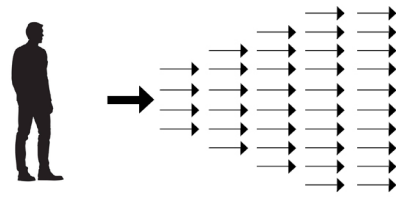


EMBODIED EXPERIENCES
for COMMONING



THE ROLE OF INITIATOR AND HIS OWN FASCINATIONS AND AMBITIONS

The research on the role of public art (and design) for Contemporary Commoning was originally initiated by Jeroen Boomgaard (lector of Art in Public Space at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy) together with Rene Boer (researcher and writer). They invited researchers and artists with different interests and backgrounds. Ronald Rietveld (RAAAF) was invited as an artist to contribute to the research project. Ronald, in his turn, initiated research on a potential site-specific intervention for Contemporary Commoning on ZBE, together with the RAAAF team, and became initiator of the installation Black Water.

With a sharp and clear idea and a convincing visualisation we managed to generate enthusiasm in the research group, locals (via Nautilus) and the municipality to participate in the organisation and realization of Black Water. Black Water is an autonomous artwork but also fundamentally part of the long-term Contemporary Commoning research project. One initiator's ambition inspired and provoked another, like a chain reaction, enriching one-another and contributing to the original vision on the importance of contemporary commoning.

RAAAF's first ambition was to use the potential of some unique vacant public buildings and generate a possible art intervention to contribute on Contemporary Commoning on Zeeburgereiland. But our fascination with the site had its origins elsewhere: the secret of a hidden space in one of Amsterdam's main public works, a silo of Amsterdam former sewage treatment plant. Darkness, silence and absence so greatly appealed to the imagination. Contrasting strongly with the young bustling urban neighbourhood that surrounds the silo nowadays. The absurdity of the two coexisting parallel worlds was an important starting point for the Black Water intervention.

Every art intervention in public space needs an initiator, starting with his personal fascinations and interests. Although large scale interventions in public spaces are very seldom made by one person alone, the fascinations belong to the single individual.

Every artist has their own interests, ambitions and ways of looking at an issue or a place. These fascinations, therefore, cannot be used to formulate standard recipes as starting points for interventions, but can be used to inspire and trigger someone else's ambitions.



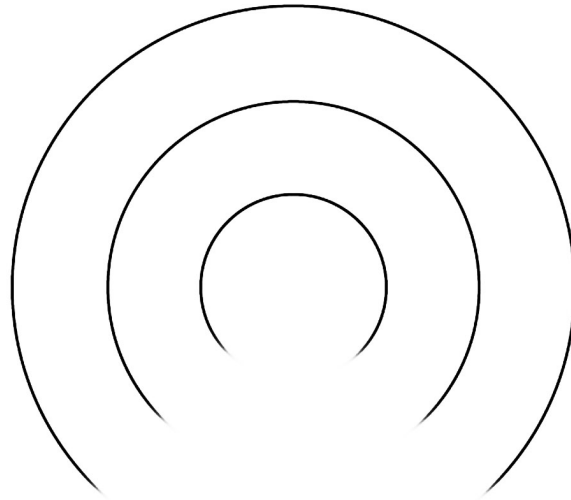
CREATING EMBODIED EXPERIENCES

Black Water is a site-specific intervention and embodied experience that links the present, the past and a possible future on Zeeburgereiland, like many of RAAAF's works articulate emptiness, create space for reflection and spontaneous interaction.

Black Water provides an 'exclusive' embodied experience that paradoxically also generates shared experiences by making the installation accessible to all inhabitants, but with a maximum of just two visitors at the same time. How does it feel to be alone in a huge, dark, silent world without contact and mobile devices. Trying to find grip in an unknown world you're thrown back on your basic senses: try to see in pitch black darkness, feel the unstable soil under your feet, hear the enormously long echo of drops falling in the water and breaking the silence, the smell of sand and water.

Dependence on contextual aspects such as weather, time of day, season, sunlight and temperature make the experience so unique. After working on site for three months, experimenting with the existing qualities of the space and analysing human perception we came up with a system that could adapt to the changes of the context and provide a personalised program according to the weather and the character of the visitor. Running these programs required being always on-site and providing personal attention to the visitors. Being aware of and sensitive to the signals a person gives off in the interaction before entering. Revealing more light for the person that fears darkness, holding the hand of the person that suffers with claustrophobia, creating a higher step for the elderly, reducing the amount of falling drops while raining, or varying the amount of light entering according to the sun. Allowing only two visitors to enter at the same time, fixing the duration of the time slots and having at least two people on site to manage each visit made this possible.

