement of entitlement and consequently creates a hierarchy of belonging within the larger Dutch Afro community. This knowledge came specifically out of the Krutu and due to my personal blind spots did not occur in the research. To inter-ethnically and in the Dutch Afro community speak about this hierarchy we will have to develop local concepts and language.

5.5 Projecting

There have been artists who tried to provide tools to project into the future. In tandem with the *Stimuleringsprijs Culturele Diversiteit*, the Mondriaan Fund also initiated the *Intendant Culturele Diversiteit* (2006–09) (effectuating affirmative action for minorities in the arts). In this programme the Wakaman group found an opportunity to bring their concerns to the fore in an environment that, on the basis of the quality argument, questioned their visual language.

In chapter four I argued that, through this programme, the agency the Wakaman group initially had as a self-organised curatorial practice was nullified by partaking in a programme established on the basis of affirmative action. In exchange they were granted a colonial form of economic agency akin to development aid. The artists who started the project, Michael Tedja, Gillion Grantsaan and Remy Jungerman, tried to artistically negotiate their subjective racial and cultural position in the Afro-Dutch condition through curatorial practices. As a consequence of these developments, curating from the Afro-Dutch condition resulted in two distinctive curatorial paths. One was following the existing racialised (post)colonial routes set out by the system (Jungerman / Grantsaan) but now executed by and benefiting artists with a Surinamese background. The other was to *Eat the frame!* (Tedja) and, a decade ahead of its time, work towards an imagined normal space where race is depoliticised and Afro-Dutchness is perceived as a cultural condition.

As an inheritor of the Wakaman curatorial practices, being able to curatorially combine their two methods in 2017 during *Be(com)ing More* at the Van Abbemuseum was a consequence of the museum's development over the past ten years and the changed Dutch environment that placed a renewed emphasis on diversity in the arts. With the understanding that, from the racial and cultural elements that make up the Afro-Dutch condition, questions could be asked that did not spare the institution, the emerging inclusive curatorial method resembled action research in the design and expected outcome.

The tools I have identified in the research for artists and curators that actually work in creating a new environment where their work can be read as native to the Dutch artistic landscape are the digital environment, the actual work, the production of language and the imagination to project into the future. Developing these tools entails investigating the link between their subjectivity, the available information about their supposedly different culture and how to produce work in relation to that. Considering that the Dutch education system never taught much about that 'other' culture, the internet contributed to all the different generations' understanding of themselves as Afro subjects in the construction of today's Dutch context. Becoming aware that technological developments play a key role in representation, the Afro-Dutch (artist) takes full control in trans-mediating and exploring their existence through the digital. Consequently, the Dutch digital spaces that emerged in recent years were deliberately created or tapped into and have a direct relation to other Afro stories that influence the Dutch Afro awareness and development. For the Dutch Afro artists, the internet helped in understanding how the racial / physical part of the Afro-Dutch condition that is connected to the diaspora could result in visual art production.

The curatorial propositions made by Afro artist-curators in the Netherlands followed a trajectory of self-determination that relates to Stuart Hall's historical account of Black artistic moments as a spiral retelling. Starting with the *Srefidensi* group (1970s) establishing a gallery space for Caribbean artists and *Cosmic Illusion* (1980s) organizing exhibitions that aligned the artists with the then prevailing Modernism of the New York-Cologne axis, we arrive at Felix de Rooy with *Wit over Zwart* (1989) that made visible the colonial legacy of racism through objects. The latter was a curatorial turning point in centralizing the troublesome race-culture axis in the Dutch artistic landscape. *Wakaman* (2000s) questioned how this legacy informed the perception of their subjectivity and the work they produced and looked for new curatorial routes that centralized their experience. With the *Krutu* (2017) the Wakaman curatorial arguments were transformed into action curating as a method that affirms Afroness as native to the Dutch artistic landscape.

This forty-year trajectory effectively comes full circle in negotiating the usefulness, effectiveness and form of an artistic environment of affirmation. It postulates a new (21st century) beginning of curatorial strategies that is historically grounded and through the accelerated return of Afro and migrant experiences into the knowledge base shapes a different environment.

With this in mind, the young artist Silvia Martes whom I interviewed stated:

> As an Afro person, how much is one influenced by being born in the Netherlands and almost only seeing white (blank) people around, and in the media? Is it even possible to think from a space of blackness when you live and come from this situation? … I think it would be wonderful to create films about normal people, about the everyday with people of colour. That isn't asking too much, is it?[962]

With this statement Martes made clear that, when the racial assumptions are stripped from the work, it falls into the broader category of a migrant experience of being surrounded by a majority group. The tool to locate Dutch Afro art production as native to the Dutch artistic landscape can then be recognised as an aesthetic of belonging brought about through the digital and emerging from a Dutch immigrant background.[963] For Dutch Afro artists this immigrant background means that, due to 'cultural difference', work dealing with Dutch Afro 'life-feeling' (identity) is considered incomprehensible and consequently proves to be an impregnable fortress for Dutch art critique. Stressing this argument that was made in chapter two, curator and critic Vincent van Velsen comments that this ethnic fetishism emerging from this form of analysis denies Dutch 'cultural own' (autochthonic) agency to artists with a migrant background and informs how they are approached and consequently speak about themselves.[964] Their biographical migrant narrative 'is brought in as new and as a way to increase [autochthonic] knowledge and economics'.[965] This idea is solid and hinges on what Ad van Rosmalen called the '*daardroom*' (there-dream) which entails seeing the artists as being from 'there' even though they may only have 'second-hand experiences located in the country of origin'.[966]

This way and language of framing is, in the words of Anke Bangma, reiterated through 'patterns in press releases and writings on the artists' that construct local artists with a migrant background as having a 'background' while the others (white artists) are floating around in an autonomous space.[967] The local migrant-background artists do not get the same type of appreciation as 'an enrichment of the Dutch artistic landscape and her international stature'[968] as does an American or Lebanese artist who comes to study in the Netherlands and is consequently considered an international artist. In Bangma's words,

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[962] Silvia Martes, Interview Silvia Martes, Skype, 31-03-2016.
[963] For further reading on the idea of a 'migrant aesthetics' see: G.P. Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the future of Postcolonial Studies* (Liverpool University Press, 2008).
[964] Vincent van Velsen, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[965] Ibid.
[966] Ad van Rosmalen, 'Een wederkerige droom' [A reciprocal/bilateral dream], *Double Dutch* (Tilburg: Stichting Kunst Mondiaal, 1991) p.21.
[967] Anke Bangma., Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[968] Ibid.

