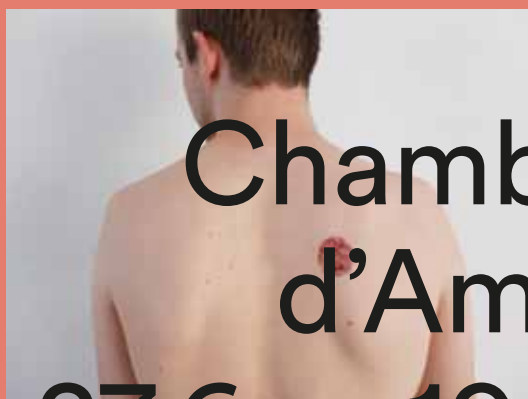


Intimacy

27.6 — 6.9.2015



Chambres d'Amis

27.6 — 19.7.2015

Intimacy is a spiritual condition signalled by the body. We find intimacy in physical security, in shared secrets and soft touches, in love and sex, in the happiness derived from bringing our inner life to the surface. We can also experience intimacy in a negative sense, when we accidentally interrupt a situation or a conversation not meant for us.

In art, where imperfect beauty and abrasive relationships are laid bare, intimacy is a common theme. Often, it is supported by something else – a picture, a letter, a souvenir, a room – which, as substitutes for the physical proximity and touch of another, make intimate space palpable.

For the exhibition *Intimacy*, Marres asked Amie Dicke, Emily Jacir, Birthe Leemeijer, Keetje Mans, Nishiko, Petra Stavast, Sanne Vaassen, and Roy Villevoeye to explore intimate space, both at Marres itself and in six homes around Maastricht.

The activities taking place outside Marres pay homage to the idiosyncratic curator Jan Hoet, who passed away last year. In 1986, he gained worldwide recognition and critical acclaim for his exhibition *Chambres d' Amis*, for which he created an exemplar of how to create intimate exhibition environments outside of the museum. Following Hoet's example, Marres wants to connect the personal expression of artists to the private living rooms and intimate stories of the people of Maastricht.

The participating houses are open for four weekends starting in the last weekend of June. The exhibited artworks serve as a counterpart to those exhibited at Marres. Following the last weekend of house exhibitions, most of the artworks will be moved to Marres for display.

1

Keetje Mans

Some Things Whirr, mixed media (2015).

I like looking at the world from my studio window, even though the world doesn't really seem to be there nor does it enter inside. The window is surrounded by clippings collected over the years; collections of photos, patterns, fabrics and ornaments from my personal collection, which have been torn from books and plucked from the Internet. They are combined on the wall until I only see a pattern of associative campfire romanticism, punkish black letters, a hodgepodge of teenage bedroom juvenilia, and icebergs at the North Pole with a spider web of words covering all the photos: a whirr of thoughts, patterns, and colours.

Wishes, oil on linen,
200 x 140 cm, (2012)

Spread, oil on canvas,
200 x 300 cm, (2015)

Spread (Black), oil on canvas,
200 x 300 cm, (2015)

I like to work with homespun symbols and subjects with which I can construct a private world. My paintings describe interiors in which I am looking for logic within irrationality.

I like the tension created in pictures the moment things tend to disappear: where figures and furniture become abstracted into gestures and exchanges that take place in translucent environments. The textiles rendered in the paintings function as abstract autobiographical codes from my childhood. I mostly begin with a feeling rather than a narrative. I look at colour, silhouette, and patterns. Decorative yet functional fabrics anchor the figures in an otherworldly setting.

During the Chambres d'Amis weekends from June 27 to July 19, Keetje Mans' work can also be seen in a private home, annex salon des arts, at Keizer Karelplein 18.



Keetje Mans, *Wishes*, 2012



Keesje Mans, *Black Dots*, 2013



Petra Stavast, *October* 2012





Amie Dicke, *Soft Shoulder*, 2013



Amie Dicke, *Mine*, 2013, Photo: Sander Tiedema

2

Amie Dicke

Daughter, sandpapered print (2015)

Family, sandpapered print (2015)

I try to relate to an unruly world full of used objects, everyday materials, and alluring images and from the media, fashion, and interiors. They are silent witnesses to situations that I feel part of, but cannot recall, or have experienced myself. Sometimes I tackle these 'witnesses' using a surgeon's knife or sandpaper, over which I use ink, Tipp-ex or tape. By sanding, cutting or layering plastic over a picture of an interior, its image fades and provides space for the imagination and personal memories. Similarly, a portrait of a seated man whose features are sanded away provides a space for speculation and deeper enquiry.

For this exhibition, I removed a cupboard corner, a piece of soap, and a few photos, all from a house on Pieterstraat. I have used the photos to create new works. Instead of adding to the house, I have taken a substrate and exhibited it at Marres.

During the Chambres d'Amis weekends from June 27 to July 19, Amie Dicke's work can also be seen in a private home at Sint Pieterstraat 74.



Sanne Vaassen, *Invisible Present*, 2015



They offered me a drink and I was introduced to Birthe Leemeijer, who seemed to be a bit nervous,

Birthe Leemeijer, *Ik laat u het mooiste zien dat ik ken (1)*, 1997, detail video

Ik laat u het mooiste zien dat ik ken
(I'll Show You the Most Beautiful
Thing That I Know) (1998)
Video [4'30"]

In 1998, I was one of seven artists in Middelburg who showed work on the television programme Avro's Kunstblik, presented by Liesbeth Brandt Corstius and Angela Groothuizen. It was a live broadcast and the audience could vote for the artwork they would most like to have, with a chance of winning their chosen artwork. My work consisted of a sign that read: I'll show you the most beautiful thing that I know. The video clip shows the winner, Joke Weber.

