THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

Highlights of Memory Machine and Intellectual Playground 2014–2017

CASTRVM PEREGRINI

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About

This magazine features highlights from three years of Memory Machine – We Are What We Remember, a rich programme of exhibitions, lectures and debates organized by Castrum Peregrini in Amsterdam. Memory Machine is about the importance of our cultural memory. It shows how we can be led and misled by the value system with which we were brought up. And how difficult it is to appreciate the merits of other systems. 'The fear of the Other is primarily rooted in anxieties about the Self', writes Kenan Malik in this issue of *The House of Gisèle*. This magazine is a tribute to the values of the original residents of Castrum Peregrini, first and foremost Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht. She is the true and unsung hero and her house on the Herengracht – the House of Gisèle – a monument to courage and humanity.

For more on Memory Machine: www.castrumperegrini.org

Gisèle d'Ailly van Waterschoot van der Gracht at the age of 100.
Photo Koos Breukel, 2012

The House of Gisèle is a time machine

Living testament to a life centred on art and humanitarian values

Time seems to have come to a standstill in a maze of stairways, corridors and rooms at Herengracht 401 in Amsterdam. Here you find the renowned hideaway pianola, as well as written, painted and photographic testaments to a life full of profoundly human values and artist friendships: The House of Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht.

By Michael Defuster

It is difficult to imagine if you've never been there: in the centre of Amsterdam stands a building on Herengracht which is teeming with stories from recent European history, leaving visitors feeling dizzy from all the impressions. The house is a maze of stairways, corridors and rooms where young Jewish, German and Dutch poets and artists could go into hiding in the 1940s, and where they could discuss art and poetry until the early hours of the morning. A place frequented in the post-war years by great creators like Margerite Yourcenar, Karel Appel and Georg Baselitz. But despite what you would think about such rooms steeped in history, time has not stood still here. It feels as though the painter Max Beckmann might drop by for coffee at any moment, to explain why he fled from the Nazis who condemned his art. At the same time, your eye might be drawn by the work of contemporary artist Amie Dicke, who has left her mark on the house with her art collections, as though she's lived here for years.

The protagonist in this microcosm is Gisèle (1912-2013), a strong personality, driven by a passion for beauty and authenticity, accepting no compromises from those around her. She arranged her house in Amsterdam exactly as she herself lived: intensive, inventive, creative, with style and significance, lovingly, with respect for the stories of things and surrounded by inspiring artists and poets. The house at Herengracht 401 reveals every phase of her life: photos and objects from her childhood among American Indians in the Wild West, furniture and other items from the sturdy Austrian castle, belonging to her mother's noble family in Styria, and from the Amsterdam canal house of her father's family.

The House of Gisèle is in fact a time machine. One glance into her wardrobe is enough to bring to life her fashionable student years during the *années folles* in Paris. Drawings and paintings acknowledge her formative artistic years with the celebrated stained glass artist Joep Nicolas in the town of Roermond. Her library and archive reveal her exciting life among artists and intellectuals in pre-war Bergen (Noord-Holland): Jacques Bloem, Eddy du Perron, Menno ter Braak, Adriaan Roland Holst. Gisèle herself follows the visitor from various vantage points around the house. Self-portraits are arranged in a seemingly casual manner on painter's easels. A bust of her by the sculptor Titus Leeser peers over you from its position on top of a cabinet. She glances at you with tempting eyes from a drawing by Max Beckmann in the hall, and she greets you with amusement as a radiant figure of light painted by Joep Nicolas when she was a young woman. Her own work hangs throughout the house, engaged in a symbiosis with the interiors that she skilfully arranged.

A hiding place

At the age of 28, just before World War II, Gisèle, accompanied by the poet Adriaan Roland Holst, first entered the building, in search of an Amsterdam home that she found there on the third floor. She furnished the apartment cosily with furniture she acquired from her mentor Joep Nicolas, who had left for the United States to escape the looming catastrophe. The young Gisèle soon welcomed the German poet Wolfgang Frommel, who needed a safe house for his Jewish

Yourcenar, Beckmann, Appel, Baselitz, Bloem, Du Perron: all members of the *familia spiritualis*

pupils. This marked the start of a lifelong friendship and the establishment of the Castrum Peregrini community. Gisèle looked after those hiding in her home. She got hold of food vouchers through her network of artists and writers. Because she refused to register with the Kulturkammer, the institute set up by the German occupiers which all artists had to join in order to be allowed to work, she travelled the country to earn money illegally for her *familia spiritualis* by painting portraits of rich industrialists from the circles around her father, who was director of the energy company Nederlandse Aardolie Maatschappij (NAM). The small community survived the Nazi regime of terror thanks to their friendship and to the arts, which turned out to have life-saving properties helping the group through oppressive times. With the help of literature and art, Gisèle and Wolfgang succeeded in creating a convincing parallel universe with rules of its own, helping to keep the horrors of the 'real' world at bay.

After the war, Gisèle was able to acquire the whole building. She moved into the upper floors, where she lived in the 1950s with her husband, former mayor of Amsterdam Arnold d'Ailly. Her previous apartment on the third floor she gave to Wolfgang Frommel, who continued to live there until his death in 1986. He scarcely made any alterations to the interior, thereby ensuring that the original interior from the wartime years of hiding have remained intact to this day. It is a magical place that puts you in touch with your deepest feelings and drives: fear, mistrust, survival instinct, sacrifice, self-assertion, responsibility, trust, love, belief in truth and justice. It leaves nobody unmoved.

Castrum Peregrini

Gisèle offered Wolfgang Frommel and some of the other hiders a permanent home, and in the 1950s they set up the foundation and publishing house Castrum Peregrini. A versatile artist, Gisèle worked on a range of commissions. She created a number of stained-glass windows for, among others, the Begijnhof Chapel and the Krijtberg Church in Amsterdam, and she designed tapestries for the ship SS Rotterdam. Frommel travelled around the continent frequently in search of authors and artists for his magazine *Castrum Peregrini*, which was supported financially by Gisèle. All this and more turned Herengracht 401 into a magnet for artists and intellectuals, among them a young Georg Baselitz, the German choreographer Kurt Joos, Marguerite Yourcenar, Karel Appel, Godfried Bomans and Gerrit Kouwenaar. The effects of the resulting creative momentum were not lost on young people, who began to be admitted to the house in the 1960s. All of them have left traces, which Gisèle collected and incorporated into her interiors, like entries in a diary, as messengers who convey their messages invisibly through space and whose effect is felt to this very day.

