

## **Edition #2 - The Noise Edition**

***Cas-co, Leuven, Belgium – 7<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2020***

### **The setting**



Edition #2 took place in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic, in December 2020 in Leuven, Belgium. For the first week, we were more or less quarantined together in a fancy but not very well-designed apartment. At the same time, we were able to work in Cas-Co, the art centre in Leuven that invited us for the residency.

We got invited to Cas-Co after we had written an application to their Open Call for residency opportunities. Cas-Co is an art centre and offers workspaces for artists as well as residencies for guest artists. It is situated in a former industrial area of Leuven, that in recent years has been transforming into a new area, both spacing workplaces for artists, as well as apartments and commercial areas. The apartment where we stayed

was also situated in this area, in a building housing temporary and other office spaces, as well as a restaurant and event area.

Due to restrictions like the need to quarantine and other measures taken in connection to Covid-19, we were unable to invite people to come work with us or have a public showing, which was the initial idea for sharing the work in Leuven. The regulations also implied that Menzo had to go back to The Netherlands before the start of the second week to be there another week in quarantine, as not to spend Christmas in quarantine. Mirte stayed behind in Leuven and continued working from Cas-Co.



Because of this, the second week of the residency became a week during which we worked together, but geographically distanced. We decide to take the challenge to work in different ways than by relying on the digital platforms so often used nowadays. We basically worked with simultaneous timing, starting and finishing workdays at the same time, as well as agreeing on specific moments in time for doing specific activities together. We mainly communicated through/in a google drive document and did not use zoom or other live digital communication means. At the end of the residency, we called by phone.

In an attempt to share the work with other people, we decided for this residency to write letters to the audiences. Beside the planned simultaneous activities, we used our time to write letters, 21 in total, to the people who reacted on an invitation, sent out by Cas-Co.



Dear Menzo,

writing you in English, a letter, by means of summarizing

Other People, common ground edition #2 noise  
at Cas-co in Leuven (Belgium)

December 2020.

In the same format as how we have been sharing what we worked on, with our audiences, also to you I am writing a letter. We talked about how we are through this long term project, writing a kind of history, not only of our collaboration and the work we do, but also how our lives are connected to it and how the context in which we work influences the work. In this edition # that becomes quite clear in some of the working methods we have been choosing. Like the way of sharing the work with our audiences. As of the two weeks of work, the first week gave us only access to a sleeping place and a working place due to rules of quarantine and lockdown of the city Leuven we worked in. And as for the second week, we are working further on what we build the first week, but then in physical and geographical distance. You in Amsterdam in another quarantine in a city in lockdown, and me still in Casco in Leuven, now out of quarantine, but still very limited in physical freedom.

Already in the very beginning of the start of our second edition - in residency at Cas-co, we called this edition:

Other People, common ground edition # noise.

Not only is the whole situation with restrictions and overload of



everything that has to do with covid-19, corona, lockdown, quarantine, travel restrictions, corona-shame and so on, like a noise over all life and work we do, but on top of that did you notice so many different noises both in the apartment where we stayed, as well as the space in cas-co where we worked.

The noise of the blowing heating,  
some unfound source that produced a noise  
with a present pitch of  $B^b_3$ ,  
the blowing heating in the apartment,  
the light in need of almost 10 minutes  
to turn into non-sary green light and noised a lot,  
the ventilation in the apartment,  
and you would probably easily  
be able to make this list much longer.

Even though we talked in edition #0 already about rituals, we took it up again in this edition #2. Probably also because we, in the beginning of this edition, read again our summaries of the previous ones, to see if and so what, we wanted to take up again. Besides our schedule of working hours, which we followed quite good like we decided it at first (working from 10-13, lunch from 13-14, working from 14 to something between 17 and 18 h), we also had some routines: Every morning, when arriving in the studio, we turned on the noisy blowing heating, put on music, went up to get a bucket with water and swept the floor. After we warmed up simultaneously in the same space, listening to the same music that was playing from the speakers, but individually warming up, following our own needs. We mostly didn't talk in those moments. Personally I was quite internally focussed on body and emotions.



Another ritual which we repeated daily, was our walk from 14-15 h.

Noting more decided than the time and the activity of walking. Sometimes towards a specific place - like the very kitch town house in the center that was looking like a Disney Land castle - , sometimes just walking around to where we were curious. By the way, I heard that the town house in "normal circumstances" - which means previous years - was on top of what we saw, also decorated with pink and purple light. The version we saw now, was with other words comparably sober. Funny and wow, I thought.

