

HOLE

HOLE I N ONE EXHIBITION

1 – 23 December 2012
Tue. – Fri. 13–17 hrs.
Sat. and Sun. 11–17 hrs.
-
2 – 20 January 2013
Tue. and Fri. 9–13 hrs.
And by appointment.

KUNSTVEREIN LEVERKUSEN SCHLOSS MORSBROICH E.V.

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EXHIBITIONS SELECTION PAST THREE YEARS

2012
Kunstverein Leverkusen Schloss Morsbroich e.V. Germany, 'Hole in One' (solo)
MOA (Museum Oud Amelisweerd), Bunnik 'Het Gebouw' (group)
Platform57, Den Haag 'Selected Drawings' (solo)
Re:Rotterdam Art Fair i.c.w. Blue Episode Foundation (group)

2011
De Overslag, Eindhoven 'Too Big To Fail' (solo)
Art Amsterdam 'We Like Art' i.c.w. Galerie Wit (group)
NEST, Den Haag 'Urban Expressionism' (group)

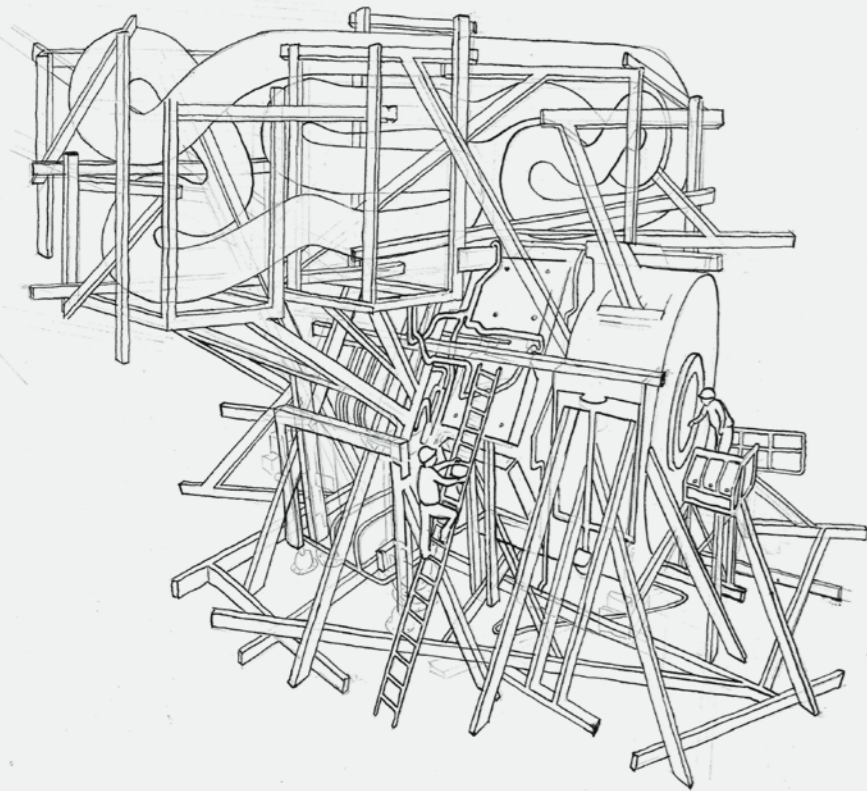
2010
Galerie Phoebus, Rotterdam 'Tautologische ruimte' (group)
Artist 2010, Istanbul, Turkey 'Art Pie' (group)
De Fabriek, Eindhoven 'Bringing coherence to the mystery' (solo)
Locatie Z, Den Haag, Zondag 'deeltjes/particles' (group)

WORKS

- A – *Ghost*, 2009.
installation / silkscreen prints
118x88,5cm, paper, wood
- B – *Nest*, 2011.
installation / photo edition of 25
30x20cm print on Hahnemuhle paper on dibond
- C – *Whatdarkmatters*, 2009.
silkscreen print edition of 5
100x90 cm
- D – *Bringing coherence station no1*, 2010.
drawing, 60x50cm
- E – *Bringing coherence to the mystery*, 2010.
installation / wood, drawings,
photo- & silkscreen prints, sand, wax, lightbulbs
- F – *Hybride 2*, 2009.
installation / drawing 110x76 cm,
light, shadow, wood, glass, tubes

All photos © Johan Nieuwenhuize, except B © Thijs Ebbe Fokkens

THIJS EBBE FOKKENS
www.thijsfokkens.com



D



F

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KUNSTVEREIN LEVERKUSEN SCHLOSS MORSBROICH e.V.

Stroom
Den Haag



E



ONE

INTRODUCTION

Verena Loewenhaupt
Curator, Kunstverein Leverkusen Schloß Morsbroich e.V.



A

The role of the Kunstverein is to support young artists and advance their careers. Besides organizing three to four exhibitions per year, we aim to facilitate and stimulate an active contact with contemporary art in general, for example by gallery and visits to exhibitions. Primarily focused on artists at the beginning of their career, the priority is to strive for high quality yet leaving enough space for experiments.