Very soon the building became too small for all this activity. When in the late 1970s the chance arose to expand into the colossal premises next door, Gisèle acted without hesitation. She set up her studio on the top floor, beneath the glass roof, where she could showcase her predilection for remarkable objects shaped by nature. Amidst her own works of art, she collected shells, bones, minerals, feathers and leaves, which she arranged into compelling still lifes. Her fascination influenced her artistic practice: 'It's the paintings I did not paint that are the most breathtaking. They capture visual emotions that make man-made mediums impotent.' The documentary *Het Steentje van Gisèle*, made by Cees van Eden and Maud Keus for the *Het Uur van de Wolf* series by broadcaster VPRO, illustrated the inspiration that the then 86-year-old Gisèle found in her nature discoveries and applied in her own work. She turned this artist space into her main residence, giving her ample opportunity to experiment, packing it to the rafters, until her fulfilled life finally drew to a close when she was a centenarian.

Her studio space has recently been used as a venue for exhibitions, lectures and activities that focus on the core values freedom, friendship and culture of the Castrum Peregrini community. The multitude of layers within this house, the living testament to a life centred on art and humanitarian values, make this place so special and unique. It tells us that simplifying impoverishes the mind, that art enhances the value of life, and that sensitivity, openness and humanity are positive qualities, despite what the populists of the 1930s and of today would have us believe. That is why the residents of today are working to keep the house open and to spread its message. Art allows us to explore the remarkable history of this Amsterdam house and open it up to the public.

Michaël Defuster is director of the Castrum Peregrini Foundation. He was born in Kortrijk, Belgium, and lives and works in Amsterdam. After a previous career as an architect, and landscape architect he initiated the process of making the heritage of Gisèle sustainable for future generations.

THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

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Photo: Simon Bosch

Atelier Gisèle

Atelier Gisèle

Photos: Simon Bosch

THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

Atelier Gisèle

Friendship in wartime

How Gisèle supported Max Beckmann in Amsterdam

The art of Max Beckmann was 'Entartet', according to the Nazi regime. During the war he found refuge in Amsterdam and maintained a closed friendship with Gisèle.

By Gusta Reichwein

'Quappi and Giselle in Hague and made it to "Ordre de Mission" (for voyage) and showed up here shrieking for joy, really sweet. So, it really will be America it seems', Max Beckmann wrote in his journal on 17 July 1947. His wife – known as Quappi – and their friend Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht had just managed to obtain travel documents that would finally allow Beckmann and his wife to leave for America. By then Beckmann had spent ten years in Amsterdam and could not wait to leave the 'ironing board', as he called the Netherlands.

Beckmann trained in Weimar and Berlin and was already enjoying success as an artist in the early years of the twentieth century. In the First World War he worked as a volunteer in a field hospital at the German front until he had a mental breakdown. He returned to painting after 1918 and went to teach at the academy in Frankfurt. But fate would strike again. Hitler came to power and the Nazis targeted the art of the German avant-garde. Twenty works by Beckmann were shown at the 'Entartete Kunst' (degenerate art) exhibition that opened in Munich in 1937 and then travelled around Germany. It became impossible for Beckmann to live and work in his native country and he and his wife fled to Amsterdam. He never actually intended to stay in the Netherlands, but the outbreak of war prevented them from leaving.

He managed to rent an apartment and studio at 85 Rokin with the help of art dealer Helmuth Lütjens. There he produced almost three hundred paintings and innumerable drawings, on which he made notes in his journal. Besides painting portraits, city scenes and landscapes he frequently painted images where myth and reality mingle, as in a dream – allegories of the modern world. He had an exhibition at the Van Lier gallery in 1938. The reviews were not good and in the years that followed his work drew little admiration in Amsterdam. Only his friends understood and supported him. They included Friedrich Vordemberge-Gildewart, Wolfgang Frommel and Gisèle van Waterschoot. He gave Gisèle three drawings: a portrait of her that he made in 1945 and two watercolours, including *Two Dancers*.

The liberation did not improve matters for Beckmann, as he first had to obtain official 'non-enemy' status from the Dutch state before he could leave the country. His bank account was frozen and he was not permitted to sell any of his possessions. Helmuth Lütjens shared his salary with Beckmann and his wife. They eventually left for America in 1947; he died there in 1950.

Gusta Reichwein is an art historian and Head of Collection at the Amsterdam Museum. In 2016 Reichwein was the curator of the big summer exhibition Made in Amsterdam - 100 years in 100 works of art *and the author of the accompanying book. From the Castrum Peregrini archive and collection two works were on show: a watercolour by Beckmann entitled 'Two Dancers' (1947) and a self-portrait of Gisèle (1948).*

'Made in Amsterdam' chose five Amsterdam buildings to represent and symbolize distinct aspects of the city's art scene: the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Arti et Amicitiae, De Appel and Castrum Peregrini, the latter as place of refuge for artists and writers.

Max Beckmann 1884-1950
Two Dancers (Girls with Blue Dwarf), 1947

Gisèle: an unsung hero

A house on Herengracht as a monument to courage and humanity

The house on Herengracht 401 is a unique fusion of history and space. Everything about the House of Gisèle is authentic, nothing is reconstructed. From the pianola in which people hid, to the bookshelves lined with reading material for the long nights in hiding.

By Job Cohen

No God, no scientific law, nor yet any amount of ethical concrete, can protect us from the dangers of falling off the moral tightrope that we are condemned to walk as human beings. It can be a highly disconcerting prospect. Or it can be a highly exhilarating one. The choice is ours. – Kenan Malik in 'The Quest For A Moral Compass'

Castrum Peregrini honours Gisèle as an unsung hero. During World War II she selflessly turned her apartment on the third floor at Herengracht 401 in Amsterdam into a safe house. Gisèle's motivation was her conviction and belief in humanity. Although she could easily have emigrated to the United States, she chose to stay. She didn't want to leave family and friends behind. In this vulnerable atmosphere she took two Jewish people into hiding, and later numerous youths who were escaping from forced labour under German rule. When asked about her motivation, she always replied: 'I won't allow them to be slaughtered like chicken.' Was this naive thinking or did she act in a considered manner? Intuition or rationality? Driven by circumstances or conviction? Nature or nurture?