Such an exclusive embodied experience, while opposed to participation art, paradoxically lead to the essential ingredient of commoning: sharing. Shared experience. →



3HREE

"What is important now
is to recover our senses"
– Susan Sontag

RAAAF's interventions do not try to solve - problems, unlike applied disciplines such as design and architecture. They rather point to hidden qualities and make them tangible. Undergoing something physically and with multiple senses makes for a total and intense experience.

The orchestrated sequence of revealing the silo's qualities, such as a vestibular disorientation by stepping on the sand for the first time, feeling cold and insecure, hearing the echos of the drops, smelling the wet concrete and seeing the first light beam, helps people to focus on one quality at a time, read the space more slowly and with attention to detail.

The intervention Black Water is made by reinforcing existing qualities and adding subtle elements. Emphasising the existing qualities of the silo, such as by means of the water's reflection that makes the silo look even emptier, the day light-filter that makes it even darker and the water thickener that makes the echo of the drops even deeper. Restricting natural light from entering the silo changes the space inside into a landscape of darkness, silence and absence. Highlighting the contrast with the 'smooth' context of Zeeburgereiland makes the experience even more extreme.

This embodied experience makes one first of all feel (!) rather than think, but also provides space and time to reflect on the circumstances, instead of digesting information about it.

During a visit in the silo people start to trust their senses. They slowly start to see and discover the space inside. People open up and undergo the experience without any expectation of outcome, without initially wondering what exactly they are seeing. And, naturally, the depth of this experience causes all sorts of reactions afterwards.

The emotional reactions that visitors had after experiencing Black Water could only be captured immediately after coming out of the space (often while still crawling through the pipe) (SHARED EMOTIONS). The reflective reactions came later, when people were back in the contemporary.

In the following chapters SHARED POTENTIAL / POSSIBILITY / RESPONSIBILITY it becomes clear what role locals and a local party like Nautilus can play in this process.



QUOTES FROM VISITORS:

"I literally went looking for the light switch by hand, but it wasn't there. Total disorientation. Then contemplation and rest."

"The first minutes you lose your balance, looking for balance, for a grip on yourself. Then you can let it come to you. Pitch black in silence."

"Everything was black. Your purple hair and the green grass hurts my eyes now."

"It's quite a scary tunnel at first, but you know you're in a work of art so you trust it to be good."

"It also feels like a kind of mourning. A Requiem."

"It's like a swamp where your senses take over."

"You feel very small and very powerful at the same time."

"Transition in time."

"Crawling backwards leaves you completely disoriented in the dark."

"Maximal & Minimal at the same time"

"Soundscape, and those low bass tones, make it very esoteric. Really beautiful and also confronting. I noticed in myself that I was always looking for how it was made instead of surrendering completely."

“What a wonderful experience. That silence with drops. You become totally different.”

“What an immersive experience. Completely surrounded by the darkness that engulfs all form, including myself. The silence, the emptiness, my thoughts.”

“I felt very small in a gigantic space.”

“And then suddenly you come back to everyday life with that graffiti and a succession of experiences.”

“Mystical experience, that sound....”

“It has touched us deeply. Very powerful in his absence.”

“Maybe I shouldn’t say it but I thought it was a meditative experience.”

“Impressive experience that sharpens all the senses because you are completely thrown back on yourself. The drops and shifting light felt completely natural. What we both found so strong is that the quality of the building and its function came into their own and that nothing had been contrived.”

“Individual positions contribute to the commoning. Individual experiences can become shared experiences. Impulse starts somewhere. From an individual maker.”

“It has touched us deeply. Very powerful in his absence.”

“Maybe I shouldn’t say it but I thought it was a meditative experience.”

“Impressive experience that sharpens all the senses because you are completely thrown back on yourself. The drops and shifting light felt completely natural. What we both found so strong is that the quality of the building and its function came into their own and that nothing had been contrived.”





SHARED EXPERIENCE

It is not necessary to experience something together in order to have a shared experience.