In the case of Dutch artist Thijs Ebbe Fokkens this “space for experiments” is to be taken literally, as Fokkens often transforms exhibition spaces into some sort of laboratory. The result can be hardly imagined. He creates his own cosmos to explore the world, drawing parallels with large scientific projects such as CERN in Geneva or O.P.E.R.A. in the Gran Sasso mountains in Italy. In doing so he questions the relationship between curious endeavour and applicable results, with an ironic hint.

Fokkens seems, indirectly, to claim that he can reach more with his art than science can. By integrating his drawings and prints in huge constructions, he enters and provides undefined territory. Often a variety of perspectives occur, depending on the point of view and the medium chosen. The human eye experiences a moving light bulb in a different way than a photo camera with a certain time exposure. Fokkens reaches dimensions impossible to achieve by science: the form and the

esthetic constellation lead to viewpoints, which are intentionally ambiguous and different for every visitor. Over and over again Fokkens seeks the dialogue in - and with - his work. As co-founder of artist initiative *Locatie Z* he is also involved in other levels of art and art reception beyond his own work. Interesting discussions and insights take place at irregular *Locatie Z*- events mixing art, science and philosophy. The perception of art as a dynamic process, a continuous conversation on many levels, is at the core of his practice.

Also the Kunstverein expects a gainful exchange: between the exhibition space and the integrated work, but especially between the art itself and its observer. With the title ‘Hole in One’ the artist raises the expectations to a high level. Fokkens promises blindly, that his experiment will succeed. The title of another exhibition, in 2011 at *De Overslag* in Eindhoven, was ‘Too Big To Fail’, a term originating from the banking sector. Another project at *De Fabriek*, in 2010, promised to ‘Bring coherence to the mystery’. Besides this supposed megalomania and over-estimation of his own capabilities, strangely enough he also seems to fully embrace the possibility of ‘failure’ at the same time. Either it will be a ‘Hole in One’ or the experiment collapses and the deeper insight and achievement of knowledge stays in the dark. Either way, it promises to provide enough matter to think, and talk, about.

THIJS EBBE FOKKENS, DREAMING ABOUT ART AND SCIENCE

Michael van Hoogenhuyze

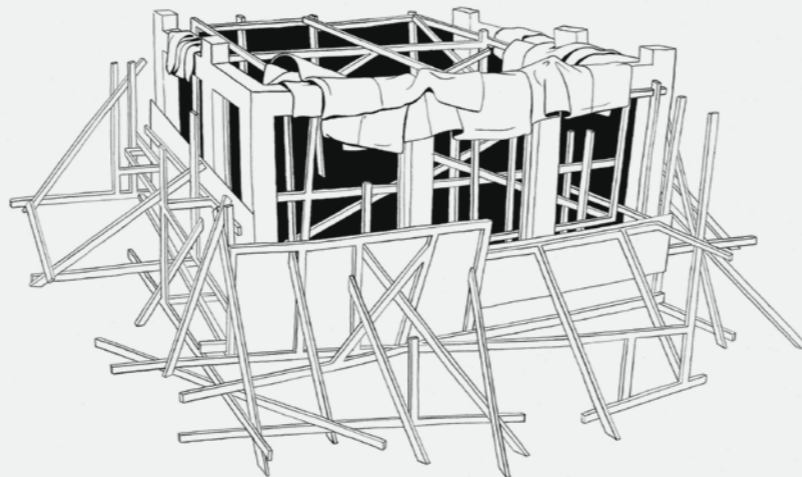
Art and science are, often unintentionally, connected. In science we can find aesthetical, ethical and emotional aspects where ideas from art can be significant. The relationship between artistic and scientific thinking is reflected in notions such as ‘the connection between truth and beauty’ and ‘simplicity as the hallmark of the truth’. A specific beauty can be perceived in the search for a consistent model of the cosmos, based on a clear system of scientific laws. The beauty of systems can inspire artists, like those that manifest themselves in the shapes of crystals or the growth patterns in organisms. The heroic stories of scientists continuously searching for new discoveries and possibilities to escape from the restrictions of old ideas and visions are important for art. The ideal of the hero, the explorer or inventor, can be a role model for the individualistic artist, trying to change our vision of the world. And as results are often shown in presentations and demonstrations, the practice of science also has a theatrical character. We can see it for example in the anatomical amphitheatres at the European universities in the Renaissance and Baroque era, as well as in the shows and demonstrations of science, for the outsider, in the ‘salons’ of the eighteenth century.

So the beauty of order, the striving for openness and change and the theatrical aspect are inspiring for the arts. The connection of science and theatre is particularly ambiguous. The goal of science is the truth. In theatre it is necessary to play and to imitate. In some sense you can say that it is permitted to lie in theatre. In science it is not. When people in science indulge too much in the theatrical aspect of their presentation, their activity may end up being beautiful but deceitful rather than faithful to the truth. Or can it be that the beauty of the presentation refers to a kind of deeper truth? We have to be careful here.