> An artist born in the Netherlands and drawing from their transnational background is not viewed as contributing to the international character of the Dutch art scene.[969]

She points out that those

> artists with a multiple background are always discussed in terms of symbolism and tradition [i.e. paganism] and the work of artists with a so-called single background discussed in terms of agency and artistic experiment.[970]

It is a culturally specific language of autonomy that seems unable to speak about art and culture without thinking personal ethnic and cultural background. This treatment of 'autonomous' artists linguistically reduces culturally multiple-background native individuals to a single lesser narrative.

To project into the future and get to the different type of discourse and curatorial practice, I refrained from heavily conceptualising and coming up with new theories as this would frame and consequently hinder the development of the yet-to-come. My research aim was mainly to locate the source, the degree zero, and stake out several points that provide evidence of the possibility for the existence of a different future. The Krutu attempted to rearticulate the findings and test the stakes in a community of ideas towards a curatorial model that could work in the Dutch context. A context that, based on the national cultural self-image in which also Dutch Afro subjects such as myself are invested, opposes explicitly naming and discussing (institutional) discrimination and racism. For this reason, it is imperative that a language is devised that works with and around that to prevent further polarisation. It is here that the paradox of simultaneously becoming and refusing to be black is in full vision.

To understand how this works, I framed the contemporary Dutch moment using David Scott's idea of the problem space, 'a historically constituted discursive space', and the 'horizon of the future' that emerges from that.[971] Looking at historical horizons for the future in other diaspora spaces confirmed that in the Dutch environment of today 'a people-yet-to-come who in some senses [are] already here'[972] is not new. However, this people-yet-to-come has to be understood in the Dutch context of the twenty-first century

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[969] Ibid.
[970] Ibid.
[971] 'David Scott by Stuart Hall', in *Bomb,* No. 90, (New York City: New Arts Publication, winter 2004/5), https://bombmagazine.org/articles/david-scott/, acc. 18-09-2018
[972] Simon O'Sullivan, 'Notes Towards a Minor Art Practice', *Drain: Journal of Contemporary Art and Culture*, *'Syncretism'*, 2(2) (2005) www.drainmag.com, acc. 18-09-2018.

where immigration is a pressing issue in relation to Dutch cultural self-understanding. As noted in chapter one, rather than producing a 'carbon copy of equivalence or the linear projection of progress',[973] this Dutch moment is Edouard Glissant's spiral retelling: the movement from the One out to the multiple. The difference in generational arrival and taking on of the colonial past as part of the national history between those historical diaspora spaces and the Netherlands confirms the urgency of imagining a new contemporary artistic environment. In the historical Dutch horizons for the future, the imagining meant responding to the art world by fitting the work into an existing visual language. With the imagining in the first chapter of this thesis I argue for the contemporary artistic result to be constructed through a self-evident hybridity that is self-referential and consequently results in a different normal space and a new contemporary artistic environment. It is a conflated spiral retelling, merging with different levels of self-awareness and embedded in a migrant experience that needs imagination to move forward.

From the current perspective, contemporary Dutch Afro awareness produces a movement with many different organisations working towards including Afro-ness in the understanding of what this Dutchness is. Even though it cannot be compared to the civil rights movement, this awareness develops using similar methods of art and activism. Supported by digital media, this evolution occurs in tandem with worldwide Afro awareness, as exemplified in moments such as #BlackLivesMatter (2013), #RhodesMustFall (2015) and Black Twitter. In effect, Ron Karenga's 1968 questions are reiterated: 'Whose vision of the world is finally more meaningful, ours or the white oppressors? What is truth? Or more precisely, whose truth shall we express, that of the oppressed or the oppressors?'[974] No matter whether it is done through the racial component or through the cultural elements, the imaginative language the artists and activists produce with their works renders the edges of the imagined normal space and new contemporary artistic environment visible, from the insider perspective.

The Krutu reaffirmed this set of issues that came out of the research and are becoming increasingly prevalent in the current discussion around diversity. My proposed model or strategy of going forward comprises action research-based curatorial projects coming out of a migrant experience, with the specific aim of changing the status quo – in other words, action curating.

This approach operates in a broader Dutch field where the majority group is struggling with the idea of cultural diversity. This idea is a strong concern for the majority group that is unwilling to understand itself as a part of the multiplicity over which it is losing control. In Dutch (cultural) institutions the often unconscious desire for ethnic dominance results in cosmetic solutions that require a 'black person in the

[973] Max Hantel,'Rhizomes and the Space of Translation: On Edouard Glissat's Spiral Retelling', *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism,* Vol. 17, No. 3 (42) (Durham: Duke University Press, November 2013) pp. 100-112 (p. 110).
[974] Larry Neal, 'The Black Arts Movement', *The Drama Review: TDR Vol. 12, No. 4, Black Theatre* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, Summer 1968), pp. 28–39.

annual report'.[975] This way of dealing with diversity has become a way to demonstrate awareness without actually making a change towards a multiplicity of voices on an executive level. As it centralises whiteness, this diversity discussion is at odds with the growing minority and Afro awareness of this time. Consequently, in thinking cultural diversity, it is of more concern to the museum to include Afro-ness in its programme and exhibitions than it is for Afro-ness to be concerned with the museum.

When Afro artists come with expressive Black concepts they create a paradox in the Dutch artistic landscape that is centred around institutional recognition, the local and the global.
With these concepts they culturally pass as (international) Black which is recognised by funding bodies such as the Mondriaan Fund who invest in their practice. By not complying with the rules of Blankness and presenting themselves in this way, the artists are not recognised by the local institutions as relevant to the Dutch artistic discourse and their artistic and curatorial expertise is neglected by those institutions when it comes to issues of 'diversity' in the Netherlands.[976]

Consequently, these artists develop careers that are more acknowledged as Dutch outside of the Netherlands than they are locally. Combined with the Dutch reaction to the production of explicit Black concepts, a hierarchy of belonging is then produced that advances artistic loyalty to global Black culture which in turn influences local understanding of aesthetics and identities that are not part of the mainstream Dutch art market. There is a strong relation between recognition, representation and the production of Afro-Dutch subjectivity through the works of these artists. It effectively perpetuates the dominance of English-language discourse in the development of local concepts and language.