Ik laat u het mooiste zien dat ik ken
(I'll Show You the Most Beautiful
Thing That I Know) (2008)
Audio with English subtitles

In 2008, the then director of the Zeeuws museum, Valentijn Byvanck, invited me to participate in an exhibition there. I wanted to show work I'd made while living in Zeeland between 1993 and 2000. Because there is no physical trace of the work, I asked Valentijn Byvanck to interview witnesses of the artworks and ask them if the artworks even existed. One of the interviewees was Joke Weber, winner of Avro's Kunstblik. In the interview, she informs him that she has stayed in touch with me, and that what happened still preoccupies her after all these years. This story of doubts, hopes, confusion, and emotions, takes an unexpected turn halfway through.

During the Chambres d'Amis weekends from June 27 to July 19, Birthe Leemeijer's work can also be seen in a private home at Capucijnenstraat 47.



4

Petra Stavast
Ramya (2001 – 2015)
Various media

In 2001, I moved to Amsterdam, where I lived in an attic room of my neighbour Ramya's apartment. Our contact slowly evolved into a close relationship. Following her sudden death in 2012, our bond attained a new dimension when I inherited her personal archive. Searching for answers to unasked questions, I delved deep into Ramya's life story. I traced her membership of the Rajneeshpuram commune, established in the no-

RESULTS I CHOOSE TO CREATE:

1. Being together
2. Living outside
3. in a nice house
4. good relationships with friends
5. good health
6. having children
7. go on holiday
8. to India
9. Enjoy myself much more
10. Not doing boring work

Petra Stavast, *Mastering Relationships*, 2014



Petra Stavast, *Ramya* – 2001

man's-land of Oregon in the 1980s by followers of the Bhagwan (Osho). Ramya went by the name of her rebirth, which was given to her during her Bhagwan years. I also found videos from the early 1990s, showing her at a workshop given by a new guru in Amsterdam. Gaining wider and often-opposite perspectives, I obtained photographs and paintings of Ramya by other artists; I consulted archives, and interviewed people with whom she had shared parts of her life. Together, these documents constitute my work about Ramya. Each selection, excision, and adaptation results from my attempts to organise the chaos of expectation and truth surrounding her life. Furthermore, they tell a story of love and the struggle to find oneself.

During the Chambres d'Amis weekends from June 27 to July 19, Petra Stavast's work can also be seen in a private home at Witmakersstraat 9.



Petra Stavast, October 2012



Roy Villevoye, Voice-Over, 2014



Sanne Vaassen, *My Continental Drift*, 2014

5
Sanne Vaassen

My Continental Drift (2014)
Sticker, Ø 4cm
My Continental Drift is made possible with support of a Talent Development Grant from the Mondriaan Fund.

In my work, I research processes of change through documentation or stimulation; as such, it is a practice where nature and culture regularly meet. In *My Continental Drift*, I have documented my birthmarks and translated them into a temporary tattoo as a snapshot of my skin. The tattoo enables an element of my personal identity to be temporarily grafted onto another's skin. As on my skin, these spots will slowly change form on the wearer and eventually disappear.

Invisible Present (2015)
Mixed media

Invisible Present is made for the V-House, a concrete and glass house designed by Wiel Arets. In it, I project stimulated microorganisms taken from the house's walls and paintings. The work provides a glimpse into an invisible world. The two Petri dishes shown at Marres contain microorganisms from the skin of the inhabitants of the V-House. The work is both detached and objective because we cannot read much into what is visually presented. However, I'm literally showing one of the most intimate parts of a human: their household bacteria.

During the Chambres d'Amis weekends from June 27 to July 19, Sanne Vaassen's work can also be seen in a private home, V-House at Batterijstraat 42.





Nishiko, Repairing earthquake project, Third phase "Current washes ashore", 2013



Sanne Vaassen, My Continental Drift, 2014



Amie Dicke, 4xU, 2013, courtesy Anat Ebgi, Los Angeles, foto: Michael Underwood





Emily Jacir, *Where We Come From 2001-2003* detail
(*Jihad*) American passport, 30 texts, 32 c-prints and 1
video, photo: Bill Orcutt © Emily Jacir



Petra Stavast, *Hundred Kisses in Enraptured Red*, 2012 – 2014

A'dam, 12 december 2001

Dag Petra,

Hopelijk heb je zin voor
je gaat hier te eten (anders
koffie te drinken)
Do. of vrijdag want vandaag
kook ik voor Smidtje die
niet zo lekker is en 'k heb
vanavond een feest.
Laat je 't even weten
(tel. voicemail of life)

Sorry dat ik zo chagerijnig
was bij de wasmachine,
had niks met jou te
maken, maar iets dat
net gebeurd was.
Is al weer voorbij.