Whatever the case, Gisèle didn't think it was anything special. The 'resistance' she offered arose because she kept faith in what she herself thought was 'normal'. Today, as the old ghosts of the 1930s seem to be returning to haunt us again, her integrity and courage are, more than ever before, an example for people who are searching for an ethical framework, or for ways to adapt their own lifestyle to the new realities that present themselves.

Reality bubble

For Gisèle, it was important to create a humane world, no matter how small, in the face of difficult conditions. Her third-floor apartment became a reality bubble that withstood all threats of raids, where despite the cold and hunger a group of youths and their helpers came together, united by their fate and the art that preoccupied them. Gisèle could create an atmosphere that fostered beauty and trust. She did that together with her friend Wolfgang Frommel and with many people in her network, among them Eep Roland Holst and Max Beckmann. More than anyone else, Gisèle succeeded in harnessing the unifying power of art.

Despite all traumas of the wartime years, she continued to draw on the connective and creative power of art and, after the war, to make this venue available to those who had once hidden here. Her house continued to expand around the original rooms used as hiding places during the war. She turned floor after floor into studio spaces, or into living accommodation for her and her husband, the former mayor Arnold d'Ailly, and for those who once hid here and later returned for shorter or longer periods to work on the periodical *Castrum Peregrini*.

Illustrious network

An illustrious network of artists and intellectuals thus emerged, all of whom left traces that are visible to this day. When Gisèle died in 2013 at the age of 100, the younger generation had already set up a cultural programme that draws on the history of this house to question the present. What made such dehumanizing conditions possible back then? And what do we need to remain resilient and courageously human in such conditions? The foundation set up by Gisèle explores such themes in cultural programmes, with the story and the individual of its founder in their midst.

World War II is still a subject of great interest in The Netherlands. This interest is not declining, but changing. The disappearance of eye witnesses is turning memory into history. Owing to its great significance, it is our collective responsibility to keep the memory of World War II alive. It should not turn into a history confined to books with no value to the present. Instead, the collectively connecting trauma can feed a collectively connecting future.

As that first generation declines in numbers, the people themselves can no longer speak, but what they have left to us can. And Gisèle has left us something unique, original interiors used as a safe house, an accompanying archive, and a story line that extends right up to the present day.

Software and hardware come together in this house. That the story of Gisèle and those she helped hide remains visible and palpable in this remarkable place makes for a unique combination. The hardware is authentic. Nothing is reconstructed and everything is genuine, from the pianola in which Buri hid to the bookshelves lined with reading material for the long nights in hiding behind darkened windows. Now it is up to us, the present generation, to facilitate access to this vulnerable pearl: to preserve and restore the building and its interiors, and thereby open up this *lieu de mémoire* to a wide audience.

Empathetic

Gisèle was a striking figure in Amsterdam right up until her death. Everybody recognized her immediately when she passed on the street. She had an empathically easy way of engaging with everybody, whether they were a mechanic or a mayor. She could share some moment with everybody she met, often involving looking at something together. She could enjoy the beauty of a feather on the street before your feet just as intensely as a Picasso in a museum. What mattered was that she shared that moment with you, that she could build up a bond with somebody, always through art, through doing, experiencing or creating something together. That attitude helped her and others during the war. It was this humane approach that encouraged her to leave everything to a foundation, so that it would benefit all of society.

The unveiling of a plaque on the facade of her building at Herengracht 401 on 2 May 2016 symbolizes the start of a new life for the building: the House of Gisèle, which she has left to us like a jewellery box well stocked with thrilling and true stories.

Today it is a vibrant house that continues her work. Under the name Memory Machine, Castrum Peregrini organizes debates, publications and exhibitions. Profundity is the keyword in all it does. Wholly in the spirit of Gisèle, Castrum Peregrini focuses on an audience of experts: the creative makers, the opinion leaders, the academics, the socially engaged, in short, those who carry the promise of a better world. In the international think tank Intellectual Playground, the foundation gathers and shares with them knowledge about the human condition, with its sinister and pure sides, capable of both genocide and flourishing communities. With them it seeks answers to the many questions provoked by the moral ambiguity of humanity.

The historical interiors of the House of Gisèle were officially opened in 2016 for small groups of visitors. Preservation and broader access will be tackled in the coming years. But the uniqueness and educational potential can already be savoured by appointment.

Photos: Maarten Nauw

For information about visiting the House of Gisèle see www.castrumperegrini.org

Job Cohen is a Dutch jurist. He was mayor of Amsterdam from 2001 to 2010 and leader of the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA) from 2010 to 2012. In 2005 Time Magazine called him a 'Hero of Europe'. In 2015 Cohen joined the Board of Recommendation of Castrum Peregrini and in May 2016 unveiled a plaque in memory of Gisèle.

Gisèle's apartment became a reality bubble that withstood all threats of raids

A walk through the night

Writing a biography about a good Amsterdam fairy takes you down a path littered with pitfalls

It's difficult to imagine a better preserved and documented life than that of Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht. Yet writing a biography of this woman is not without risk.

By Annet Mooij

In October 1956 the Belgian-French writer Marguerite Yourcenar and her friend Grace Frick enjoyed a nocturnal stroll through Amsterdam. And they were not alone. Guiding the pair around personally was the then city mayor, Arnold d'Ailly. D'Ailly would not hold his position for much longer. By the end of that year he had stepped down, in part because of this married man's not-so-secretive affair with the artist Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht. She was also there that night.

A few months earlier in Rome, after a visit to Villa Adriana, Gisèle had met Jacques Kayaloff, who had returned to Yourcenar a suitcase of letters and old papers that she had left behind in Switzerland during the war. Among the contents, Yourcenar unexpectedly came across her old notes on the Roman emperor Hadrian, a discovery that instantly revived her abandoned plans to write his memoires. Her biographical novel appeared in 1951. Gisèle knew and admired the book, entitled *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, soon published in a Dutch translation entitled *Hadrianus' Gedenkschriften*.