The work that comes out of this commonality creates 'elephant paths' that disrupt the system. Whith Dutch Afro artists being recognised in a discussion about global Blackness and having the power to represent through social media, the function of structured cultural authorities becomes of less importance in shaping Dutch Afro-ness. Stimulated by the developments in popular culture, the result is art that is deeply immersed in the Afro-Dutch condition as an experience. The variety of works coming out of this produce the shape on which the Afro-Dutch condition is moulded in an effort to change how it is experienced. It is spatial entitlement at work through pieces of art that become a metonym for social and political activism (Artivism) that is driven by cultural entitlement. The relation of this Artivism to fine art or cultural practices of Blankness is often limited to a promotional link but its intertwined relation with digital spaces is the social link between high-impact popular culture and low-impact 'high art'.

[975] Respondent nr. 19, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[976] Respondent nr. 4, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.

During the Krutu, cultural entrepreneur Ricardo Burgzorg remarked that the new eyes that are to be developed for a broader view of the environment are part of reassessing the quality argument that is used as an easy tool of exclusion.[977] Unwillingness to examine and therefore lack of understanding have placed Afro-Dutch artists in the artistic space of less qualified rather than a minority that is Dutch. Willingness to scrutinize this circumstance becomes an exercise in recognising the locals as fundamental agents in rethinking the current art environment. As part of this willingness, the use of a quality argument by directors, curators and other art professionals should be carefully grounded in the understanding of a 'visual language that one is not used to and may be hard to understand with the specific Western visual language as a frame'.[978] For Jelle Bouwhuis it is matter of 'decolonising liberalism and the enlightenment as a way of looking at the museological world. […] a new language may be found in critique or affirmative sabotage.' [979] Imara Limon concludes that the current limited vision on the language and the visual signifies the whiteness of the institution which needs to be made explicit by plastering on the wall:

> 'White Institute'.[980]

Demonstrating that it is a white-centric non-racial equivalence meritocracy, according to respondent 20, such a gesture creates movement so that in the future this being explicit will no longer be necessary.[981]

> A big issue in this process is to always make apparent again why and for whom?[982]

Being explicit in this current moment is important because curators have to be aware 'of how to speak about working (with) black artists, the practicalities of press release, representation and what is being achieved'.[983] In this process of establishing a new environment where race and ethnicity do not drive the arguments around the quality of the work or its belonging to the Dutch art environment, it is crucial to consider the implications of mentioning someone's ethnic background. The curatorial criteria for selecting an artist should be based on looking, speaking and comparing with other artists.[984] The question, therefore, is not whether the transformation needs to take place, but rather how? There is no one answer to this and it needs to be re-asked all the time to produce a different playing field.

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[977] Ricardo Burgzorg, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[978] Ibid.
[979] Jelle Bouwhuis, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[980] Imara Limon, Krut'krutu, open session, 27 may 2017.
[981] Respondent nr. 20, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[982] Respondent nr. 16, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[983] Ibid.
[984] Respondent nr. 13, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.

> It would then be advised to look for what that is here and now, in that space, in the broader cultural field. The different forms of knowledge form this broader field.[985]

> It is really about everything from what you think you are as an institution which is not yet understood.[986]

> Doing this, Dutch cultural institutions may learn to 'speak a language that speaks to many identities'.[987]

This was emphasised by the promotion for *Be(com)ing More* which also stated *Be(com)ing More Black*.

> How does one become more black? Is it something the institution really wants to do? What do we become when we become more black, how do we become more black, how can we have become more black?[988]

These articulations point towards the agency exercised by institutions, curators and critics in allowing Dutch Afro-ness, expressed as Blackness, to culturally pass into their understanding of the art world. An art world where the studio space in which the closed session of the Krut'krutu was held and that was carefully rearranged to accommodate the gathering overlooked the light shining in the eyes of certain participants. This brought forth the question for whom the space was designed and what it was supposed to do in the first place. Rightly, my Afro-ness did not exclude me from being scrutinised for trying to pass the space as Afro-sensitive in a white institution. My Surinamese and educational background allowed me to culturally pass [for Black] but the agency that was provided to me by proxy did not allow for a full cultural translation and moulding the space into one that was right for a Krutu. Even if it was conceived as action curating with the intention of bringing about minor changes in the status quo, it was still catering to a majority group idea about diversity. With all the best intentions on the part of all parties involved, with an invited Dutch Afro curator, the diversity in a museum and 'White Institute' is limited to passing for rather than being inclusive. It is symptomatic for the Dutch environment where even an institution like the Van Abbemuseum, where ten years after Gita Luiten called for a close look at the structure, still does not have a curator of colour.

[985] Respondent nr. 18, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[986] Respondent nr. 16, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[987] Respondent nr. 17, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[988] Respondent nr. 15, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.

In such a construction the museum is not a home base but rather a place where others make place and the discussion goes back to considering the Afro-Dutch condition in relation to the art world. Alternatively, reaffirmed through the Krutu, a 'Black' space would provide an environment in which conceptualising identity could be done without being damned if you don't and problematised when you do.[989] While looking for a cultural space that could be outlined through language, the participants in the Krut'krutu formulated that creating one's own physical spaces is considered necessary. They added that this space is desired and there is the conviction that there is an audience for something that is not a white cube.[990] In terms of content, it could be:

> A place where the visual language, body language, scent, colour and hair are understood.[991]

It is imagined as a space where Afro-normative thinking is central. A space where Dutch black people can find out for themselves what Afro-ness is and how it can be inclusive.[992] A space where it is possible to think up ways to distance oneself from the burdened colonial background and understand what migrating through different spaces results in (*doormigreren*).[993] Looking into what that entails is part of the work that can be done. It can inform other art institutions in their quest for a really inclusive curatorial programme.

I am explicitly making an argument towards a curatorial practice that is based in a migrant experience rather than one based in the institution as it is now. I am convinced that this is what we have to move towards to make the idea of the institution viable for coming generations. The departing point of hybridity as degree zero is confirmed in the racial and ethnic mix that culturally identifies in a location that in the past did not include those physical markers. This has to be the basis for everything one thinks about when it comes to the future. The idea of the singular identity does not hold up. Examining this needs theory and practice to go hand in hand in this contemporary period when we are training for the not-yet. It is a matter of writing and doing until we find a way that actually works as an idea of an institution or a curatorial practice.

