



Room view showing works by Lohse and Lissitzky. Photo Peter Cox..

title **Bik Van der Pol**
Pay Attention: Act 3
episode **Plug In #28.3**
duration **from 10-05-08 until 21-09-08**
curator **Bik Van der Pol**
text by **Bik Van der Pol**
& Miryam van Lier
photographer **Peter Cox**

Liesbeth Bik and Jos van der Pol have been working together as Bik Van der Pol since 1994. They often work on location, use, reuse and reactivate the work of others – be they from the world of art, journalism, media or history – and confront the visitor with situations for which they as artists refuse to take complete control. Their oeuvre consists not so much of interpretations as of the creation of connections and interacting elements that generate a communicative platform. They continually question the function and meaning of art and art spaces and repeatedly request that what we conveniently call history or general body of thought be updated and evaluated. Bik Van der Pol's work contributes to the discussion that the Van Abbemuseum itself wishes to instigate all the time: what

is the social significance of contemporary art museums and how can today's art encourage the public to get involved?

Plug In #28 Pay Attention is a series of presentations that address the visitor as an individual and a member of society. A museum room is turned into a temporary 'public domain' in which examples of freedom of speech related to censorship and private responsibility cause us to explore our own limitations. The continual assessment of ultimate democratic freedom is duelling with notions of what is socially desirable. Based on these notions and using a scenario, Bik Van der Pol display alternating presentations of works from the Van Abbemuseum collection, at different locations in the museum.

In room B2.03, they present a selection of 140 books from Loompanics Unlimited publishers, Washington. Out of business since 2006, this publishing house had for decades published manuals that 'your mother and the state would rather you didn't read'. Subjects varied from practical handbooks on 'How to Develop a Low-Cost Family Food-Storage System' to less generally

acceptable publications as 'Gourmet Cannabis Cookery' and controversial self-help books as 'How to Start Your Own Country', 'Homemade Guns and Homemade Arms', or 'How to Clear Your Adult and Juvenile Criminal Records'. On a crate next to it is 'Little Liars (collection from Kiev, model 1-9)', 2006-2007, a series of bronze-cast radios from the former Soviet Union. These radios were found in every household (usually in the kitchen), were on all day long and only received on the government-approved frequency. A weapons permit Charles Esche, director of the Van Abbemuseum, had to acquire to be allowed to display a work of art with a gun by Joseph Beuys, and Bruce Nauman's litho 'Pay Attention', 1973 offer an ironic framework for this multitude of contrasts. In the midst of all this, visitors are free to pick up any book they like or use the copying machine should a subject be of particular interest to them.

Previously, in 'Act 1' in room B0.08, they presented three works by On Kawara ('13 Jan. 1973', 'July 4 1973' and 'Lat. 31° 25'N, Long. 8° 41'E', 1965), and their own work 'Kiev, 18-3-2006 (slide version)'. The dates and GPS coordinates on Kawara's paintings give implicit meaning to a certain day and location. We know what is meant by a certain date, even if we do not know whether it is relevant, and why. 'Kiev, 18-3-2006 (slide version)', based on an interview with the director of the Chernobyl Museum, is about a specific event and its representation. Although it does not contain a direct reference to the specific location and time of this event, the work tells us about the role of the museum, the production of information, knowledge and culture, and where the power to do so is vested.

In Plug In #28.2 Bik Van der Pol, Pay Attention: Act 2, over the last months they have presented 'Wall Drawing No. 256', 1975 by Sol Lewitt, and 'Baldessari Sings Lewitt', 1972, in which Baldessari brings Sol Lewitt's work into the limelight. By singing Sol Lewitt's conceptual principles, they register, according to Baldessari, differently than when we read and reread them in silence.

In Plug In #28.3 Bik Van der Pol, Pay Attention: Act 3, they present the work of three artists. 'Les Grands Ensembles', 1994-2001 by Pierre Huyghe presents a 'conversation' between two buildings, which are typical examples of

the notorious, modernist, social housing projects, once seen as a utopian dream designed to accommodate good living. The illuminated windows conjure memories of Spielberg's film 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind'. The adjoining gallery features photomontages of a building designed by Lissitzky that was never built, 'Der Wolkenbügel', 1925. Lissitzky saw these buildings, as a proposal for a new rational architecture that would be a match for the trend at that time of building massive skyscrapers and a manifestation of the worldwide popularity of modernism. The painter and graphic artist Richard Paul Lohse used his work to reflect on the relationship between art and society. To him, the systematic and rational approach of constructive art was the only way to view the rapidly developing world and represent it. His work, therefore, must not be understood as a formalist exercise in colour, but rather as a critical, objective representation of social structures that can be used to investigate social reality. According to Lohse, constructive art was predestined to play a key role in dealing with a changing society and environment due to its philosophy and transparent methods. Once again, the means by which we gather information is key. How is information conveyed, and in what ways can we see it? If we think we know it already, is it still possible to see it, even if it is not said or shown as such?

Art works

Pierre Huyghe

Les Grands Ensembles, 1994-2001

El Lissitzky

Der Wolkenbügel. Grundriss. Ansichten gegen Kreml und entg, 1925

Der Wolkenbügel. Ansicht gegen Nikitskij B-d, 1925

Der Wolkenbügel für Moskou. Fliegerbild, 1925

Der Wolkenbügel für Moskou. Blick gegen Strastnoj B-d, 1925

Richard Paul Lohse

Bewegung von Gelb über Grün und Blau zu Violett, 1958-1973

Modular Seriell, 1977

3 x 3 Colour Equations, 1980



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Pierre Huyghe *Les Grands Ensembles*, 1994 -2001. Photo Peter Cox..