Inspired by the encounter with Kayaloff, Gisèle, upon her return to Amsterdam, wrote a letter to Yourcenar, enclosing with it some issues of *Castrum Peregrini*, the literary periodical made by the circle of friends with whom she had shared her house on Herengracht since the war years. Gisèle enquired if Yourcenar would consider contributing to the periodical.

That was not such a strange request, as there were quite a few points of similarity between the then celebrated Yourcenar and the Amsterdam circle of friends around the periodical and the publishing house of the same name. Both shared a great interest in the classics and a humanistic worldview. Moreover, Hadrian's love of the Greek beauty Antinous, who had died young and who played a central role in *Mémoires d'Hadrien*, must have echoed on Herengracht where, in the footsteps of the German poet Stefan George, a comparable cult of friendship had thrived.

Some time later Yourcenar did indeed heed the call to contribute to the periodical, but before that, the story of Castrum Peregrini had intrigued her so much that she announced herself there as early as that October, when she happened to be in the Netherlands.

This is but a miniscule fragment, one of the countless encounters that took place in the 100-year life of Gisèle d'Ailly-van Waterschoot van der Gracht (1912-2013), the good fairy who created Castrum Peregrini, and watched over the house and its occupants right to the end. The task of writing her biography has been entrusted to me. Family histories and biographies are a popular way of approaching the past. They make the far corners of history accessible, imbuing them with life and giving them a face. Nobody could object to that, and the genre's popularity is more than merited. Yet that does not lessen the fact that the relation between historical reality and biography, history and memory is often complex. Entire bookshelves have been written about the traps and pitfalls of biographical research.

'There is so much we don't know, and to write truthfully about a life, your own or your mother's, or a celebrated figure's, an event, a crisis, another culture is to engage repeatedly with those patches of darkness, those nights of history, those places of unknowing,' writes Rebecca Solnit in her *Men Explain Things to Me* (2014). Each narrated life can perhaps best be compared to a walk in the dark. Some stretches are clearly illuminated, while others will always remain dimly lit. Some issues are crystal clear simply because the light is plentiful, while in other places the spotlight or biographical torch has to be directed more precisely. Sometimes you need to work with the help of a candle.

Whatever the case, situations often remain shaded, their illumination artificial. That does not mean that historical truth is always elusive in every sense, Yourcenar writes in her notes at the end of her *Mémoires d'Hadrien*. 'It is with this truth no different than with all others: people err *more or less*.'

Those notes contain more that is of value, varying from exhortations to herself ('Always bear in mind that everything I tell here gives a distorted impression because of what I do not tell') to useful advice to those who dare to set off along the biographical path. She points out the danger of idealization and forced criticism, exaggeration and omissions, and tells the biographer never to lose sight of the graph of a human life. That graph is not a straight line from the cradle to the grave, but consists of three curves that 'constantly veer towards and veer away from one another: that which a person thinks he was, that which he aspired to be, and that which he actually was.'

It is difficult to imagine a better preserved and documented life than that of Gisèle d'Ailly – they would eventually marry. Visiting the building on Herengracht is like entering a time capsule. The floor used as a hiding place appears to have been catapulted from the 1940s into the 21st century. *Appears*, for appearances here are deceiving, but the whole scene looks as though it was left intact. Her legacy is a storehouse full of documents and bequeathed work, a cabinet of natural wonders, a treasure trove filled with precious objects. Letters from more than five hundred correspondents have all been preserved. Amidst all this senseless excess, this ocean of Christmas cards, birthday letters and holiday postcards, one occasionally comes across small gems, such as the short letter from Yourcenar to Chèr Monsieur le Bourgmestre to thank him for the visit: 'La promenade nocturne à travers Amsterdam a été l'un des plus beaux moments de notre sejour en Hollande.'

This sizeable archive is the result of years of struggle against growing forgetfulness and threatened oblivion, an utmost attempt at control. But it is also a self-made monument to someone who, like a Cerberus, carefully watched over the creation of her own self-image. Gisèle was strongly committed to circulating a specific, fairy-tale like version of her life. Prudence should therefore be exercised.

Despite the profusion of material, in reconstructing this life you also regularly encounter 'patches of darkness', consciously created or otherwise. 'Seit der Kindheit – immer – hat mich die Maskerade gelockt,' Gisèle once remarked in an interview. You can interpret that literally: she enjoyed fancy dress parties. But it is also true in the more existential sense. Masquerades, metamorphoses and mythology formed part of her being. The same goes for Castrum Peregrini, which is why the residents themselves sometimes compared it to the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii. The foundations here were also shrouded in mystery.

So yes: a foghorn sounds loudly here and there in the obscurity of our nocturnal promenade. That poses an additional challenge for the Night Mayor whose task it is to make the trip as pleasant, illuminating and exciting as possible.

Annet Mooij is a Dutch researcher and author who mainly publishes on historical and sociological matters. Since 2002 she has been an editor of De Gids, the oldest Dutch literary review, and from 2012 to 2015 she was its editor in chief. Mooij is currently working on a biography of Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht, scheduled for publication in the autumn of 2017.

'Always bear in mind that everything I tell here gives a distorted impression because of what I do not tell'

THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

Wolfgang Frommel,
1945

Gisèle in the hiding floor,
1945

One of the hiders,
Buri (A.F. Wongtschowski),
in the hiding floor

One of the hiders,
Claus Victor Bock, 1940

Top: hiding floor
Bottom: Wartime friends with flower garlands around Percy Gothein and Wolfgang Frommel at an Easter poetry reading

Archive Gisèle

Self-portrait Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht, 1978

Gisèle in her studio on the top floor

THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

Wolfgang Frommel and Gisèle, 1966

Gisèle in her studio on the top floor

Archive Gisèle

Seven artists on working in the House of Gisèle

Castrum Peregrini has hosted hundreds of projects, artists, writers, film directors, students and curators. They all have a special bond with the house on the Herengracht in Amsterdam, with its history and values that are held in high regard. And of course they have this extraordinary click with the most important inhabitant: Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht (1912–2013), who lived and worked there for more than 70 years. Seven artists, directors, composers, students and artists reflect on how the house and Gisèle inspires their work.