Opportunities for spontaneous interactions between people have been consciously incorporated into the entire experience: meeting people before and after the visit at the cultural meeting point Nautilus, established by people from the same neighbourhood (Zeeburgereiland). This was meant to get to know each other and build a bond of trust - which was necessary for the visits in pairs - as well as a possibility to share emotions with the volunteers immediately after the visit and share thoughts with the neighbours afterwards.

In the days after the opening, people from the area were talking about Black Water in the coffee shops, supermarkets and out on the streets, sharing a secret of a hidden place. So did other Amsterdam citizens: Is there something going on? Why am I not there? People were wandering around in groups, trying to see what's going on.

Some visitors returned several times, bringing people with them. Artists, initiators and architects came in search of new possible scenarios, anticipating possible uses at various locations, sharing ideas with the inhabitants of Zeeburgereiland.

Besides spontaneous interactions, realizing the Black Water project also provoked new alliances with researchers and specialists (light-, scenography-, photographers etc.) and built collaborative relationships between artists, inhabitants and volunteers. The research group was present at all phases and generated activities and collaborations with the local inhabitants, volunteers from the Rietveld Academy and Zeeburgereiland were working together.

The way Black Water was organised made commoning possible even in a time of the Covid-19 lockdown, when all the other exhibitions and events were canceled and restricted. In an online and contactless society we provided the opportunity to recover one's senses and a chance to see the other side of isolation, find a piece of one's own self and learn from the experiences of the other. What could be more important than finding like-minded people to be able to share emotions from collective experiences, reflect on them, and interact.







SHARED EMOTIONS

Such a precise and strategic intervention brought its unexpected revelations, together with the sensory recovery and re-activation of a wide range of emotions that are usually hidden behind facades. Black Water also, surprisingly, showed an ability to awaken personal memories. But even more unexpected was the desire people felt to share it. Curiously, after this intense experience people were sharing personal stories they would never have shared with anyone under any other circumstances and both hosts and strangers, having been through the same experience, discovered the desire and ability to listen.

Most of the people were happy to stop time for a moment and meditate on the feelings experienced in Black Water, although some people confronted their fears or relived traumatic or nostalgic memories that they did not dare to think about before. (see quotes of visitors)

Awakening personal memories that are shared activates collective ones and emotions become shared.

After a meditative experience, that helps you feel grounded, sharpening all the body senses, even a closed and defensive person suddenly becomes ready to share the thoughts and becomes open for interaction, wants to talk, listen and touch. Only after going through this sensitive personal experience alone, with your own self, one becomes ready for sharing. That shows that not art on itself, but the way we experience it becomes an essential ingredient of commoning.

If before visiting Black Water people thought they needed restaurants and sport-centers, that they could common with the partner or a friend, now after the experience people were finally ready for spontaneous interaction with the people they had never seen before and would never have interacted with in say the super market, which is a crucial finding for commoning. (And it was reached by only articulating the void (with minimal means), rather than filling it with luxurious design projects of obvious programs, which are often expensive and yet less effective).

QUOTES FROM VISITORS:

"I was reminded of when we drove desert in Mexico. There was a hole in the ground and we crawled inside. We entered the cave. We started singing there and now we wanted to do it again."

"You mentally dive into history. I was born in the Jordaan and see myself sitting on the toilet there as a child. "

"I was thinking of my mother, who went through the terrible things during the war. I couldn't stop imagining what my mom would feel here. It would have a completely different meaning for her. "

"Mexico. Dark forest with light coming through. You go back to deep associations."

"A large amount of people mentioned forest experiences. Some a creepy, nightmarish forest, others a magic, fairytale-like forest. Some gave examples of particular forests they had been before."

"Kind of a scary but excited transition moment close to the experience of labour, that feels like life will never be the same after. My baby fell asleep inside, no wonder, it's like a womb. "

"This silo has absorbed the quintessence of everything that happened in the last so difficult years."

"I relate the installation to the personal story of Ronald."

"The smell activated the memories of spaces we have visited together with my husband before. The story of our first date, when we were meeting in a factory, that smelled absolutely the same."

“I am recovering from a serious burnout with the help of a psychologist and it is very complex. Black Water is the space I would enter every day to detox from everything.”