While there is a need for autonomous cultural institutions where the normal space is not imagined, there is great hesitance towards a culturally ideological split from Dutch society with deliberately separated artistic environments – in other words, a racially driven separate cultural nation. This idea is considered

[989] Respondent nr. 21, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[990] Respondent nr. 3, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[991] Ibid.
[992] Respondent nr. 22, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[993] Ibid.

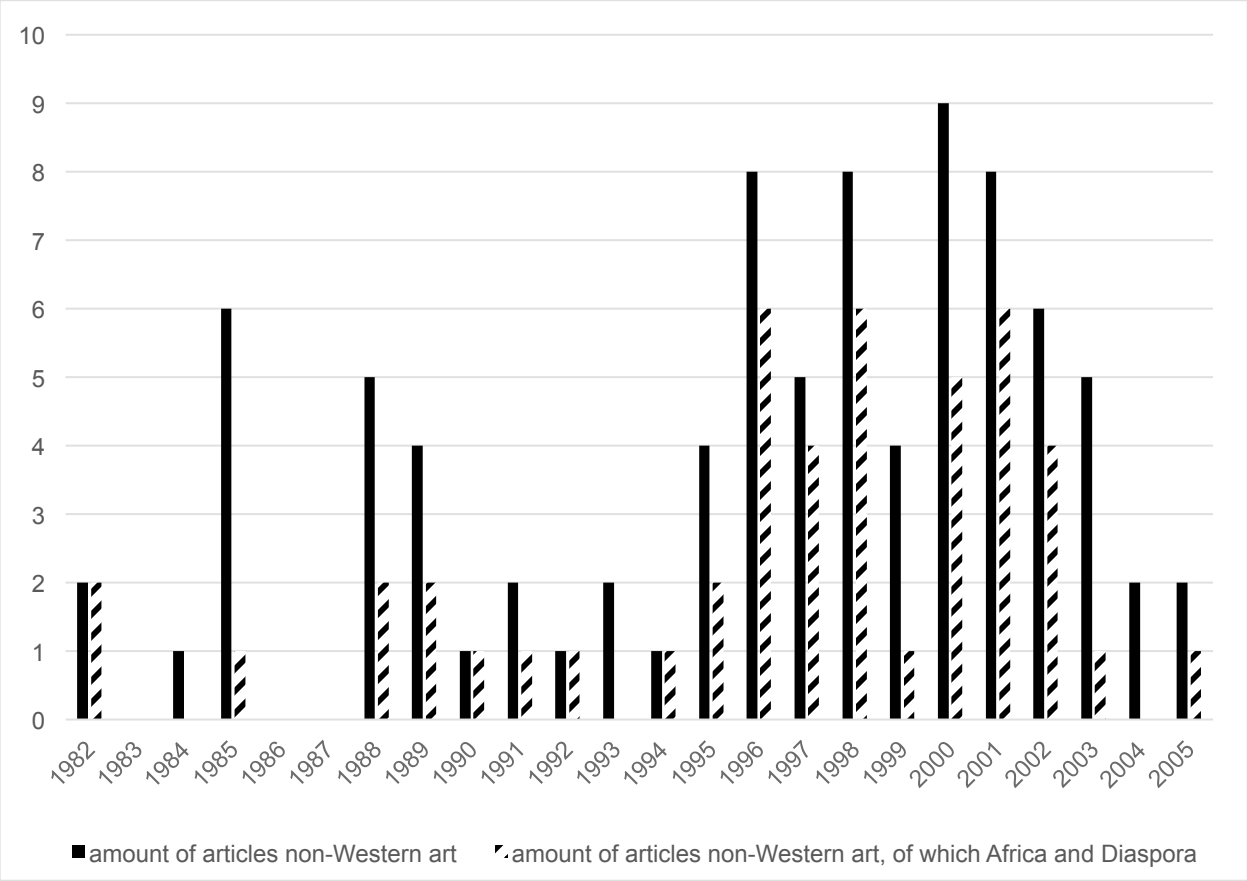
sinister,[994] summoning ideas of a dystopian sci-fi movie,[995] which is scary and sounds like the United States.[996] These reactions are a direct consequence of the sensibilities in Afro-Dutch culture where many people have partners, family and a social life with different ethnicities. It is also a major underlying force in the paradox of simultaneously becoming and refusing to be black. It is claiming Afro-ness as a native cultural position while refusing to become Black as an oppositional position. It is the understanding of the multi-ethnic and multicultural subjectivity that understands itself as Creole. A Creole subjectivity that results in understanding the moves through culture, time and space in terms of comparable emotive moves with other nations rather than understanding them as spatial movement of migration. A separate nation would create safety but not progression. A podium would allow for multiple paradigms and also allow white people to learn how to shift gears when entering a space.[997] The question of whether Dutch Afro artists can be located as native to the Dutch artistic landscape is answered with the question of whether the Netherlands is able to recognise and honour the social, spatial and cultural entitlement that is experienced by these artists. All participants agree that there is no time to wait until this happens or we are invited again by a museum. We have to invite ourselves to make things happen. We have to again become

Blue.

[994] Respondent nr. 1, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[995] Respondent nr. 19, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017.
[996] Respondent nr. 3, Krut'krutu, closed session, 27 may 2017
[997] Ibid.