Janina Pigaht, director

Who: Janina Pigaht (1982) is a director who has a way of tackling societal issues in her films by looking at them from a personal perspective. This allows her to invariably find the hidden poetry and subtleties contained within.

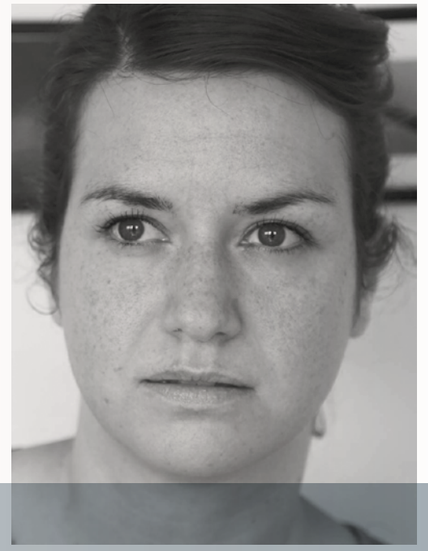
Project: Herengracht 401, a film.

How did you find your way to the House of Gisèle?
'In 2013 I became fascinated with the idea of telling the biography of a place.

'The house left a strong physical impression. I could feel, hear, see, touch and smell it all at once'

How the walls of a house, for instance, could be the bones of a story. A friend told me about Castrum Peregrini and I went to have a look. Programme coordinator Lars Ebert gave me my first tour. And the rest is (film) history.'

What was the most striking aspect of the house?
'The house left a strong physical impression. I could feel, hear, see, touch and smell it all at once. It had the sense of different stories to it and triggered me to investigate and find them.'



What does Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht mean to you?
'I never met Gisèle. I once read a letter written by her in which she describes trying to catch a butterfly in Greece. When she finally does capture it, it manages to escape only shortly afterwards. That is always how I imagined Gisèle to be. In flight. You can try to capture her but she will always escape you.'

What is the most important insight you gained from working at Castrum Peregrini?
'When working as a creative, before I start a project, I write down my vision on a piece of paper. And return to it again and again. So that I never loose sight of it, no matter how long the project takes.'

Louis Andriessen, composer Betsy Torenbos, dancer, director

Who: Louis Andriessen (1939) is an internationally renowned composer of modern music. He has performed with Robert Wilson, Peter Greenaway, Hal Hartley and the Quay Brothers and his works have been performed all over the world.
Betsy Torenbos (1969): is a dancer, documentary maker and artist whose work is largely based on oral history. She worked both nationally and internationally: National Theatre (The Netherlands) with director Johan Doesburg and with Artists in Residence DanceBox (Japan).

Betsy Torenbos and Louis Andriessen at the hiding pianola

Project: *Gisèle, a homage*. It is a filmed tribute to Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht, a trip through her studio full of memories of her loved ones and her art. The piano music of Louis Andriessen is an integral part of the film.

How did you end up in the House of Gisèle?
LA: 'What fascinates me extraordinarily is the pianola, the converted piano that served as hiding place during World War II. Betsy took me there and I found it very exciting, I did not want to miss

'She was not afraid to die. I filmed her next to the portrait of her mother and her father. That was where she wanted to go, she said'

it. After Gisèle died in 2013 I played the piano for the first time.'
BT: 'I made documentary theatre that was staged with nine very old women from various European origins. Lars Ebert from Castrum Peregrini came to me after this project. So that's how I got in touch with Gisèle.'

What was the most striking aspect of working in the House?
LA: 'Making music for the hiding place. Betsy asked me to compose a score for the complete film. How do you do that? I sat at the piano and thought I'd make five genre pieces, short piano pieces, composed on the spot. Like they were kind of born out of the piano. We recorded them at a professional recording studio. As for now, I'm quite satisfied with the result. It is a free form. Betsy can use whatever she wants. Maybe at a later stage, I will discuss if the works are used in the film the way they were meant.'
BT: 'For me the most striking aspect is the personal contact with Gisèle. It was intense, like two melting candles that become one. As a human being and as a personality, Gisèle is unforgettable. Her humour, her precision, her warmth; I carry it with me. I am grateful that I got to know her.

What does Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht mean to you?
LA: In my music there are always references to other times and other worlds present. That's what Gisèle also did in her paintings. Let's talk about 1920. That is an important period in the life of Gisèle. Berlin is musically completely different from France. Kurt Weil or Francis Poulenc, for me the difference is obvious, but you shouldn't bother non-professionals with it. This film is going to be about the love of Betsy for Gisèle and her paintings. They are two completely different things. How it should sound, I have no idea.
Betsy is right to say that resignation and hope are part of the response when someone dies. Bach I can hear you thinking, he offers solace. But what does he show us? Is it hope? Resignation? Which notes should you use? There is no prescription available.'
BT: 'For me Gisèle is an example. Thanks to her I could make a great journey through the studio, life, her art. It has been preserved. But some of the ephemeral and fragile things she made are gone now. It is conserved in the film. I filmed the paintings the way they were placed before she died. If you look at the house you understand that art and culture literally are bearers of the society. Gisèle was a lovely civilized woman with humour, but she didn't deny her own opinion. She was an authentic person, with nature as inspiration and as a force. She was not afraid to die. I filmed her next to the portrait of her mother and her father. That was where she wanted to go, she said. '

What is the most important insight you gained from working at Castrum Peregrini?
LA: 'There are two essential aspects for me. First, the canal house in Amsterdam that was preserved in its original condition. That's very rare. And the result was that my interest was captivated by this pianola in this obscure little room. Like Stravinsky Gisèle wielded many different techniques. Every ten years she was doing something different. Those kinds of artists are the ones I loved most. And that goes for all you can do in your life, I guess.'

BT: 'The house Castrum Peregrini represents human dignity, shows courage and beauty. It is very impressive and should remain open for younger generations. It makes me realize that if you follow your intuition as an artist your can be a creator of the new future. It may sound overstated but in what Gisèle has left behind, you can see the importance of the role of an artist as an accelerator for transition.'