Ik hoop dat je
nog tijd hebt;
die zo snel gaat

Gr. Ramya

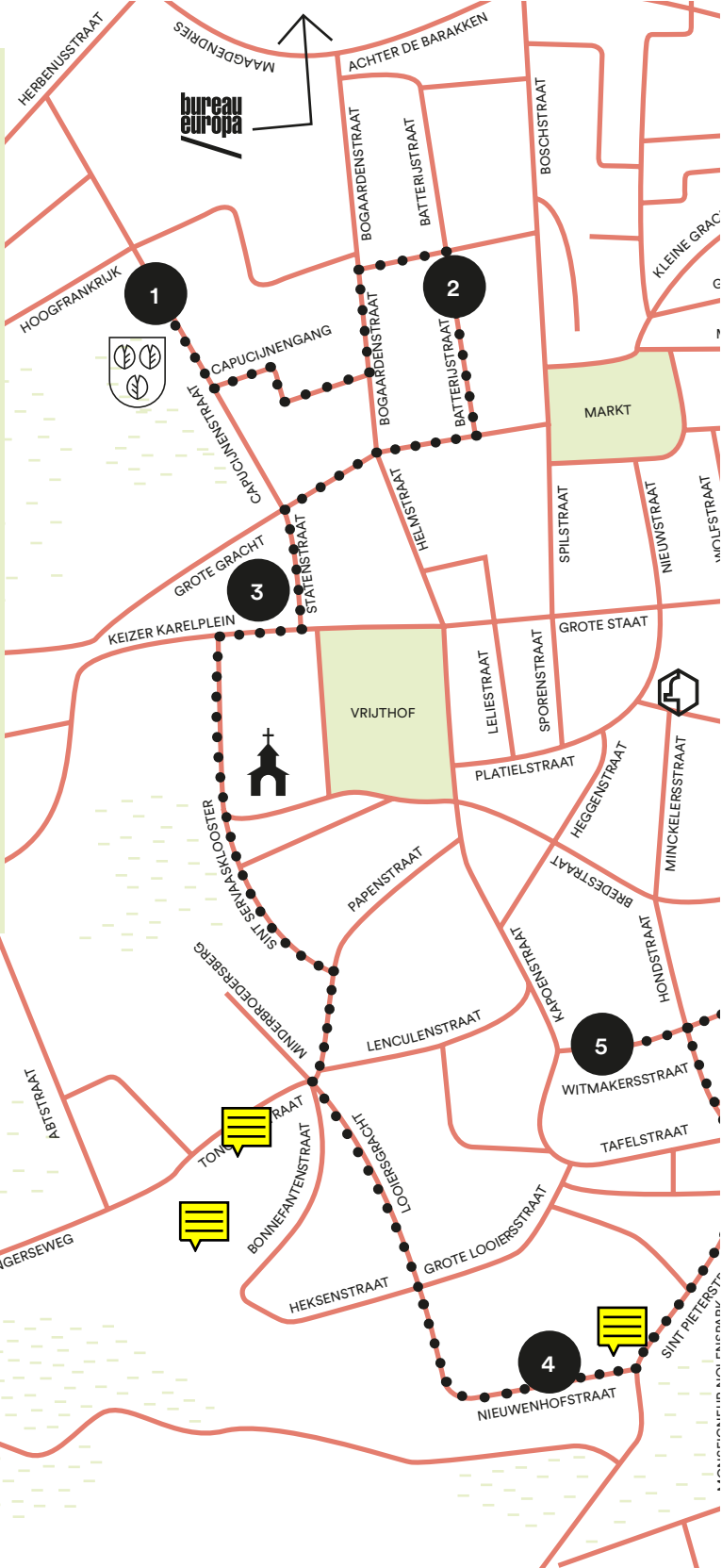
Petra Stavast, *Post from Ramya 2001*

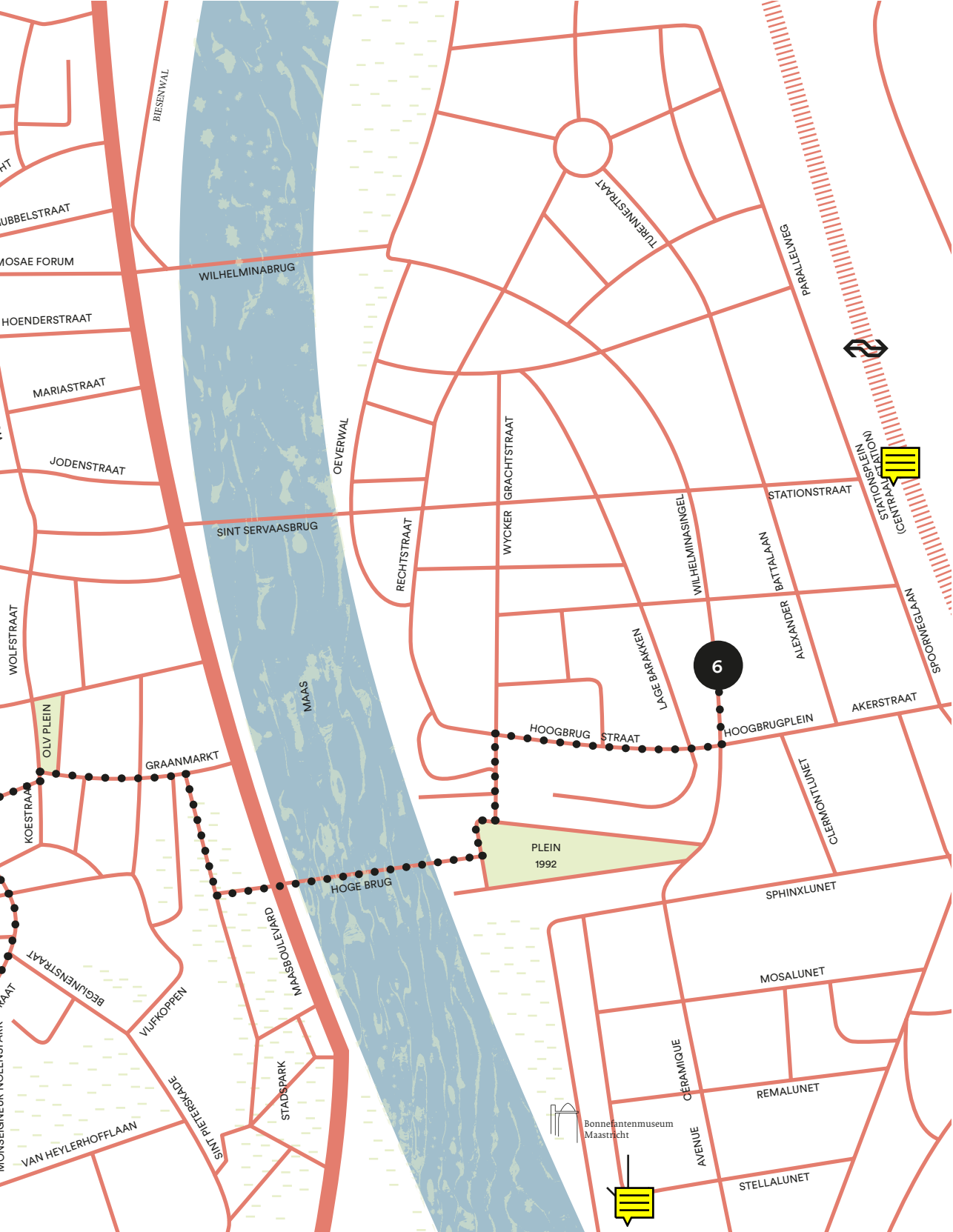
The Chambres d'Amis weekends
between June 27 and July 19.