Appendices

Appendix 1.: Overview of articles on non-Western art in Kunstbeeld magazine 1982-2005



Appendix 2.: Names participants Eindhoven Caucus

Name	Nationality	Domicile
Bastaan Arler	Italy	Eindhoven
Lucia Babina	Italy	Rotterdam
Petra Bauer		
Delphine Bedel		Amsterdam
Sebastian Bodirsky	Germany	Berlin
Teres Chen	USA	Zurich
Carla Cruz	Portugal	Port
Erwin van Doorn	Netherlands	Eindhoven
Ronen Edelman	Israeli / USA	Jerusalem
Jurry Ekkelboom	Netherlands	Nijmegen
Yasmine El rashidi	Egypt	Cairo
Klas Erikson	Sweden	Stockholm
Alexandra Fereira	Portugal	Berlin
Nicole van Harskamp	Netherlands	Amsterdam
Alicia Herrero	Argentina	Buenos Aires
Jennifer Hopkins	Puerto Rico	Eindhoven
Eric van Hove	Belgium	Tokyo
Annete Krauss	Germany	Utrecht
Julia Krupenia		Amsterdam
Martin van Laar	Netherlands	Helmond
Heba Mashhour	Netherlands	Eindhoven
Toos Nijsen	Netherlands	Eindhoven
Charles van Otterdijk	Netherlands	Eindhoven
Giancarlo Pazzanse	Chili / Italy	Amsterdam
Illya Rabinovich	Israel / Netherlands	Amsterdam
Allan Razzak	Netherlands	Amsterdam
Marc Schoneveld	Netherlands	Amsterdam
Michael Smit	Netherlands / Australia	Palo Alto
Axel Straschnoy	Argentina	Helsinki
Iris Tenkink	Netherlands	Enschede
Alite Thijsen	Netherlands	Amsterdam
Pelin Uran	Turkey	Ankara
Anne Verhoijsen	Netherlands	Amsterdam
Bettina Wind	Germany	Munich

Appendix 3.: Deviant Research Proposal

September 2016:
Draft 1, Deviant Research Proposal, Charl Landvreugd

This text, written in a Dutch context, is in English and immediately calls to the front the issue of institutional tools such as theoretical frameworks and specifically language. It is here where my research interest and van Abbe's research towards the Caucus in 2017 meet.

The research (PhD) I am doing in Curating Contemporary Art at the Royal College of Art in London departs from a personal and artistic subject position that assumes that (cultural) hybridity is always a given and an inevitable feature of creativity. By exploring various and multiple artistic subject positions through processes of identification and self-identification, the research is geared towards opening up and imagining spaces from which to view and incorporate the practices of Dutch artists of Afro descent, into an understanding of the Dutch artistic landscape as native. The focus on artists of Afro descent serves as a subject example in thinking through past and contemporary Dutch (and continental European) strategies, ideologies and structures in the development of inclusive methods and language for the future. This is no coincidence as the work of Dutch-Afro artists, when not readily fitting into an existing native artistic discourse, is placed outside of the Dutch cultural context. The research consequently is divided in Tracing the genealogy of Afro artist subject production, how this is experienced by the artists and what strategies the artist adopt and create to establish their place in the landscape. Effectively it looks at the way institutions (and art critique) have produced uniform/ hetero- normative subjectivities and the task of artist and cultural producers role to push against it.

In collaboration with the van Abbe museum I would like to explore how an institute could contribute more holistically to the production and empowerment of plural subjectivities. The method of achieving this is by departing from the prevailing British and 'Americo-centric discourse' (Gilroy, 2004, p.xvi)[998] and concentrating on the production of language that takes into account the specifics of local Dutch (and continental European) sensibilities. **Focusing on its Dutch particularities, the intention here is to work towards a new language that takes as it starting point the subjective experiences of native artist, curators and critics as a tool to balance out the current institutional language on inclusive practices.** This will be done (among other things) through discursive tools such as personal (public) interviews, revisiting the (Be)coming Dutch dictionary **from these subjective positions** and eventually authoring a full day during the Caucus. By doing so we take issue with prevailing institutional tools, develop deviating theoretical frameworks and language. Consequently, in the long term, the developed tools can be used in artistic circles where the relation of multiple subjectivities to broader institutional contexts is prevalent. In combination with this discursively intended method, when looking at the Caucus specifically, my research (knowledge and analysis of the Dutch context) can contribute to the future positioning of the van Abbe museum and institutions in the Netherlands in general.

[998] Gilroy, P. (2004) 'Migrancy, culture, and a new map of Europe' foreword in H. Raphael-Hernández (ed.) *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence*. New York and London, Routledge, pp.xi–xxii.

Working method

Using the Van Abbemuseum, its archive and its professional expertise and knowledge as the site of my research is paramount to my proposal and it is precisely in the analysis and critique of *past* enactment of curatorial methodologies and framings that I would like to consider most specifically in relation to the archive and interviews I would conduct around Be(com)ing Dutch but depending on the institutional research perhaps expanding across other curatorial projects in the last ten years ? Given my location in the Netherlands I would propose a part time presence over a period of six months from September 2016 to March 2017. This would then allow for ideas coalesced to be developed in relation to the June 2017 Caucus for which I have been invited to author one day by Chief Curator Annie Fletcher.

Appendix 4.: Krut' Krutu Invitation

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tel. +31 40 238 1000
fax +31 40 246 0680

www.vanabbemuseum.nl
info@vanabbemuseum.nl

BTW: NL 001902763b03

Alex van Stipriaan
stipriaan@eshcc.eur.nl

Eindhoven, 15 februari 2017

Onderwerp: uitnodiging 'Becoming More'

Beste heer Van Stipriaan, Beste Alex,

Graag nodigen wij u uit om een bijdrage te leveren aan het komende 10 dagen durende publieksprogramma 'Becoming More' in het Van Abbemuseum in mei 2017. Concreet willen we u vragen om deel te nemen aan het programma van zaterdag 27 mei. Deze dag wordt georganiseerd door kunstenaar en onderzoeker Charl Landvreugd.

In mei, op de 10e verjaardag van 'Be(com)ing Dutch' georganiseerd door het Van Abbemuseum, zijn wij van mening dat het tijd is om opnieuw bijeen te komen om het museum als een project in de 21e eeuw te bediscussiëren, en om samen te komen om de bestaande allianties versterken en nieuwe affiniteiten te ontwikkelen. In het zicht van toenemende verdeling en isolatie, winnen militante en essentialistische vormen van identiteit snel aan populariteit in de gehele wereld. Het museum wenst een inclusief en discursief evenement waarin de vraag gesteld wordt of kunst en creatieve netwerken productieve en kritische ruimte kunnen bieden waarin nieuwe solidariteit kan worden gevormd, en nieuwe sociale en politieke visies kunnen worden ontwikkeld? Met andere woorden, we willen de vraag opwerpen: hoe kunnen we meer worden?