Renée Turner, artist/writer

Who: Renée Turner is an American-born artist and writer whose work is collaborative and interdisciplinary. Through visual and discursive research,

'With each artifact in her collection, something is revealed about Gisèle as an individual, but also the histories in which she lived'

her projects involve public discussions, making spaces for co-learning and creating online narrative archives.

Project: *The Warp and Weft of Memory* is a project exploring the wardrobe of Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht, and the ways in which it reflects her life, work, and various histories through textiles and clothing.

How did you find Castrum Peregrini and what is the most interesting thing about the house?
'To be honest, I knew nothing about the history of Herengracht 401, till the moment people from Castrum Peregrini guided me through the hiding place, all the while talking about Gisèle as an almost magical character. At the time of my visit, she was still alive, but I didn't meet her that day. She was in her studio archiving and organizing her work. Now working on my project, I better understand what that ritual of archiving entailed, and how it was a process integral to who she was.'

'My next visit came after Gisèle passed away. Most of her work and curiosities were left in place. At the corner of the room, there was also a rack of clothing, which they weren't quite sure what do with.'

'I couldn't stop thinking about the clothing, and how they ranged in origin from China to Greece to Morocco. But there was also a certain mirroring happening between the textiles in her studio, the repetitive lines in her paintings and the patterns on the garments. There was an internal logic, a clear aesthetic impulse. I kept thinking about Gaston Bachelard, and how he wrote about memories being housed in drawers and wardrobes. So, that's how my project began…'

What does Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht mean to you?
'Gisèle was a centenarian who lived many lives, and because she was a prolific if not obsessive archivist, collector and maker, we are given insight into each period. With each moment, and each artifact in her collection, something is revealed about Gisèle as an individual, but also the histories in which she lived. Her traces are seductive because they provide clues, but also leave gaps for projecting my own speculations and narratives.'

What is the most important insight you gained from working at Castrum Peregrini?
'This passion for archiving, not only her work– Gisèle also did this for items in her closet, with each shelf carefully numbered with corresponding contents. She even kept a written catalogue of her closet in Greece, plus detailed descriptions of items she packed for particular trips. I wonder if Gisèle may have had a form of *hypergraphia*. To come back to the title of my work, *The Warp and Weft of Memory* – this writing feels like a kind of weaving, an attempt to bring objects, experiences, and travels together. My question at this moment is, were these notes to herself, just simple reminders, or were they written for someone like me, an outsider who might decipher or interpret them later?'

Quinsy Gario, performance artist

Who: Quinsy Gario (1984) is a Dutch Caribbean performance artist who researches narratives of decolonization, the aesthetics of resistance and the politics of belonging through a multidisciplinary art practice. He is also engaged in the Think Tank of Castrum Peregrini.

'What she has left behind is a testament to what is possible in a world that can be cruel, treacherous and inhumane'

Photo: Roger Cremers

Project: Struck by the preserved status of the rooms, he invited audiences to figuratively step back in time with him. His second performance centred on sending messages in code through poetry with the audience.

How did you end up in the House of Gisèle?
'I was performing during the Amsterdam Book Night in 2012 a block away from the house on the Herengracht. That's where Castrum Peregrini saw me. For the Museum Night they asked me to conceive a performance.'

What was the most striking aspect of the house?
'What struck me was that the house was an actual refuge for the continued creation of art. In the house art wasn't something far removed from daily life but a means of resistance, survival and a marker of continued living.'

What does Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht mean to you?
'She was a beacon of integrity, strength and hope at a time when those were fundamental in the Netherlands. What she has left behind is a testament to what is possible in a world that can be cruel, treacherous and inhumane.'

What is the most important insight you've gained from working at Castrum Peregrini?
'The notion of perseverance in the face of mortal danger is really strongly embedded in the building. You can feel it when you enter and that is something that has inspired me in my work as well.'

Pieter Paul Pothoven, artist

Who: Artist. Pieter Paul Pothoven (1981).

What: Artist in residence at Castrum Peregrini.

How did you get involved with the House of Gisèle?
'Through a residency programme of the Dutch Mondriaan Fund. In February and March 2017 I will live at Herengracht 401 in Amsterdam as an artist in residence. Before this started, I followed out of interest certain parts of the Memory Machine programme.

'It was such a strong bond between people, that I ask myself: will I be able to understand this bond?'

For instance, I attended the lecture by Aleida Assmann on *7 Forms of Forgetting*. And the exhibition *exclud/include, Alternate histories*, curated by Vincent van Velsen. In terms of content, the programme fits in with the questions I ask myself as an artist: what role does the past play in the present and how can this past be shaped?'

What was the most striking aspect of the house?
'What appealed to me during the first tour of the old apartment of Gisèle, is that a group of people in the war lived on those few square metres. They were under great stress, but managed to keep standing. It was such a strong bond between people that I ask myself: will I be able to understand this bond? Besides that, it is a historic place, full of old objects and art, including some beautiful watercolours by Max Beckmann and a bent bookshelf full of Goethe.

What does Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht mean to you?
'I must confess that I would still have to immerse myself in her more. But what I know about Gisèle is that she stood for solidarity with others in difficult times. Which is, of course, very admirable. Another special feature is that the spirit of solidarity and friendship that arose during World War II still exists in the way people are using the House of Gisèle.

What is the most important insight you gained from working at Castrum Peregrini?
'Don't know yet. I will be living there from February on. I'm curious myself!'

Cees van Ede, director

Who: Cees van Ede (1947), director and editor for the Dutch public broadcasting service NPS. He has a fascination for outstanding personalities and important events of national cultural significance.

Project: Documentary about Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht for Dutch television programme Het Uur van de Wolf, entitled Het Steentje van Gisèle (Gisèle's Treasure), broadcast on 24 March 1997.

How did you end up in the House of Gisèle?
'An acquaintance, Tineke Sexton, had the idea that Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht 'more than anyone deserved a TV portrait'. From the moment Gisèle began to talk about her life, producer Maud Keus and I hung on her every word. It was clear that this film had to be made.'