Marres
Capucijnenstraat 98

- 1 Birthe Leemeijer**
Capucijnenstraat 47
- 2 Sanne Vaassen**
Batterijstraat 42
(V-House)
- 3 Keetje Mans**
Keizer Karelplein 18
(woonhuis annex salon
des arts)
- 4 Amie Dicke**
Sint Pieterstraat 74
- 5 Petra Stavast**
Witmakersstraat 9
- 6 Roy Villevoye**
Wilhelminasingel 119
- 7 Nishiko**
In all participating houses





BIESENWAL

WILHELMINABRUG

SINT SERVAASBRUG

MAAS

HOGEBRUG

PLEIN
1992

6

Bonnefontenmuseum
Maastricht

UBBELSTRAAT

MOSAE FORUM

HOENDERSTRAAT

MARIASTRAAT

JODENSTRAAT

WOLFSTRAAT

OLY PLEIN

GRAANMARKT

KOESTRAAT

BEGIJNENSTRAAT

VIJFKOPPEN

MAAGBOLTVARD

STADSPARK

SINT PIETRSKADE

VAN HEYLERHOFFLAAN

RECHTSTRAAT

WYCKER GRACHTSTRAAT

TJERNESTRAAT

LAGE BARAKKEN

WILHELMINASINGEL

BLITZTALAN

STATIONSTRAAT

PARALLELVINGEL

ALEKANBERG

AKERSTRAAT

CERMIJNLUNET

SPHINXLUNET

MOSALUNET

REMALUNET

STELLALUNET

CERAMIQUE
AVENUE

(MOLLE) STADSPARK
CENTRUM

SPORWEGLAAN



Roy Villevoye, *Voice-Over*, 2014



Keetje Mans, *Yellow painting*, 2015



Omomá, why did you
and ta

6
Roy Villevoye

The Video Message (2009)
Video (4'30")

Voice-Over (2014)
HDV video film (21'20")

The Things They Carried (The Missionary) (2013)
Silicone rubber, synthetic resin,
metal, polystyrene, human hair,
clothing, stuffed cockatoo, glass

Sculpture manufactured by Remie
Bakker/Manimalworks

In one way or another, many of the people who play an important role in my work live in the forest. Often, it is literally a forest, but it can also be a metaphor for the margins of our world; the point where different rules and histories prevail and where people are supposed to be free, authentic, and untamed. This is where my protagonists are at their best. An example

would be Rodan Omomá, an Asmat from Indonesian Papua New Guinea. He was a good friend and in 2007 he posed for the sculpture *Madonna (After Omomá and Céline)* (2008). In *The Video Message* (2009), Omomá makes it known that in allowing himself to be immortalised in sculpture, he may have roused the anger of his ancestors. When he died, the Asmat people made a large traditional wooden statue to commemorate their family member, as can be seen in *Voice-Over* (2014). I closely followed the ritual and so could share in the mourning over his loss. However, at the same time, I became embroiled elsewhere in a business conflict in which I had to defend myself. It is a painful confrontation between two worlds: the sculpture as an international symbol of 'life' on one side and big money on the other.

The Things They Carried (The Missionary) is a sculpture depicting Vince, a missionary and kindred spirit in Papua New Guinea who spent a large part of his life in the Asmat. Missionaries are not popular because of their association to colonial times. We can hardly imagine that such individuals, who put their life in the service of humanistic ideals far from our comfortable world, still exist. After completing the sculpture of Vince, I sent him a photo and a letter. To my surprise, I received a reply.



Roy Villevoye, *The Video Message*, 2009

During the Chambres d'Amis weekends from June 27 to July 19, Roy Villevoye's work can also be seen in a private home at Wilhelminasingel 119.



Amie Dicke, *Self-help*, 2015, Photo: Sander Tiedema

7
Nishiko

Repairing Earthquake Project (2011 –)

Repairing Earthquake Project, Third Phase: Current Washes Ashore (2013)
Installation with found objects, sea sand, seawater, rainwater and photography, 22 x 40 x 1500 cm
In collaboration with Sachi Miyachi's *The Scope in the Swell Waves*

Repairing Earthquake Project, Fourth Phase: How to Store (2013 –)
Repaired found objects, wood, paper



Nishiko, *Repairing earthquake project, Third phase "Current washes ashore"*, 2013



Roy Villevoye, *The Things They Carried (The Missionary)*, 2013

The Repairing Earthquake Project deals with the Great East Japan earthquake and tsunami, an extensive natural disaster that hit Japan in March 2011. For the project's first two phases, I searched the debris in the disaster area for items destroyed during the tsunami. Subsequently, I repaired them in temporary studios in Yokohama (2011) and Mito (2012). As the studios were set up in exhibitions, the repairing process became a public performance. The third phase, *Current Washes Ashore*, researched the tsunami marine debris found on the other side of the Pacific Ocean, after

