

## A jam studio

The monumental wooden barn with its high ridge is an appearance in itself. Upon entering, the long pieces of coloured fabric that divide the barn into several smaller spaces from top to bottom are especially striking. An organ flaunts itself in the centre of the space, some video cameras are lingering around, a number of TV screens are displayed, the floor is littered with drawings and piles of printed texts: all ready to be brought in motion.

Jochem van Laarhoven, Bas van den Hurk and Reinout Scholten van Aschat have the Flemish barn on the estate De Moeren at their disposal for three months to continue their research into the relationship between visual art and theatre. They have transformed the barn into a place where working, cooking, sleeping, eating, reading, conversing and jamming alternate, or rather: intersect. You could say my two separate visits to the estate in Zundert were of a very different nature. The first seemed to have a clear frame; it was a family visit. The second could be described more as a work visit. Although, it does prove difficult to separate the two. To what extent can you call cooking together and talking about what goes on in the barn a working visit? Perhaps this immediately points out one of the core elements of this residency: Jochem, Bas and Reinout have created a place where work and life, art and everyday life flow organically into one another.

From their background in visual arts, Jochem and Bas, who have worked together for several years around a shared art practice, draw inspiration from working processes within theatre. An important part of this is the long-term collaboration with Reinout. The rehearsal process in which a group of theatre-makers, without a mutual hierarchy, continually make proposals for new acts by going directly "onto the stage" to experiment, is a way of working that Jochem and Bas find immensely appealing. The atmosphere in which everyone can throw something into the group on an equal footing and react or elaborate on each other is very refreshing to them. Conversely, the characteristics associated with the classic studio of a visual artist are actually very attractive to a theatre-maker like Reinout: the inquisitive nature in which the end result is less or perhaps not at all central and the absence of a defined amount of time to work on something. Reinout says that having a place to research material without an immediate performance attached to it is quite unique in theatre. Here in Zundert, he has the opportunity to meet this need for time and space for playing and researching.

In researching the relationship between visual art and theatre, there is another element of great importance to the three artists: the collective way of working. For a theatre company or collective this is a given, but for a visual artist, traditionally trained for a solo studio practice, a joint working period is less evident. Jochem and Bas have already designed a series of residencies in a similar way, and this is how *Networked Collective* came into being. They describe themselves as a flexible group of about twenty-five artists, actors, theorists and performers who collectively create artworks, films and produce plays. Reinout calls it 'the blob' rather than a collective or a network,

a blob is always subject to change and thus does not take on a fixed form: the community is always 'becoming'.

So what does the work process look like? When working with a loose-fixed group of twenty-five makers? It comes down to Jochem and Bas, and this time also Reinout as one of the initiators, creating spaces and conditions in which a jam can arise, a collective inspiration flow in which making is done together. Facilitating the preconditions is actually the biggest part of the work. What elements allow something to be set in motion? What is available in the space? What materials or tools are available? Space to sleep, to cook together and to take a walk on the moors are essential, precisely from the belief that in that in-between space, in an unconstrained situation, anything can be created. One of the most important conditions they create is the space to do nothing. It is all about potentiality. Anything is possible, also the possibility of not creating a new work or not ending up in a collective jam. The collective work is at the same time an investigation of living together. In this sense, with this residency, the trio is also making proposals to organise life in a different way and express certain values. Bas indicates that they also want to break through a certain economic practice, not put the value of money at the centre - for example, all collaborating creators are paid in the form of a work of art, rather than in money - which makes it clear how, in their own way, they question the current capitalist system.

Departing from research into the cross-pollination between visual art and theatre, Jochem, Bas and Reinout end up with an ever-changing blob of artists who are given the rare time and space to attempt. The next residency may be one in which the collective process occurs even in an earlier stage and another layer will be peeled off.

Bibi Scholten van Aschat