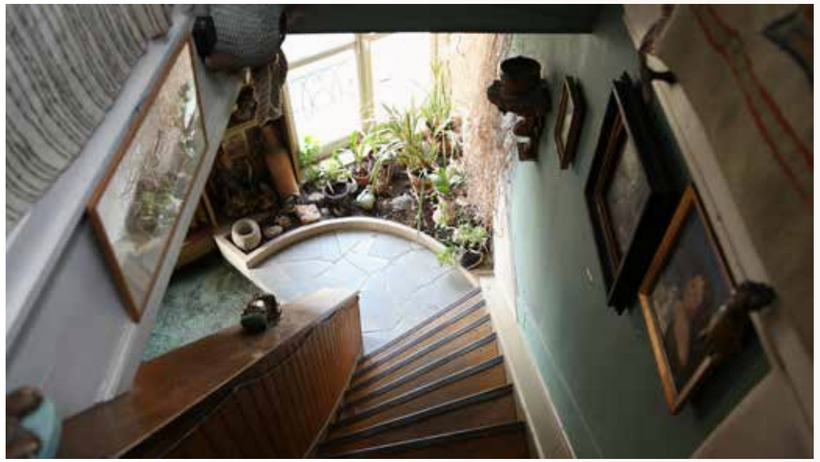
'She was an older woman but at the same time so appeallingly young, energetic, curious, intelligent and sensitive'

What was the most striking aspect of the House?
'The house on Herengracht, which Gisèle occupied since 1940, is like the treasure of her life. In her studio you find yourself on the Greek island of Paros. In her living room you experience in almost a physical way the presence of hiding from World War II. And everywhere, everywhere you are confronted with the exuberant manifestations of her art.

What does Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht mean to you?
'I consider it a great privilege to have met Gisèle personally. When we filmed her, she was 84 years of age. She was an older woman with wrinkles, but at the same time so appealingly young, energetic, curious, intelligent and sensitive. It was a privilege to spend time in her company. When it comes to 'lust for life', I see her as a great and inspiring example.'

What is the most important insight you gained from working at Castrum Peregrini?
'Frankly, I found the old foundation Castrum Peregrini, with the publishing house and the magazine that they edited, a somewhat old fashioned and closed institute. Now a younger generation (Michael Defuster, Frans Damman and Lars Ebert) has taken over with great élan. Castrum Peregrini today has acquired a much higher profile in the cultural life. That has given me the insight that the importance of history is more effectively brought under attention, as one manages to establish links with the present and the future.'

THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE



Janina Pigaht

Living up to diversity

The fear of the Other is rooted primarily in anxieties about the Self

Our view of the Europe of the past is distorted by historical amnesia, writes the British thinker and scientist Kenan Malik. We have to rewrite our image of diversity in the past, is the message of a lecture he gave at Castrum Peregrini: Living in Diversity.

By Kenan Malik

'Can Europe be the same with different people in it?' So asked the American writer Christopher Caldwell in his book, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, published a few years ago. It is a question that has been asked with increasing urgency in recent years as the question of immigration, and in particular of Islamic immigration, has taken centre stage.

At the heart of this question lies the dilemma of how Western societies should respond to the influx of peoples with different traditions, backgrounds and beliefs. What should be the boundaries of tolerance in such societies? Should immigrants be made to assimilate to Western customs and norms or is integration a two-way street? Such questions have bedeviled politicians and policy-makers for the past half-century. They have also tied liberals in knots.

The conundrums about diversity have been exacerbated by the two issues that now dominate contemporary European political discourse - the migration crisis and the problem of terrorism. How we discuss these issues, and how we relate the one to the other, will shape the character of European societies over the net period.

The numbers of migrants coming to Europe are indeed large. But it is worth putting these numbers in context. One million migrants constitute less than 0.2 per cent of the EU's population. Turkey, the country to which migrants are being deported under the new deal signed with the EU, has a population one seventh that of the EU, but is already host to some 3 million Syrian refugees. There are already 1.3 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon – 20 per cent of the population. That is the equivalent of Europe playing host to 100m refugees. Pakistan and Iran each have over 1 million refugees within their borders. Some of the poorest countries in the world, in other words, already bear the greatest burden when it comes to helping refugees.

Debates about immigration are, however, rarely about numbers as such. They are much more about who the migrants are, and about underlying anxieties of nation, community, identity and values. 'We should not forget', claimed Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán, as Hungary put up new border fences, and introduced draconian new anti-immigration laws, 'that the people who are coming here grew up in a different religion and represent a completely different culture. Most are not Christian, but Muslim.'

Many thinkers, Christian and non-Christian, religious and non-religious, echo this fear of Muslim immigration undermining the cultural and moral foundation of Western civilization. The late Oriana Fallaci, the Italian writer who perhaps more than most promoted the notion of Eurabia – the belief that Europe is being Islamicised - described herself as a 'Christian atheist', insisting that only Christianity provided Europe with a cultural and intellectual bulwark against Islam. The British historian Niall Ferguson calls himself 'an incurable atheist' and yet is alarmed by the decline of Christianity which undermines 'any religious resistance' to radical Islam.

To look upon migration in this fashion is, I want to suggest, a misunderstanding of both Europe's past and Europe's present. To understand why, I want first to explore two fundamental questions, the answers to which must frame any discussion on inclusion and morality. What we mean by a diverse society? And why should we value it, or indeed, fear it?

When we think about diversity today in Europe, the picture we see is that of societies that in the past were homogenous, but have now become plural because of immigration. But in what way were European societies homogenous in the past? And in what ways are they diverse today?

Certainly, if you had asked a Frenchman or an Englishman or a Spaniard in the nineteenth or the fifteenth or the twelfth centuries, they would certainly not have described their societies as homogenous. Our view of the Europe of the past is distorted by historical amnesia; and our view of the Europe of the present is distorted by a highly restricted notion of diversity. When we talk of European societies as historically homogenous, what we mean is that they used to be ethnically, or perhaps culturally, homogenous. But the world is diverse in many ways. Societies are cut through by differences, not only of ethnicity, but also of class, gender, faith, politics, and much else.