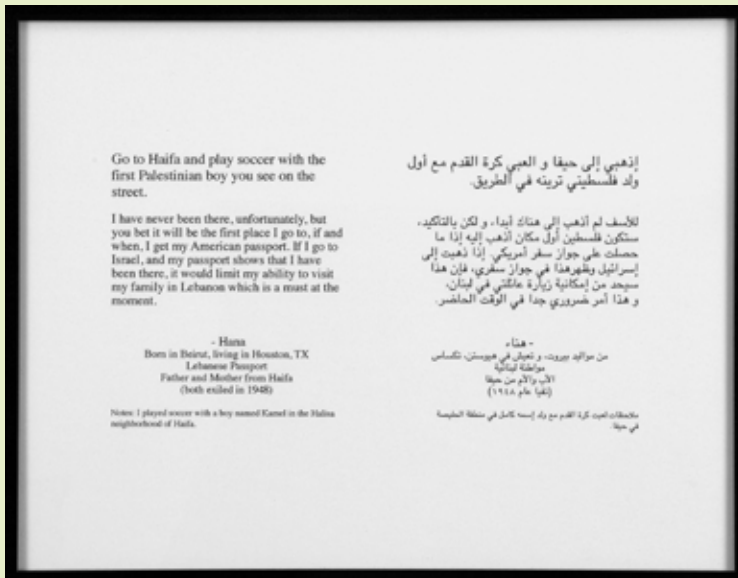
being swept away by the 2011 tsunami. The fourth phase is ongoing; I am making wooden cases for each repaired object, so that they can be easily stored and transported. I then give the objects to people supporting the project. I also issue a contract stating that the object should be returned to the owners should they claim it.

During the *Chambres d'Amis* weekends from June 27 to July 19, Nishiko's work can also be seen in all of the participating private homes.

Where We Come From (2001 – 2003)
Framed laser print(s) and C-print(s)
mounted on Cintra, video loop, text
panel 24 x 30 cm (including frame)

For this work, I started by asking the following question to more than 30 Palestinians in Lebanon, Syria, Europe, the USA, and Palestine: 'If I could do anything for you, wherever in Palestine, what would it be?' Most of the respondents were not allowed to cross the border or had psychological barriers that were just as restrictive. Thanks to my American passport, I could fulfil their wishes as far as was within my reach. One girl asked me to go to Haifa and play football with the first Palestinian boy I met on the street. One man asked, 'Go to my mother's grave in Jerusalem on her

birthday, place flowers and pray'. A third: 'Drink the water in my parents' village'. The video, photographs, and texts document the wishes and my attempts to fulfil them. They also explain why the participants could not fulfil these simple tasks themselves. With this work, I literally hoped to open borders, but also to open people's eyes to the everyday reality of many Palestinians.





Emily Jacir, *Where We Come From* 2001-2003 detail (*Hana*) American passport, 30 texts, 32 c-prints and 1 video, photo: Bill Orcutt © Emily Jacir

Intimacy

Valentijn Byvanck

1 — Intimacy

In his *Intimate History of Humanity* (1994), the historian Theodore Zeldin writes that since the 18th century, we have been able to distinguish several types of intimacy. There is the notion of passion or spiritual harmony based on intimacy in relationships. In addition, intimacy exists within groups, as can be seen in the fraternal embrace of men. And then, writes Zeldin, there is also the intimate room, where one can withdraw to their personal souvenirs and memories.

Zeldin's studies on the subject emerged just prior to the advent of the Internet and reality TV. In today's society, these two formats are responsible for creating environments where intimacy plays an important role in public space. There is an intimacy industry whose products allow us to daily consume the intimacy of others. Not only do we feast on the politicians and celebrities that fall from grace via secretly filmed intimate acts or statements. En masse, we watch programs where ordinary people express their deepest feelings after being reunited or finding unexpected love. Through Facebook and other social media, we share our feelings more than ever and partake in the intimate feelings of others.

The sociologist Richard Sennett believes this trend towards public confession indicates an urge for collective intimacy. We find it important to participate in the intimate feelings of others, even strangers, because it provides us with a framework for conduct in a public space whose rules seem to be in flux.

In recent decades, visual artists have unabashedly provided glimpses into their private worlds. Tracy Emin became world famous with *My Bed* (1998), an installation showing her bed after several-days use; the detritus between its sheets and on the ground included used condoms, traces of body fluids, and dirty underpants. In the performance *Financing My Parents' Divorce* (1999), the Dutch artist Cees Krijnen embarked on a world tour with works devoted to his parents'

messy divorce. In *Take Care of Yourself* (2007), the French artist Sophie Calle had a former lover's rejection letter analysed by many experts. The art lover is confronted with the bare facts that intimacy is part of public life.

The artists in this exhibition express intimacy in a different way. Some research and visualise their intimate space. Others document the environments, histories, and dreams of people whose lives they have entered. With the help of images, objects, and letters, they weave themselves into those lives, almost unintentionally and in passing at first, and later with growing awareness, leaving their feelings as a fingerprint on the work in the process

2 — The Other

We primarily associate intimacy with relationships to others. Shortly after moving to Amsterdam, Petra Stavast lived in an upstairs room near the Marnixplantsoen. To shower, she had to visit Ramya's apartment, her downstairs neighbour who never seemed to be at home. At first secretly, and then with Ramya's permission, she captured her neighbour's life (*Ramya*, 2001–2015). First the present — an unmade bed, a messy kitchen — and later, almost imperceptibly, she began portraying her past; her addiction to drugs and alcohol, moving to a Bhagwan community in Oregon, her rehab therapy, her personality disorder. The audience is painfully aware of an intense and difficult life, in which the artist partakes in an exceptional way.