“I was lying down in the sand and watched stars in the sky, the water reminded me of a lake, and a light was appearing like a sunrise. But everything was just my imagination inside the simple concrete silo. I relate this experience to some scenes from my childhood, how the reality was different from its perception back then, and how the memory transformed and reshaped it overtime. It was a right moment for me to visit it.”

These revelations were partly caused by stepping out of a comfort zone. →



AWARENESS OF UNEXPECTED AFFORDANCES

To generate the embodied experience of the intervention by visitors every detail counts.

An experience of Black Water starts long before one finds oneself in the darkness of the silo.

Waking up and going through the routine rituals in ones own, familiar, apartment; walking through Zeeburgereiland which looks like any other newly build luxurious neighbourhood, to the meeting point at the Nautilus building. Having your warm cup of tea during an everyday conversation with the local inhabitants. The other visitors park their car or bike, arrive by tram and walk toward the meeting point in the residential area, an area you could find everywhere nowadays; everything seem to be “perfect”, similar to any other contemporary city expansions in The Netherlands. Black Water will offer an opposite experience.

Unexpected turns take one out of one’s comfort zone. Phones are securely stored and left behind at Nautilus. One or two visitors at a time are guided towards the silo, again a short walk through the newly constructed neighbourhood, heading towards three enormous bold, bare, concrete silo’s in the middle of a grass field. You must follow the simple rules of the ‘Zone’, to the instruction of the guide, in order to stay safe. Above all: don’t expect anything.

Access the work by crawling backwards through a small hole into an unknown world that one can only enter in this awkward unfamiliar way. You are thrown back on yourself by the darkness, without your phone and together with another person you might never have seen before. After this first shock, the body starts search grip and generate unique ideas and opens the imagination instead of the pre-programmed actions.



QUOTES FROM VISITORS

“At night. Beam lights at sea breaking through the clouds.”

“You were really standing in the origin of the earth. Suddenly there was a light.”

“Silky cloud in there.”

“I was very much thinking about churches and parochial spaces abroad, a religious experience.”

“We are on vacation in The Zone of Stalker.”

“A kind of revelation from Jesus, a birth from that white haze.”

“Absolutely Chernobyl, those drops. “

“There was a very large moth on the wall.”

“I’ve seen Tarkovsky’s Stalker at least 15 times. This time I really felt it for the first time.”

“I’m not a believer, but I’ve seen Jesus. There was a white haze above the graffiti, then came the apparition.”

“At first it looked like rock wall until I saw it was graffiti.”

“Very weird that the space felt oval as it was round.”

“On a black ocean with beams of light.”



SHARED POTENTIAL & RESPONSIBILITY

With the installation Black Water, RAAAF once again points to the unique hidden qualities and potential of 10.000 vacant public buildings in the Netherlands, presented in the Dutch pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2010. These buildings were constructed in different eras, with function, crafts and the use of materials being time specific. On the other hand, just like the 10,000 other vacant public buildings, the silos were built in a specific time, with a specific purpose and using a specific construction method. In many cases the cultural history was charged by the people who lived or worked there, in the case of the silos at ZBE it was precisely the absence of people; the desolation of the site since the 1980's to 2010.

The paradox is that that emptiness is still here today. But now inside the silos. This emptiness, darkness and absence are emphasised in Black Water because the surrounding terrain is now completely build up. These silo's have unique qualities that can enrich our contemporary city.

As non-reproducible buildings, the silo's represent the current disappearance of irreplaceable affordances and experiences offered by vacancy in all our cities.

Many visitors have been asking: "Why didn't you do anything in the other two silos?" and immediately started sharing what they would do there. By leaving the space empty and reinforcing the unique qualities of a post-industrial cave that the silo inherited, rather than filling the space with the predictable program, we provided a context that is stimulating and opening the imagination of the visitor; makes one think what else could be possible, instead of filling the space with functions that could be anywhere.

Opening of the imagination was the main ingredient of the shared experience. The intervention created a hunger for the non-reproducible qualities of the silos. That in its turn inspires thinking about the potential of the other two silo's and opens the eyes towards the other 10.000 vacant buildings in NL.







CONNECTING SCALE LEVELS

While analysing and testing ideas for a site specific intervention it can be useful to reflect on these ideas on different scale levels. What does the intervention in the silo mean at the scale of city, a country or even internationally?