Binnen de 'caucus' hebben we een aantal kunstenaars, curatoren en academici gevraagd om een dagprogramma op te zetten. De bijdrage van Charl aan de 'caucus' vindt plaats op zaterdag 27 mei. Wij nodigen u uit om de dag door te brengen in Eindhoven. Charl schrijft:

"Diversiteit is het nieuwe sleutelwoord geworden. Maar wat wordt daar dan precies mee bedoeld? In mijn PhD onderzoek maak ik dit heel specifiek en kijk ik naar het precaire onderwerp 'ras' in de beeldende kunst in Nederland. Welke 'agency' bestaat er rond de Nederlandse Afro-kunstenaars?

In samenwerking met het Van Abbemuseum onderzoek ik specifiek taal en tentoonstellings-praktijken rond dit 'divers' Nederlandse subject. In de gesprekken met diverse partijen komen tot nog toe onderwerpen naar boven die voor elke professional die zich met het onderwerp bezighoudt, interessant kunnen zijn. Als kunstenaar vraag ik me af op welke manier deze gesprekken zinvol kunnen zijn voor anderen?

In plaats van een ieder individueel te spreken lijkt het mij nuttiger om van elkaar te horen hoe het systeem in elkaar zit en waar de knelpunten en mogelijkheden liggen. Door het formuleren van specifieke en pertinente vragen kunnen we in gemeenschap een stap verder komen in het begrijpen van de mechanismen die gebruikt worden rondom de agency van Nederlandse kunstenaars met een Afro achtergrond.

vanabbemuseum

Het voorstel is om dit te doen in de vorm van een *krut'krutu*. Een *krut'krutu* is een 'debat' waarbij er geen winnaars of verliezers zijn en er enkel kennis is opgedaan en overgedragen. De opzet gaat ervanuit dat het onderwerp agency van alle mogelijke kanten belicht wordt. In dit geval vanuit de directeuren, curatoren, kunstenaars en critici. Op deze wijze komt dit onderwerp volgens mij het best tot zijn recht en wordt het nuttig gemaakt voor de grotere kunstgemeenschap."

We zullen zeer verheugd zijn, als u deze dag met ons in Eindhoven voor de *krut'krutu* door wilt brengen. Ook zullen we deelnemers vragen een korte (10-15) minuten durende bijdrage aan de 'caucus' te verzorgen. Nadere informatie hierover volgt binnenkort.
Het Van Abbemuseum zal uw reiskosten naar Eindhoven vergoeden. Afhankelijk van het uiteindelijke aantal deelnemers zullen we ook een kleine vergoeding aanbieden.

We hopen dat u zich bij ons aan kunt sluiten voor deze belangrijke bijdrage aan de 'caucus'.

Met vriendelijke groet,
Annie Fletcher, Nick Aikens en Charl Landvreugd

To:

Dear,

Further to your conversation with Charl Landvreugd we are delighted to invite you to participate in the forthcoming 'KRUT'KRUTU' event on the 27th May 2017, taking place as part of the 10 day public programme 'Becoming More' at the Van Abbemuseum (17th -28th May)

Becoming More is a ten-day caucus comprising of lectures, performances, screenings, commissions, discussions and food hosted by the Van Abbemuseum. For Becoming More, the Van Abbemuseum has invited artists, organizers and thinkers working in the Netherlands to author distinct days, bringing different forms of knowledge and experiences into the museum. We believe at this critical juncture of unrest, it is vital to listen, consolidate and share. The programme is the outcome of these extensive discussions from which a series of urgent topics have emerged. Through the caucus we will ask how art can provide a productive, critical space where solidarities are formed and political visions rehearsed. In other words, it will ask: 'How can we become more?'

On the 27th May, Landvreugd takes the dynamic model of the Krut'krutu (an Afro-Surinamese gathering in which issues of governance (bestuur) and issues of law are brought before the members of society) to focus on linguistic and curatorial strategies surrounding art made by Afro subjects in the Dutch context. This model is used to unpack the concepts, sensitivities and artistic expressions that are typical of the region. The day consists of two parts. In the first part, invited artists, curators, directors and critics will individually respond (along with a public audience) to key pressing questions that examine Dutch Afro artistic production.
In the second part, these same pressing questions will be addressed again, however through a private and focused session (not open to the public). However, Charl would like to video document these events for his research, not to be publicly released for 10 years.

Please note that this day will be conducted primarily through Dutch. The Krut'krutu begins in the the Van Abbemusuem at 11:00am, and we respectably request that you arrive in advance of this time.

During this day there is a focus on linguistic and curatorial strategies surrounding art made by Afro subjects in the Dutch context. Central to the krut'krutu (a multilogue) are local language and concepts which recognizes the sensitivities and artistic expression that are typical of the region. We request you to prepare a short position piece of 3 to 5 minutes, in response to the following proposition posed by Charl:

What would your considerations be towards developing a language that, considers work made by Dutch artists with a migrant background, as culturally Dutch.
Wat zijn uw gedachten voor de ontwikkelingen van een taal die, het werk van Nederlandse kunstenaars met een migranten achtergrond, als cultureel Nederlands beschouwt.

We would like to offer you a modest fee of €200 for your contribution, and your travel within the Netherlands. Lunch and dinner will also be provided at the Design Huis at 13:00 and 18:00 respectively.

We are delighted that you can join us for this important contribution to the caucus.

Best wishes,

Annie Fletcher, Nick Aikens and Charl Landvreugd

Appendix 5.: List of invited participants Krutu

X did not attend

ARTISTS:

1. Melvin Motti – X
2. Marga Weimans
3. Silvia Martes
4. Patricia Kaersenhout
5. Iris Kensmil
6. Quincy Gario
7. Antonio Guzman
8. Monika Dahlberg - X
9. Femi Dawkins - X

ARTIST/CURATORS:

11. Remy Jungerman
12. Nancy Hofman
13. Sara Blokland
14. Felix de Rooy - X

CURATORS:

15. Ferdinand van Dieten
16. Thomas Meyer zu Schlochtern - X
17. Jelle Bouwhuis - X
18. Ricardo Burgzorg
19. Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen
20. Josien Pieterse
21. Annie Fletcher
22. Steven ten Thije
23. Mirjam Westen - X
24. Chandra Frank

DIRECTORS:

25. Els van der Plas
26. Gita Luiten - X
27. Mariette Dolle
28. Alex van Stipriaan - X
29. Charles Esche

CRITICS:

30. Rob Perree
31. Ozkan Golpinar
32. Guno Jones

33. Vincent van Velzen
34. Markus Balkenhol

SCRIBER:

35. Frederick Calmes

Appendix 6.: Interviewees consent

- **Ethics approval attached to Thesis submission form.**

1. Information sheet and consent
2. Signed consent pages:
    a. Anke Bangma
    b. Christiane Berndes
    c. Charles Esche
    d. Annie Fletcher
    e. Diana Franssen
    f. Remy Jungerman
    g. Silvia Martes
    h. Roel Meelkop
    i. Rob Perrée
    j. Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern

1. Information sheet and consent: Sent to interviewees as one pdf. file.

Project Information Sheet

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:
Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

Dear ……,

My name is Charl Landvreugd, a research student in the Curating Contemporary Art department at the Royal College of Art. As part of my studies, I conducted a research towards my PhD dissertation entitled *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world.* You were invited to take part in one or several parts of this research project, which explores Dutch exhibition histories and art critique regarding (Dutch) artists with an Afro background (1982-2006), the Van Abbemuseum Be(com)ing Dutch project (2006-2008), the Wakaman project (2000-2008), and the Krut'krutu during the Becoming More programme at the Van Abbemuseum (2017).
Your verbal consent to participate involved:

Being interviewed and/or having a recorded conversation with me about your personal and/or professional relationship to either of the above mentioned topics in the research. Except for the closed session during the Krut'krutu the information you provided is identifiable to you as comments in the dissertation.

I identified you as a participant because of your close connection to the topic. This means that you are either a critic, curator or artist that could comment or was closely involved in either of the above mentioned topics in the research.

Your participation was and is entirely voluntary. This means that you can withdraw at any time and there will be no disadvantage if you decide to pull your comments. Except for the parts that are used in the dissertation, all information you provided is confidential. All the information gathered from our conversation has been stored securely. The information you provided has been analysed and once the dissertation is approved all the recordings and transcripts will be destroyed.

If you have any concerns or would like to know more about the outcome of this project, please contact my supervisor Victoria Walsh at the email address at the top of this letter. (victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk)

Thank you for your participation,

R. Charl Landvreugd

Complaints Clause:

This project follows the guidelines laid out by the Royal College of Art Research Ethics Policy.

If you have any questions, please speak with the researcher. If you have any concerns or a complaint about the manner in which this research is conducted, please the address the RCA Research Ethics Committee by emailing ethics@rca.ac.uk or by sending a letter addressed to:
The Research Ethics Committee
Royal College of Art
Kensington Gore
London
SW7 2EU

Consent Form

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

I **…** have read the information on the research project *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world* which is conducted by R. Charl Landvreugd from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Sheet, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the project at any time, without penalty, and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing. I understand that,

I consent to *some of my comments being used in the PhD dissertation: Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world*

I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented.

Print Name: **……**

Signature……

Date: ……

Complaints Clause:
This project follows the guidelines laid out by the Royal College of Art Research Ethics Policy.

If you have any questions, please speak with the researcher. If you have any concerns or a complaint about the manner in which this research is conducted, please the address the RCA Research Ethics Committee by emailing ethics@rca.ac.uk or by sending a letter addressed to:
The Research Ethics Committee - Royal College of Art - Kensington Gore London - SW7 2EU

2. Signed consent pages: a. – Anke Bangma

Royal College of Art

RESEARCH& INNOVATION

Consent Form

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

I **Anke Bangma** have read the information on the research project *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world* which is conducted by R. Charl Landvreugd from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Sheet, a copy of which I have retained.

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I consent to *some of my comments being used in the PhD dissertation: Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world*

I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented.

Print Name: **Anke Bangma**

Signature.....

Date: 1-9-2018

b. – Christiane Berndes

Royal College of Art
RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Consent Form

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

I **Christiane Berndes** have read the information on the research project *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world* which is conducted by R. Charl Landvreugd from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Sheet, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the project at any time, without penalty, and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing. I understand that,

I consent to *some of my comments being used in the PhD dissertation: Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world*

I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented.

Print Name: **Christiane Berndes**

Signature: Christiane Berndes

Date: 18-9-2018

c. Charles Esche

Royal College of Art
RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Consent Form

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

I **Charles Esche** have read the information on the research project *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world* which is conducted by R. Charl Landvreugd from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Sheet, a copy of which I have retained.

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I consent to *some of my comments being used in the PhD dissertation: Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world*

I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented.

Print Name: **Charles Esche**

Signature.....

Date: 5/11/2018, EINDHOVEN

d. Annie Fletcher

From: **Annie Fletcher** annie@vanabbe.nl
Subject: Re: Dissertation chapter on Van Abbemuseum for your editorial considerations
Date: 10 October 2018 at 12:06
To: charl landvreugd landvreugdcharl@gmail.com

hi Charl

its a great chapter i have no changes to make i will sign the form apologies for being so late

Annie

> On 03 Sep 2018, at 12:34, charl landvreugd <landvreugdcharl@gmail.com> wrote:
>
> Dear Annie,
>
> Hope this email finds you well and in good spirit.
>
> I was wondering if you had the chance to look at the chapter and whether you can find yourself in the way you have been quoted?
>
> Looking forward to hearing from you either way.
>
> All the best,
>
> Charl
>
> <180814_ Chapter 3_ Becoming Dutch.docx>
>
> > On 14 Aug 2018, at 15:32, charl landvreugd <landvreugdcharl@gmail.com> wrote:
> >
> > Dear Charles, Annie, Diana and Chris,
> >
> > Hope this email finds you well and enjoying the holidays.
> >
> > The chapter in my dissertation that is based on the interviews we had and the archive research on Be(com)ing Dutch is almost completed.
> >
> > With this email I would like to ask you to take a look at the chapter to see whether you are represented correctly.
> > If you can, please comment on parts where you think that information is missing and on statements that you would like to delete or rephrase.
> > Your input will make the chapter more complete and more accurate.
> >
> > For your consideration: using the search tool in Word will help you easily identify your name and where you are mentioned.
> >
> > I have to hand in the whole dissertation on 10 September.
> > If you could have your remarks sent to me by the end of August that would be great.
> > After that I will send you an ethics form to sign in which you agree with me using your interview in the chapter.
> > Please note that the recordings of our conversations and the transcripts are not part of the dissertation and will be destroyed.
> > Also please note that the content of the chapter is subject to Royal College of Art confidentiality and copyright, which means that you are not allowed to forward it.
> >
> > Looking forward to hearing from you.
> >
> > Warmest,
> >
> >
> > Charl<180814_ Chapter 3_ Becoming Dutch.docx>

e. Diana Franssen

From: **Diana Franssen** d.franssen@vanabbemuseum.nl
Subject: Re: Dissertation chapter on Van Abbemuseum for your editorial considerations
Date: 4 September 2018 at 10:23
To: charl landvreugd landvreugdcharl@gmail.com