By describing her practice as working on a continuous self-portrait, Amie Dicke also addresses the notion of identification. Her project for *Castrum Peregrini* in Amsterdam examined the house and life of its main tenant, the artist Gisèle d'Ailly Waterschoot van der Gracht (1912–2013). Since Gisèle had lived there so long, the house still bore traces of her artistic life from the Second World War, during which she offered salvation to those in hiding. Everything can be felt in the interior of the old house at Herengracht 401: a life's history sorted into things. Amie Dicke talked with Gisèle, held her objects, and even wore her clothes.

In 1992, the artist Roy Villevoeye met his friend Rodan Omomá on his first visit to the

Asmat population of Papua New Guinea. Since this visit, he returned often and many of his works have been devoted to his relationship with the Asmat. Omomá played a crucial role in this. The artist felt so close to him that he expressed his wish to Omomá to make a sculpture of him with in his arms the artist's daughter Céline as a baby. This was a delicate request since the Asmat tradition dictates that one may make effigies only of the recently deceased. These deceased live on as ancestor spirits. A sculpture of a living person would greatly upset this order.

3 — The Letter

In 2010, Villevoye receives a video message from Omomá. In it, Omomá tells him that an ancestor spirit has visited him and protested against the sculpture Villevoye had made of him. Accused of breaking a taboo, Omomá fears for his life. Painfully highlighting the inequality of their relationship, he proposes to restore the balance by asking for more money.

The artist does his best to help him. However, in the second film, *Voice-Over* (2014) we see this has been in vain: Omomá has passed away. It is now up to Villevoye to restore the balance. He has ordered a traditional ancestral sculpture from family members of his dead friend. A slow-paced documentary follows the making of the sculpture, until it is rudely interrupted by a phone call with a gallery owner who refuses to pay the artist for an earlier work. Left unpacked in the exhibition, the ancestral sculpture symbolises the problems of both films: the forbidden artwork and the unpaid artwork. For the artist, it also poses a dilemma: he views the sculpture as a mummie of his dead friend, how can he simultaneously view it as an artwork? The missionary Vince, who views Villevoye's work with a mix of sober consideration and friendly mocking, writes in an recent letter to the artist: 'The forest ... can be taken as a metaphor for the journey which consists of delving into and peeling away the layers of the mystery of life.'

It is its combination of expression and distance that makes the letter such a suitable medium for intimacy. In a letter, we write what we dare not say and can reflect in a

manner for which there is no space in a conversation. Thus, the letter can provide a unique insight into a fragile, personal world. In a series of highly personal refrigerator notes, Petra Stavast's neighbour reported on her mood and everyday worries. In a series of letters, Joke Weber works through her confusion over an artwork by Birthe Leemeijer, which she may or may not have won. Amie Dicke writes how, in the house of Gisèle, she was confronted with the amnesiac resident's numerous notes, which, especially now that she is dead, read like letters to the living. Between the woodcuts, engravings, drawings, and clippings on her bulletin board, Keetje Mans hangs pages from her diary: reminders, encouragement, and letters to herself.

For her project *Where We Come From* (2001–2003), Emily Jacir asked Palestinian exiles if there was anything she could do for them in Palestine. Her American passport gave the artist freedom to travel and fulfil the wishes of Palestinians who may never see their homeland again. One person asked her to visit Haifa to play football with the first Palestinian boy she met. Another asked her to do something he would have done on a normal day in Haifa. In Jerusalem, she paid a phone bill and laid flowers on the grave of someone's mother. From Bayt Lahia, she took with her a family photo in which the refugee's brother's children were properly portrayed.

The letter reoccurs several times in this work; first the exiles' request letters, then the letters she gave to people involved, and finally in her photographic record of the often fulfilled request. One cannot avoid the feeling that the mediator in this polyphonic correspondence has become entwined with the story. She becomes a companion in the intimate space of the exiled and their memories.

4 — The Object

Amie Dicke and Petra Stavast are increasingly confronted by the fact that we become embodied in the things we use. The red imprint of lips on a tea cup, the notes we pen in our books, the curve of a once sleeping body in an unmade bed. These imprints often coalesce with older layers. The lipstick-stained cup was inherited from grandmother, who put the cup to her own lips countless times, and the

book was leafed through by another person's hands before it became our own.

The study of functional layers of meaning inherent to an object belongs to the field of archaeological research. From the perspective of their emotional value, Susan Stewart notes that the souvenir transports history to a more personal sense of time. It is not the display of time itself that is important here — the year and associated events — but the intimate relationship between the souvenir and its owner. Dicke's studio wall features a quote by Walter Benjamin stating that, for the collector, an object's ownership expresses an intimate relationship: he lives *through* his objects.

To be part of that life you have to crawl into those objects. Dicke does this through erasure. She cuts out, scratches, sands, and reorders to create space for new meanings and, ultimately, for herself. The intimate relationship between objects and their owners is a palimpsest and can always be overwritten with new memories and feelings.

Nishiko demonstrates this in objects whose personal history remains unknown. For *The Repairing Earthquake Project* (2011–2015), she endeavours to repair household items belonging to victims of the tsunami that struck Japan on 11 March 2011. The tsunami had a devastating effect, especially in the area of Miyagi. Altogether, more than 18,000 people died. The tsunami inspired the world to develop major help programmes. Whole neighbourhoods were rebuilt, with new schools and hospitals, to once again enable human habitation. In the meantime, Nishiko looked in the affected area for traces of human existence — pieces of porcelain, bits of plastic, broken everyday items — and brought them to public places to repair them with the help of local residents. After being repaired, she sought new homes for the artefacts. New owners are asked to promise that they will return the object if their rightful owners come to claim them.