Black Water provide an experience of darkness, absence and silence, unique values that became underestimated and a scarce resource over the last decades in Amsterdam and many other cities on the planet. Physically the silo is in the centre of a contemporary city. But the experience inside the silo is almost a polar opposite to the local inhabitants' daily living environment. We eliminate all the distractions from "just being here" (such as phones, people, entertainment and noise).

What could this experience mean in general for our often "smooth and pre-described" contemporary cities and public spaces, where people are always "online"? In a world overloaded with stuff and images it is important to emphasize a "poetry of absence". A large part of the 500 visitors pointed to the value and need for this kind of experiences. Providing such experiences can be beneficial to well-being in other districts of Amsterdam as well as other contemporary cities. But, of course, it will have to be reached in a different site- time- and context- specific way.



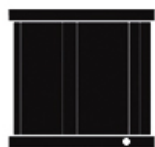
QUOTES FROM VISITORS: THE URGENCY

“Everything is normal, grey and routine before you get inside. And then you are in a vacuum completely alone. You start to hear the drops, feel the smell, and pay attention to the temperature and feeling of your own body. All sensations are sharpened. And when you go outside you suddenly feel thirsty for colour, so your eyes try to capture it: the grass, the sky the pavements of the buildings. You want to touch someone and talk to someone. Everything feels different from before.”

“It’s like when you are keeping a strict diet for a while, you might even forget the taste of something you used to like, you might feel like you don’t need it anymore. Then suddenly you taste it, and you feel the taste so different, rich, favourite and familiar. Or rather otherwise, when you have to eat fast food for an entire week, and then you really looking forward for something fresh. The installation works like a detox.”

“Imagine; a deep and dark silence, pitch dark, the kind that weighs heavily on your shoulders, then drops on water (with long echoes), slowly but surely your eyes start to make out some lighter shades of grey. Looking up a cosmos of small circular dots. Very lucky with the evening light, not only because of its orange glow but the camera obscura was magnificent. Many references came to mind, cinematographic ones in particular.”

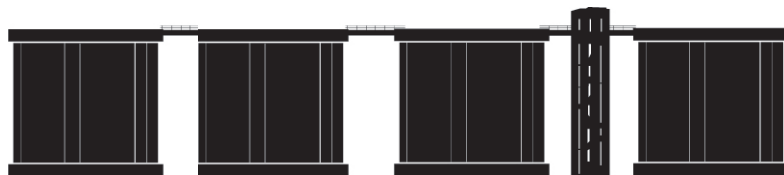
“Total sensory reset. In the beginning you are looking for something to hold on to; but after that... Delicious. I would like to come back any day.”



COMMON RESOURCES

For a seemingly infinite amount of time when nothing happens, nothing is permitted for our vacant public spaces. These spaces are closed to the public without explanation even though present and past generations have paid taxes for realising them and their specific public purpose. Often it is forgotten that these vacant public buildings don't belong to the real-estate market but are unique common resources that potentially could be available to all inhabitants in society.

The silo's were closed for more than 15 years. By opening one silo RAAAF once again tries to raise awareness of these public resources on Zeeburgereiland, Amsterdam and the rest of the Netherlands.



SHARED HISTORY

Connecting Present and Past in search for new meaning in the Future.

Cultural-historical, spatial, geographical and even political research on the selected sites or building can help to discover new insights that can contribute possible location-specific interventions.

A possible future does not have to be all-encompassing, but can be based on specific aspects. In this case it makes people aware on values like emptiness, silence, darkness in the contemporary living environment.

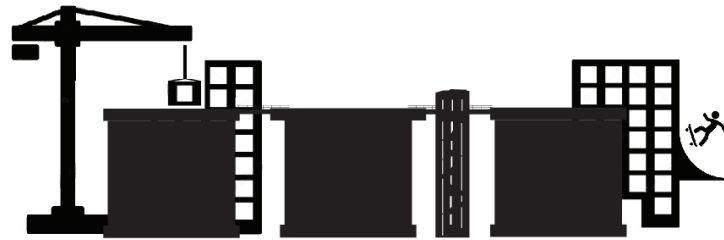
In the 1980s, the East Sewage Treatment Plant was constructed on the former military site. In 2006, a new installation in the Westelijk Havengebied was taken into use to replace this. After the demolition of the old sewage treatment complex (including one of the silos), space was created on the vacant location for housing, where the Sporpheldenbuurt has been built. In July 2012, the first piles for residential construction were driven. For 15 years the three silo's used to be a vast landmark in a dirty desolate area that has settled in the collective memory of all Amsterdammers passing by along the highway. Now they are the only empty spaces in an overloaded luxury residential area. RAAAF wondered how the silos could be given new significance in their new context.