DF

Dag Charles

Sorry voor de late reactie. Net terug van een lange fietstocht.
Ik heb geen aanmerkingen op de tekst. Alleen moet je even wat namen checken zoals bijv. Rutger Ponzen = Rutger Pontzen
groet Diana
en succes met de laatste alinea's

> Op 3 sep. 2018, om 11:37 heeft charl landvreugd <landvreugdcharl@gmail.com> het volgende geschreven:
>
> <180814_ Chapter 3_ Becoming Dutch.docx>

'Hello Charles

Apologies for the late reaction. Just returned from a long biking trip.
I don't have any comments on the text. You just need to check some names,….'

f. Remy Jungerman

Royal College of Art

RESEARCH& INNOVATION

Consent Form

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

I **Remy Jungerman** have read the information on the research project *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world* which is conducted by R. Charl Landvreugd from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to voluntarily participate in this research and give my consent freely. I understand that the project will be conducted in accordance with the Information Sheet, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I can withdraw my participation from the project at any time, without penalty, and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing. I understand that,

I consent to *some of my comments being used in the PhD dissertation: Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world*

I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented.

Print Name: **Remy Jungerman**

Signature: .....

Date: September 17, 2018

g. Silvia Martes

Royal College of Art
RESEARCH& INNOVATION

Consent Form

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

I **Silvia Martes** have read the information on the research project *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world* which is conducted by R. Charl Landvreugd from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

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I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented.

Print Name: **Silvia Martes**

Signature……  ……

Date: ……18-09-2018…… ……

h. Roel Meelkop

Royal College of Art
RESEARCH& INNOVATION

Consent Form

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

I **Roel Meelkop** have read the information on the research project *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world* which is conducted by R. Charl Landvreugd from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

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I consent to *some of my comments being used in the PhD dissertation: Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world*

I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented.

Print Name: **Roel Meelkop**

Signature.....

Date: 17-09-2018

i. Rob Perrée

Royal College of Art
RESEARCH & INNOVATION

Consent Form

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

I **Rob Perrée** have read the information on the research project *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world* which is conducted by R. Charl Landvreugd from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

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I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented.

Print Name: **Rob Perrée**

Signature.....

Date: .....October 1, 2018.....

j. Thomas Meijer zu Schlochtern

Royal College of Art

RESEARCH& INNOVATION

Consent Form

Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting:

Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world

For further information
Supervisor:
Prof. Victoria Walsh
victoria.walsh@rca.ac.uk

17-09-2018

I **Thomas Meyer zu Schlochtern** have read the information on the research project *Imagining, Tracing, Experiencing, Inhabiting, Projecting: Locating Afro artists as culturally native to the Dutch art world* which is conducted by R. Charl Landvreugd from the Royal College of Art, and all queries have been answered to my satisfaction.

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I understand that all information gathered will be stored securely, and my opinions will be accurately represented.

Print Name: **Thomas Meyer zu Schlochtern**

Signature.....

Date: September 16 2018

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E

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F

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Minor revisions:

p. 59 : 20198 = 2019

p. 66 : (ex-)colonial = (ex-) colonial

p. 129 : communist opinion = communis opinion

p. 148 : had had = had

p. 175 : and have = and has

Final paragraphs:

1. **Insert one paragraph in chapter 5, summarizing the significance of learning from Krutu/Wakaman, that surmises their usefulness to the contemporary discourses in curating/curatorial strategy.**

Inserted in p. 186 as a recap of the historical trajectory that is described and leads towards Projecting.

The curatorial propositions made by Afro artist-curators in the Netherlands followed a trajectory of self-determination that relates to Stuart Hall's historical account of Black artistic moments as a spiral retelling. Starting with the *Srefidensi* group (1970s) establishing a gallery space for Caribbean artists and *Cosmic Illusion* (1980s) organizing exhibitions that aligned the artists with the then prevailing Modernism of the New York-Cologne axis, we arrive at Felix de Rooy with *Wit over Zwart* (1989) that made visible the colonial legacy of racism through objects. The latter was a curatorial turning point in centralizing the troublesome race-culture axis in the Dutch artistic landscape. *Wakaman* (2000s) questioned how this legacy informed the perception of their subjectivity and the work they produced and looked for new curatorial routes that centralized their experience. With the *Krutu* (2017) the Wakaman curatorial arguments were transformed into action curating as a method that affirms Afroness as native to the Dutch artistic landscape.

This forty-year trajectory effectively comes full circle in negotiating the usefulness, effectiveness and form of an artistic environment of affirmation. It postulates a new (21st century) beginning of curatorial strategies that is historically grounded and through the accelerated return of Afro and migrant experiences into the knowledge base shapes a different environment.

2. **Insert one paragraph on the reasons for inventing new terminologies, such as 'Cultural Nativeness' as well as the reuse of terminologies as 'blankness'.**

Inserted on p. 172 to highlight that the Dutch language, which is underdeveloped on the topic is only one of the ways to produce new language.

Having said that, the terminologies that emerge as useful arise from that same space as the imagined normal space. It is the space between languages, an inherently hybrid space that emerges from the fold where different meaning arises in the derailment between languages.

What I suggest is that there where, in its original form the meaning of a particular word cannot be directly transferred from one language to another, the agency it has in one language also cannot be transferred. As a consequence agency and meaning are left in the fold to be appropriated and describe the inherently hybrid space. As a referent to the meaning the word has in the language from which it originated it then expands on it to create the conditions in which the imagined normal space can be conceptualized.

Terms such as 'cultural nativeness' and 'blankness' therefore should not be read as new invention, but rather as linguistic flashes, born out of inherent hybridity that suggest the existence of the imagined normal space that is proposed.