5 — The Intimate Space

The given examples show that intimacy attaches itself to things or is transferred through letters (in the broadest sense of the word), wherein we recognise and develop

our relationships with others. This is true even if we know the other only as a general category: those in exile or disaster victims. We unmistakably feel the intimacy of strangers.

But what about our understanding of the intimate spaces we make for our own feelings and rarely share with others? This is central to the work of Keetje Mans, whose inner self seems to speak directly to the viewer. She paints the interior of her imagination: fairy-tale-like and unfinished worlds with a few suggestions of object, action, or figure. The works use paint on canvas but often look like textiles: soft, strong, unrelenting, veiled. The beauty of her work is in the unfinished quality of what we think we see; the eye continuously scans, drawing us deeper into the intoxicating paintings. The works originate from an equally dreamlike studio; paintings on the walls and floor — some standing, some flat — cuttings surround a melancholic window, an old paint-spattered couch sits nearby.

Sanne Vaassen takes this idea of intimate space a step further by offering a part of herself to others. She meticulously recreated her birthmarks as 327 adhesive tattoos, and grouped them together as one form. By wearing the tattoo, you carry a small part of Sanne on your body. The artist offers her intimate self to the audience, as if she were also transferring part of her identity and emotions. And the marks come in an unlimited edition.

It's a small step from the birthmark to her next project, in which Vaassen seems to be asking what the smallest part of our intimacy is. She cultivates microbes, dust, and bacteria from a private home in Maastricht. We view the traces we leave in our beds, on sofas, or on our bathroom floors as very intimate. When looked at objectively, however, the microbes and bacteria are no more than a bulk of living matter that our body hosts for a short time. These traces are not our body per se — as the body decays, they quickly become part of something else.

Birthe Leemeijer's work provides a very unusual example of how an artist's practice can merge with intimate space. For her exhibition at the Zeeuws Museum in 2008, she asked me to conduct interviews with a number of people who were involved in the

artworks she made while living in Zeeland from 1993 to 2000. I presumed none of the works still existed, although I wasn't sure. One of the people I interviewed was Joke Weber. In 1998, Weber won an artwork by Birthe Leemeijer as part of AVRO's *Kunstblik*, a Dutch television programme about culture presented by Angela Groothuizen and Liesbeth Brandt Corstius. Birthe Leemeijer's work was a small white sign inscribed with the text (the work's title): 'I'll show you the most beautiful thing that I know.'

Weber told me she chose Leemeijer's work because it roused her curiosity. Her interest was further heightened when, at the awards ceremony, Leemeijer told Weber she would later receive an invitation to redeem the promise. The enigmatic announcement got Weber thinking: perhaps the recovered artwork was immaterial — a phenomenon of natural light perhaps, only visible in a particular season, but not now.

A few weeks later, Weber received an invitation to visit Leemeijer's house. Weber recalls how, on arrival, she saw a large painting and asked if it was the work she had won. It wasn't. They drank coffee together and then the artist went upstairs. When she returned, she had a baby in her arms. 'This is my daughter Merel,' she said, 'she is the most beautiful thing that I know.'

Leemeijer purposely didn't inform me about the works of art I had to interview people about, so this particular twist in the story was new to me. Weber made an emotional impression, and she seemed to expect me to support the rest of her story. She described how her initial response to the meeting was troubled and confused. Her mood turned in the days after receiving the prize, especially when she saw on the back of the card how much was paid for the artwork. She questioned whether the work was worth it.

A correspondence ensued with the AVRO in which Liesbeth Brandt Corstius explained to Weber that the work was an example of conceptual art, which, like material art forms, has its own price. In the years following, Weber continued thinking about the work: she collected clippings about the artist and told her story to anyone who would listen.

During the interview, it gradually dawned upon me that Weber had become a skilled

storyteller. It also appeared that Weber increasingly realised (a realisation she might have expressed for the first time during our conversation) that the work's value was not in its ownership, but in the conversations about the work. Leemeijer had shared an intimate space with Weber, where her daughter and her art were one. The confusion caused by this shared intimate space made Weber into the narrator, who gave form and life to the work.

Keetje Mans (Amsterdam, 1979) makes paintings and drawings in which elements from Western and popular culture are combined with nostalgic images from her childhood, 19th century French painting, and exotic and gothic kitsch. Mans studied at the Academy of Fine Arts and the Jan van Eyck Academy, both in Maastricht. She won the Royal Prize for Modern Painting in 2012, followed by a solo exhibition, *Through the Vineland*, at the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, in 2013. In 2015, she has participated in group exhibitions at *Panorama* in Turin and *Framer Framed* in Amsterdam. Keetje Mans is represented by *Galerie Cokkie Snoei*, Rotterdam.

Amie Dicke (Rotterdam, 1978) often uses existing materials and stories in her work. By removing elements, she reveals layers of meaning and adds her own ideas. She is currently artist in residence at *Castrum Peregrini*, a former safe house on Amsterdam's *Herengracht*. Dicke studied at the *Willem de Kooning Academy* in Rotterdam and teaches at the *Rietveld Academy*, the *Sandberg Institute*, and the *University of Amsterdam*. She is represented by galleries in Amsterdam, Los Angeles, and Tokyo, and her work has been exhibited at the *Gemeentemuseum* in The Hague, *Museum Boijmans van Beuningen* in Rotterdam, *Tate Modern* in London, and the *Schirn Kunsthalle* in Frankfurt.