Even in the context of a newly built residential island, cultural-historical aspects of the silos and the former sewage treatment system seem to offer unique affordances. For example, the poo and pee of all 'Amsterdammers' flowed together in the sewage treatment silos. It is perhaps the city's most 'inclusive place'. Paradoxically in a period when nobody was living on this part of Zeeburgereiland. 'Black Water' makes people aware of this shared history.

The Silos have a number of unique qualities that are hard to find anywhere else on the island or in Amsterdam: silence, darkness, absence, timelessness, isolation, slowness, unforeseenness, dirtiness. Contrasting strongly with the noise, light, rush, speed, crowd, cleanness and order of the young urban neighbourhood. It was important to identify these features and emphasise them in our intervention with minimal means.







Inhabitants of Zeeburgereiland have always been curious about those strange landmarks they see in their clean living environment everyday, but could never enter them. For the first time they have been brought inside two by two, into the last witnesses of the dirty origins of the island to which everyone contributed. Eventually residents started to wonder: What exactly was this place? Why have these silos been empty for 15 years? Who is the owner of these buildings? Is this public property? Can the Black Water installation stay? What will happen next? Feelings of belonging and involvement to the past and present of this place and the community they are a part of, and the feeling of responsibility for its future. You do not necessarily need to experience something together in order to have a shared experience. The shared history with a given place can itself be an ingredient for commoning. Human nature may affect us individually and collectively, it can make people desire another world that does not exist but is possible, and has nothing to do with preprogrammed consumer behaviour.

BEELDDEDE KUNST

In de bagger van Amsterdam biedt Black Water stilte en contemplatie

In een silo van de Amsterdamse rioolwaterzuivering helpt de tijdelijke installatie *Black Water* bewoners van de drukke nieuwbouwwijk na te denken over de geschiedenis en het potentieel van hun woonplek.

Roos Volkers 16 november 2021, 13:28



Door onze medewerker
Thomas van Huut

Compleet is de duisternis die je aan alle kanten omhult. Alleen aan de vallende druppels - en de lange echo die ze veroorzaken - kun je horen dat deze silo, één van de drie van de voormalige Amsterdamse rioolzuiveringsinstallatie, binnen net zo gigantisch is als buiten. Nadat je via een smalle bus naar binnen bent gekropen, duurt het nog ruim een kwartier voordat je ogen wennen aan het donker. Bovenin blijken buizen te zitten die een klein beetje zonlicht binnenlaten. Het lijkt een stierenhelm. In de verte hoor je kinderen spelen, maar hier is alleen stilte, leegte, donkere.

De ervaring die *Black Water*, de nieuwe tijdelijke installatie van de broers Erik en Ronald Rietveld van kunst- en onderzoekstudio RAAAF oproept, is een groot contrast met de omgeving. De betonnen kolossen van 23 meter hoog, gebouwd in 1966, staan inmiddels ingesloënd tussen een gloednieuwe middelbare school en honderden net opgeleverde appartementen. De afgelopen jaren is er op het Zeeburgereiland in Amsterdam flink gebouwd, uiteindelijk moeten hier ruim 10.000 Amsterdammers komen wonen. „Jarenlang was het hier één uitgestrekte vlakte met drie karaktervolle silo's”, zegt Ronald Rietveld. „En nu wordt het razendsnel ingevuld met, wat mij betreft, heel inwisselbare stedenbouw.”