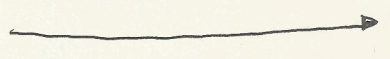
One thing which appeared during one of our walks was  
immersing practices,

a name for something that arises unconsciously and than is consciously employed in our work. In one of the walks we ended up having conversations that were emotionally grounded in some personal issues of our lives, and this suddenly leaded towards moments in studio of "zeiken", which created a lighter and more open space afterwards.

I imagine that this could become an activity, both in future editions and in my own work. The closest English word I found is "complain" as a translation of "zeiken", even though I feel zeiken is a more suitable word, more glidy an smooth, as well as the sound explains the activity better I think.

In the beginning of this edition # 2

we wrote a recipe which we will follow in the beginning of each edition. It is a recipe which makes clear what we will be doing during the residency. The recipe is as following:

see next page 



1. Checkin with following questions:
    - ▶ what have you been busy with the past months, since we saw each other last time. Practically and artistically. Possibly emotionally.
    - ▶ What are your current concerns
    - ▶ what are your needs, eagernesses, wishes to be working with together
  2. What is your question for which you will be looking for answers. This question (or interest field) is most likely different for each of us.
  3. What do we want to repeat from previous edition(s)
  4. Creating goals / activities / pursuits for the residency  
⇒ or with other words: what are we going to do.
- Note. In decent timing (depending on the residency), think and decide about the way we will be sharing the work.

This recipe we said, would (or maybe sometimes only could) be the start of each edition.

Even before we formulated this recipe, it was clear for me that I wanted to work with text, which of course is an extremely general saying.

But I also knew I wanted to work with an existing text, work on rewriting by doing something.

I first thought about rewriting the text by learning it first by heart, perform it in space and rewrite.



But this, we did not do in the end,

because we found some other ways of working.

We found a text of A.L. Spijders, who weekly sends short texts to people in his mailing list, who signed up for it.

There was something intriguing about the text for me, which was how different stories in one text were interesting each other. Very daily situations, poetic and down to earth.

I also really liked the last sentence, which was (translated by me in English)

"That was my answer when somebody asked me if there had been happening something recently."

Anyways.

We started to work with that text: reading it out loud and commenting on that, reading it by the table and in the space. We divided the text in where it felt natural for us to make stops.

And then, we rewrote the text in several ways:

- ▶ translating in another language
- ▶ adjusting the writing in how we would say it our way
- ▶ writing down the function of the sentences, free from content, and rewrite a text, based on the function of the sentences
- ▶ dividing the text in 4 parts, describing what kind of things were happening, and then rewrite it.

I thought about those categories that were mentioned, when we talked about the function of the sentences:

- ▶ a thought
- ▶ a feeling
- ▶ an observation
- ▶ an action

▶ but many more categories can be made.



Another activity we did in week 1, and which we created an adapted version of in week 2, was the activity of imagining for 20 minutes together. It went as following: We would sit, stand or walk around in the space or at the side of it. And for 20 minutes we would imagine something and say it out loud. If I remember well, already from the first or second time, we made the rule to only use the words "What if", and for sometimes also we could include "then" after which we said the words of what we imagined out loud.

At some point we agreed on allowing to ask questions, as well as only say things which we really were able to imagine.

The word in Dutch/Flemish for imagine is "verbeelden", which I would translate as "making into an image".

We had some discussions on what that means:

- ▶ Are it things that are visually observable?
- ▶ Can it be a thought?
- ▶ Can it be ungraspable?

We also talked about taking serious what the other says, by taking it really in, and possibly build further on it.

For example when there is mentioned "There is standing a rock", that means that you cannot walk through that rock unless you are conscious about doing so or deleting the rock from that spot.

In the end, we did this imagining for 20 minutes every day, sometimes we discussed what we had been doing, other times less. Because it was also just nice to just let the history of us doing it, inform what would come next.



And so came week two, where you found yourself in Amsterdam, while I was in Leuven. We had been agreeing upon some things, as well as some schedule for the week we were geographically not together. Because one thing seemed very clear and agreed upon by both of us: we did not want to work in a conventional digital way. One word was quite important as well, which was easier because we were in the same time zone:

### SIMULTANEITY

doing similar and same activities at the same time.

We also agreed upon that we wanted to share our work with an audience by writing letters to them, individually written letters to each audience member. Some formalities of the letter we agreed upon before going our own ways.