Birthe Leemeijer (Amsterdam, 1972) lives and works in Haarlem. Leemeijer studied at the *Rietveld Academy* and the *Sandberg Institute*. In 1997, she won the *Prix de Rome* basis prize for Art and Public Space. Leemeijer's works in public space include *Een reservaat voor eenzaamheid (A Sanctuary for Solitude)* (2003–2012) in Almere, *L'Essence de Mastenbroek* (2005–2012), *Mastenbroek*, and *De onbegrensde tuinen (The Boundless Gardens)* (2014) in Diepenheim. She is currently developing one of the *Eleven Fountains* in Dokkum as part of *Leeuwarden European Capital of Culture 2018*, and is working in *Ressegem* (Belgium) on a pilot project for the *Flemish State Architect* and *TAAK*. In the past year, Leemeijer participated in the exhibitions '*Beautiful Holland*' at the *Gemeentemuseum* in The Hague and '*An Olfactory Archive*' at the *WuHo Gallery* in Los Angeles.

Petra Stavast (Tiel, 1977) unravels and structures complex social issues, often derived from seemingly insignificant,

personal observations, using photography, film, and text. In her books *China/S75* (2008), *Libero* (2009), and *Ramya* (2014), she compiles various fragments of research by translating them into compelling visual stories. Her work has been exhibited in museums, galleries, cultural institutes, and festivals, such as the *New York Photo Festival*, *Prix de Rome* 2011, *FOAM Amsterdam*, and the *Stedelijk Museum*, Amsterdam.

Sanne Vaassen (1991, Sittard) graduated with honours from the *Academy of Fine Arts* in Maastricht in 2013, where she received the *Henriette Hustinx Prize*. She was also nominated for the *2013 Tent Academy Awards*. Prior to graduating, she exhibited at *De Pont* in Tilburg as one of the ten selected young artists participating in the *Student/Teacher* project. Vaassen was an artist-in-residence at *FLACC* in Genk and participated in the *Jeune Création Européenne Biennale*, which travels to eight different countries. In 2014, she continued researching her practice at the *Jan van Eyck Academy* and exhibited at the *Bonnefanten Museum* in Maastricht. In 2015, she will begin an artist residency in Paris.

Roy Villevoe (1960, Maastricht) studied at the *Rijksakademie* in Amsterdam. He makes sculptures, installations, photographs, video works, and paintings. The origins and the sources of art and the conceivability of possible lives fascinate Villevoe. In 1992, he took a risky decision and visited the *Asmat* in Papua New Guinea for the first time. Since then, he has returned regularly and has gradually developed his work as a witnessing of uncomfortable encounters between two asynchronous cultures and the ensuing confusions and fascinations. He often makes films in collaboration with *Jan Dietvorst*. Villevoe's solo exhibitions include the *Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen* in Rotterdam, *De Lakenhal* in Leiden, and the *Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam*. His work is included in collections such as the *Centraal Museum Utrecht*, the *Royal Tropical Institute* in Amsterdam, and *Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam*.

Nishiko (Kagoshima, 1981) is interested in occurrences that are slightly divergent from daily life, easily overseen subjects, or accidents from which we avert our gaze. Simplicity and repetition are key elements within her practice, with which she wishes to trigger the audience to relive the

experience of the moment, and to contextualise the subject into his or her own fantasy. Nishiko studied photography at *Tokyo Zokei University* and *Fine Art* at the *Royal Academy of Art* in The Hague. Recent exhibitions include *Artist-Run Gallery* (Billytown, The Hague, 2015), *MK award* (Art Rotterdam, 2015), *Undertones* (Marres, Maastricht, 2014), *Zeelust* (GEMAK, The Hague, organised by *Satellietgroep*, 2013), *Badly Natured* (NEST, The Hague, 2013), *Artists and the Disaster – Documentation in Progress* (Contemporary Art Center, Art Tower Mito Contemporary Art Gallery, Ibaraki, 2012).

Emily Jacir is a Palestinian-American artist whose work is dedicated to examining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the resulting exile of many Palestinians. Solo exhibitions include an upcoming exhibition at the *Whitechapel Gallery*, London (2015–16), *Darat al Funun*, Amman (2014–15), *Beirut Art Center* (2010), and the *Guggenheim Museum, New York* (2009). Jacir participated in *dOCUMENTA* (13) (2012) and the *51st* (2005), *52nd* (2007), and *53rd* (2009) *Biennale di Venezia*, for which she was awarded a *Golden Lion* in 2007. In 2003, *Belongings* was published, a monograph of Jacir's selected work from 1998–2003. *Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg* published her second monograph, *Emily Jacir*, in 2008.

Marres is a House for Contemporary Culture located in the heart of the old town of Maastricht. Marres develops with artists, musicians, designers, chefs, and perfumers, a new vocabulary for the senses. In addition to bringing a lively program of exhibitions, presentations and performances, Marres also features a beautiful garden and a wonderful restaurant.

Marres
House for Contemporary Culture

Capucijnenstraat 98
6211 RT Maastricht
+31(0)43 3270 207
info@marres.org
www.marres.org

Colophon:

Images: Courtesy of the artists
Graphic design: Vandejong
Editing: Valentijn Byvanck
Texts: The artists, Elvie Casteleijn,
Marjolein van der Loo (Sanne Vaassen)
Essay: Valentijn Byvanck
Copy editing: Margot Krijnen
Translation: Jason Coburn
Printer: Lecturis

Intimacy has been made possible by
the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds
Limburg.

Marres receives structural support
from the Ministry of Education,
Culture and Science, the Municipality
of Maastricht, and the Province of
Limburg.



PRINS BERNHARD
CULTUURFONDS