The mingling of truth and design, of discovery and storytelling, in demonstrating scientific experiments, can be seen in space exploration. In 1986 the space probe *Giotto* approached the comet *Halley* at a distance of 400 miles. This moment was shown on Dutch television in ‘real time’. It was an exciting moment. We saw photographs that were taken minutes previously and immediately sent to earth. These photographs were computer translations of the comet, beautiful but not understandable to an outsider. These images were alternated with images of the technicians in Darmstadt and the reporters in the studio. It was not clear *what, where and when* you were watching, but it was a great show. A more extreme example concerns the walk on the moon in 1969. There are rumours it did not happen at all, that the whole thing was shot by Stanley Kubrick in a studio. When we turn science into theatre and entertainment, immediately the question about truth arises. In art, however, we can postpone the question about truth for the sake of beauty and poetry.



B



C

One of the oldest stories about a discovery, you can call it a primal myth, may very well be the story of the soldier called *Er*, written by Plato in his book *The State*. *Er* was killed, but after his death he had the opportunity to see how the machinery of the cosmos worked, and what happened with the souls of deceased people. After these discoveries he was allowed to go back to earth to tell other people what he had seen. Plato had to use a myth to make his theories understandable. In his mind there had to be an ideal point from which you could get a view of the entirety and understand the world and life. After the story of *Er*, a lot of literature with the same subject followed. The best known in this field is the *Divina Commedia* by Dante. But, during the following centuries, many more texts and fantasies were published, and continue to be so even today. Reports about near-death experiences, for example, or science fiction creations like *The Matrix* movie. It doesn’t necessarily have to be a very dramatic adventure though, as Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges describes in his story *The Aleph*. In this case, the ideal point, the *Aleph*, can be found in the cellar of an ordinary house. From there you can see everything simultaneously, clear and unmingled.

It is fascinating to fantasize about an ideal point of view from which everything can be known. But the concept of such a point has become more and more difficult. Nowadays we can no longer think of a model to show the world in an understandable and complete way. Since the quantum theory it is no longer possible to imagine matter and energy in a tangible visual representation. Moreover, the world is infinitely complex and we are at an accidental moment and point in this unimaginable big space. The world is not a planetarium anymore. So when we want to understand something of the cosmos, a more ambiguous and fragmented kind of presentation, like we see in contemporary art, is needed.

One of the places for advanced scientific research is the laboratory of the CERN (European Council for Nuclear Research) at Geneva. There, a particle accelerator was built, a huge circle as big as a town, to discover new particles. We cannot see it, because it is a hundred meters under the ground. And, for an outsider, the experiments are difficult to understand; they are about the smallest particles in energy and matter. The scientists assure us that their discoveries will lead to a new image of the cosmos. They are open in their efforts and try to convey their significance in newspapers and on television, for it is not a secret project. But at the same time it is not understandable. Considering the questions and the proportions, it is a mythical project. The CERN has a strong poetical power.

This poetical power can be recognized in a few elements. The laboratory has the shape of a circle.

A strong form often used in representations of the cosmos and the system of the sun and the planets. It is a shape with religious connotations even, but also that of an amphitheatre. The research in Geneva is about the most fundamental questions in physics. It combines extremely big laboratories with the smallest particles we can imagine. A laboratory gives the feeling of openness to new possibilities and new discoveries. Thus, a laboratory can become the dreamed environment for an artist. Compared to the artist’s studio as merely a place to produce works of craftsmanship, the laboratory is a place for research and reconfiguration. There, scientists share their results in demonstrations, which may become poetic spectacles along the way.

Thijs Ebbe Fokkens shows us his dreams about science. He uses the poetical power of the circle, and makes constructions and models, which remind of amphitheatres. In his detailed drawings people are shown working in some kind of mysterious ritual. When depicted in photographs the suggestion of an ‘actual occurred event’ is even stronger, because of the nature of the medium. Sometimes he builds the constructions in space using rough wood in a primitive way, stressing the material aspect of his work. But he can also use light as drawing material, making things more ephemeral, mysterious and abstract.

Fokkens’ work is connected with the sources of avant-garde, the sketches of the architect Tatlin, the *Light Space Modulator* by Moholy Nagy and the visions of Constant for his project *New Babylon*. Like Constant, he ‘collects’ the documents and the images to prove the existence of his fantasy world. But in the work of Fokkens it is a poetical fantasy more than a vision of a utopia. He deliberately avoids - or plays with - these kinds of statements and questions about truth, for doing so provides space to contemplate and wonder. The optimism in his work is the fact that he discovers the poetical power in the reality of science.

He tries to collect the documents, drawings, models and photographs to prove the existence of the ideal point of observation, ‘The Aleph’. These documents form a collage, not a closed system. They stress technology and science but give the means to dream.

Leiden October 2012