And then, also what we continued with was the imagining for 20 minutes. As opposed to digital solutions as zoom, skype or facetime, which in my opinion have both a false simultaneity as well as an image which seems real, but in the end is a strong reduction of reality. We decided so, to record our imagining for 20 minutes each for us (saying out loud the things we imagined and record that in the timeframe of 20 min.), and then put the two recordings on top of each other as a music piece of 20 min. with two voices.

It was not only extremely exciting to do, as I in my imagining, also was imagining you and moments you spoke or were in silence, but also exciting to listen to what became the common imagination. Our images came together or accomplished each other in a nice way.



Sometimes they were said at the same time, but more often they alternated each other. It was very exciting to do, and I hope we could, in one of the next upcoming 11 years, do this with many people together.

And so, other than that, in week 2, we also wrote letters to our audiences. We wrote a text on our Facebook-pages to invite people to our sharing, as well did Cas-co send out an invitation to about 40 people of their contact list. In the end we will have written about 20 letters together. This letter is to you as a summary of our residency, our edition #2 out of 40. As well the summary of the closing edition of the first year of our collaboration of 20 years.

There is on top of what we agreed upon doing in week 2, one more thing I did several times: writingstream without stopping. Writing with the idea that my thinking and writing happened about simultaneous, as well as that I had no filter on what to write. As I have been working alone, and on top of that have been dealing with strong emotions of feeling in love with somebody with who it is impossible to be together with, I sometimes had to give words to all those feelings. I am curious how I think about this moment in let's say 10 years or 11 years.

But that being said, I think this was my summary, as well as my letter to you for this time.

Greetings from Cas-co in Leuven,

Mieke



19/12/20, Amsterdam

Hello Mirta,

De laatste brief. Het heeft even geduurd. Hoewel ik de aanhef schreef half december. Zitten we nu al in de eerste week van het nieuwe jaar. Voor ik inga op dat wet ik denk wat het schrijven van de brieven zo lastig maakt eerst de dingen waar van ik zo blij ben dat we ze gevonden hebben.

Ik ben blij dat we weer terug zijn bij structureren, bij planning. I'm realizing now that I should write this letter in English and will continue to do so. I'm happy we found our recipe for assessing wants and needs at the start of a residency, that we are allowing time for checking back in. I realized this time how much we have to get re-acquainted after not seeing each other for half a year. Especially because we don't really know each other that well still. I think this getting re-acquainted is very important because in the time we are apart, we change as people. We have to allow ourselves to have some time to meet the new version of ourselves and us as a duo.

The structures we found (starting at a set hour, lunching <sup>and quilling</sup> at a set hour, walking, planning) gave us both a lot of space and calm to try things within the structure. It helped me find a sense of purpose in our days together, although I am not ~~entirely~~ sure. if that is entirely a good thing. Because looking back, it also seems like we were ~~mimicking~~ a ~~business~~ setting that we knew as productive and thus purposeful. Which makes it feel quite safe but also a bit like we are trying to hard. Like we are still looking to produce even when part of the original idea was that we did not have to. I think we can give ourselves more time.



more time to waste. to be even less productive. To talk also.  
I notice now how much I appreciate the conversations we have  
~~about~~ about our work or work in general.

I have <sup>the</sup> feeling that what I suggest might seem pointless to you  
but I think that missing a point might be very important.

I think it is the point we are trying to do without.  
that is also why I had such trouble with the letters. Writing them, I felt  
like I had to have something to say about the project, and I don't.  
Not yet. I'm also thinking we might have to rethink our ideas about  
sharing. Maybe for the next residency, we should just share with one  
other person. Later on, we can expand.

For me now, the biggest question is that of fun. How can we find joy  
in what we do? This joy is there already sometimes, but at other  
times I feel like we are forcing ourselves to do something. (although  
I am not sure of what that would be). But let's see what we can make of it.  
And that is not something I would like for this project.

So let's try and make even more space for joy. Make time  
to be even more pointless. If we need structure for that, so be it.  
Let's try and figure out what we need to experience freedom.

I'm looking forward to it.

All the best,  
Menzo



## **Personal context**

Menzo realized that December was a challenging time for him to think in a creative way. He always feels like there is too much time left at the end of the year. More time than he has energy for. He felt it was nice to spend this time together but very hard to be productive or focussed. At the same time, he felt that this project should not be about productivity. Or at least not in the way that we usually use the word in performative arts. Not to produce a new thing. He got in trouble trying to be unproductive in a relevant way. He probably needed a break.

Mirte came to Leuven after an intensive period of work that was spread over the whole autumn season. For her it felt like a restpoint, to be working abroad on a project that does challenge the idea of productivity.