Daarbij is er te weinig oog voor de bijzondere geschiedenis van deze plek, vindt Ronald. „Dit deel van de stad werd jarenlang de 'smeerpijp' genoemd, al vanaf 1907 liep hier de afvoering van de stad, zo de toenmalige Zuiderzee in.” Hij zag een flinterpie van een regionale omroep waarin bewoners fantaseren over wat er moest gebeuren met die al jaren leeg staande silo's. „Al die ideeën hadden niks te maken met de geschiedenis hier: een restaurant, een hotel, een klimmuur, of een chocoladevwenbad. Wij willen laten zien hoe het óók kan zijn: een plek voor leegte, duisternis en contemplatie, allemaal dingen die in de stad nauwelijks meer bestaan.” Ergens volgend jaar worden de si-



REPORTAGE KUNSTWERK

Van poep en plas naar duisternis en contemplatie

Kunststudio RAAAF zaagde eerder een bunker en een testinstallatie voor de Deltawerken in stukken. Nu laat het je in een oude rioolzuiveringsinstallatie duisternis, ruimte en leegte ervaren - middenin een kersverse Amsterdamse woonwijk.

lo's door de gemeente verkocht aan een projectontwikkelaar. Wat er daarna precies mee gaat gebeuren, is nog onduidelijk.

Iconische ingrepen

RAAAF maakte de afgelopen jaren indruk met een aantal iconische ingrepen in historisch erfgoed, voor *Bunker 599* (2010) sneeden ze samen met Atelier de Lyon een schijnbaar onontastbare bunker van de Nederlandse Waterlinie doormidden (deze zomer werd de Waterlinie uitgeroe-

pen tot Unesco Werelderfgoed). Voor *Deltawerk //* sneeden ze wederom met Atelier de Lyon een meterslange watertooi, een proefinstallatie voor de Deltawerken in stukken, om tot een golf-schichtige installatie te komen. In de voormalige munitionfabriek van het Hem in Zaandam schuiven gigantische panelen van messing (het bronnemateriaal van kogels) door de hal.

Vergelijken met die gelijk zichtbare, drastische ingrepen, is het in *Black Water* zoeken naar wat de

kunstenaars eigenlijk precies hebben gedaan. „We benadrukken de kwaliteiten die het gebouw al heeft”, legt Erik uit. „Het druppelen van water is een ingreep van ons, het zand waarop je staat ook, en we schuiven terwijl je er staat, heel traag een van de latten open, om het effect van je ogen die wennen aan de duisternis iets te versterken.” In totaal werd er 120.000 liter water en 60 kuub zand de silo naar binnen gebracht.

Erik Rietveld: „Het kost tijd om er

grip op te krijgen, en dat is precies de bedoeling. De Franse filosoof Maurice Merleau-Ponty heeft een theorie over de 'optimale greep', het lichaam bereidt zich altijd voor om de wereld om zich heen zo goed mogelijk te benaderen. Wanneer je ergens een donkere kamer binnenkomt, ben je normaal gesproken meteen gericht op het zoeken van het lichtknopje. Met *Black Water* proberen we die optimale greep te verstoren, om alle zintuigen opnieuw te laten werken om de ruimte te verkennen.”

Leegstand van publieke gebouwen is een belangrijk thema in het werk van RAAAF. In 2010 maakten ze voor de voor Architectuur Biënnale van Venetië de installatie *Vacant NL*, een collectie blauwe maquettes van alle ruim 10.000 Nederlandse overheidsgebouwen die toen leeg stonden. Het bleek een „soort miniaturwereld” waar de volgende projecten al in schuilden: „het Hem en deze silo's, die zaten allemaal al in die installatie voor Venetië.” Toen RAAAF besloot iets met de

silo's te willen doen, duurde het nog ruim een jaar voordat ze van de Gemeente Amsterdam de sleutel kregen.

Ronald: „Omdat we niet in opdracht werken, zit er in eerste instantie niemand op ons werk te wachten. Ze zijn vaak bang dat wat we doen onveilig is.”

Erik: „Wat mensen dreigen te vergeten, is dat al die gebouwen publiek eigendom zijn. Door mensen hier binnen te laten, willen we ze ook confronteren met de achterkant van

de stad, die zo vanzelfsprekend is dat het onzichtbaar wordt.”

Ronald: „In het geval van deze silo's hebben echt alle Amsterdammers eraan bijgedragen: van Ramses Shaffy tot Johan Cruijff, alles wat ze door de wc spoelden, kwam uiteindelijk hier terecht.”

De installatie *Black Water* van RAAAF is t/m 25 november te zien op het Zeeburgereiland in Amsterdam. Vooraf reserveren is vereist.

Inf: contemporarycommoning.nl

FOTO'S: JAVIERRE PIERES

De installatie *Black Water* van RAAAF in de oude Amsterdamse rioolzuiveringsinstallatie.