Many of the fears we have of the consequences of modern diversity are in fact echoes of fears that were central to what we now see as homogenous Europe. Consider, for instance, the debate about the clash between Islam and the West, and fear of Islamic values as incompatible with those of the West. It may be hard to imagine now but Catholics were until relatively recently seen by many much as Muslims are now.

The English philosopher John Locke is generally seen as providing the philosophical foundations of liberalism. His *Letter Concerning Toleration* is a key text in the development of modern liberal ideas about freedom of expression and worship. But he refused to extend such tolerance to Catholics because they posed a threat to English identity and security. Until the nineteenth century Catholics in Britain were by law excluded from most public offices, and denied the vote; they were barred from universities, from many professions, and from serving in the armed forces. Protestants were banned from converting to Catholicism, and Catholics banned from marrying Protestants.

Such vicious anti-Catholicism existed well into the twentieth century, and not just in Europe. Today the idea of the Judeo-Christian tradition as the foundation of Western civilization is taken as received wisdom. But the concept of a 'Judeo Christian tradition' is an invention of the 1930s, arising out of the attempt to create a broad front to challenge the menace of anti-Semitism. Its invention is testament to the fact that, in the eyes of many people, Jews constituted a mortal threat to European identity, values and ways of being, so much so that they became victims of the world's greatest genocide. The very existence of Castrum Peregrini is testament to that view of Jews as a civilizational menace.

From the creation of the first Ghetto, in Venice, exactly 500 years ago, to Martin Luther's fulminations against Jewry, to the Dreyfus affair in France, to Britain's first immigration law, the 1905 Aliens Act, designed principally to stem the flow into

Kenan Malik is an Indian-born British writer, lecturer and broadcaster. His latest book is the internationally acclaimed The Quest for a Moral Compass: A Global History of Ethics. *He delivered the lecture 'Living in Diversity' on the occasion of the launch of the House of Gisèle at Castrum Peregrini, 2 May 2016. Kenan is also involved in the Think Tank of Castrum Peregrini, Intellectual Playground.*

‘The concept of a homogenous Europe made diverse by modern immigration crumbles when shake off our historical amnesia’

the country of East European Jews, a central strand in European historical consciousness was the portrayal of Jews as the elemental ‘Other’.

Europe was rent not just by religious and cultural but by political conflict, too. From the English civil war to the Spanish civil war, from the German Peasants’ rebellion to the Paris commune, European nations were deeply divided. Conflicts between communists and conservatives, liberals and socialists, monarchists and liberals became the hallmark of European societies.

Of course we don’t think of these conflicts as expressions of a diverse society. Why not? Only because we have a restricted view of what diversity entails.

But even within that restricted notion of diversity, our historical picture of European societies is mistaken. We look back upon European societies and imagine that they were racially and ethnically homogenous. But that is not how Europeans of the time looked upon their societies. In the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, the working class and the rural poor were seen by many as racial distinct. A vignette of working-class life in Bethnal Green, a working class area of east London, that appeared in an 1864 edition of *The Saturday Review*, a well-read liberal magazine of the era, was typical of Victorian middle-class attitudes. ‘The Bethnal Green poor’, the article explained, constituted ‘a race of whom we know nothing, whose lives are of quite different complexion from ours, persons with whom we have no point of contact.’ ‘Distinctions and separations, like those of English classes’, the article concluded, ‘which always endure, which last from the cradle to the grave… offer a very fair parallel to the separation of the slaves from the whites.’

The concept of a homogenous Europe made diverse by modern immigration crumbles when shake off our historical amnesia. We only imagine our societies as particularly diverse because we rewrite the past, and because a very peculiar definition of what constitutes diversity allows us to ignore the diversity – and the fears and the conflicts - that then existed. European societies have always had, or were perceived to have had, ‘different peoples’ within their borders.

And this brings us to the second question: why should we value diversity, or indeed, fear it? Consider two contemporary French thinkers from opposite ends of the political spectrum, for both of whom Islam represents a threat, but for very different reasons: the liberal philosopher Bernard-Henry Lévy and the conservative thinker Pierre Manent.

In 2010, during the debate about whether the burqa should be banned, Lévy came out ‘in favor of a law that clearly and plainly declares that wearing a burqa in the public area is anti-republican’. But, he insisted ‘This is not about the burqa. It’s about Voltaire. What is at stake is the Enlightenment of yesterday and today, and the heritage of both, no less sacred than that of the three monotheisms.’

Where, for Lévy, Islam represents a threat to Enlightenment liberalism, for Manent it is the corrosive impact of Enlightenment liberalism that has allowed Islam to be a threat. The French have no choice but to surrender to Islam, Manent argues, because they have become decadent and ‘tired of freedom’. By emphasizing rights rather than duties, our desiccated democracies have dissolved social bonds leaving nothing but a ‘dust’ of isolated egos. ‘The most striking fact about the present moment’, Manent writes, ‘is the political and spiritual enfeeblement of the nation. … If Islam is extending and consolidating its influence … in a region where all social forms are vulnerable to corrosive critique in the name of individual rights, then there can scarcely be any future for Europe other than Islamization by default.’

Many liberals have echoed Lévy’s warnings, many conservatives Manent’s fears. Both view Islam as a threat to European values, but disagree on what values are being threatened. For liberals, conservative Islamic doctrines run counter to the values of the Enlightenment. For conservatives, it is precisely the corrosive impact of liberal Enlightenment values that have allowed Islam to triumph.

The fear of diversity, in other words, is itself felt from a diversity of standpoints. And fear of the Other is rooted primarily in anxieties about the Self. The Other becomes a problem – indeed the Other needs only to be conjured up – when there is social apprehension about who we are or what we stand for.

The claim that Islam poses a fundamental threat to Western values draws on the ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis, popularized in the 1990s by the American political scientist Samuel Huntington. The conflicts that have convulsed Europe over the past centuries, Huntington wrote in a famous 1993 essay, from the wars of religion between Protestants and Catholics to the Cold War, were all ‘conflicts within Western civilization’. The ‘battle lines of the future’, on the other hand, would be *between* civilizations. And the most deep-set of these would be between the Christian West and the Islamic East, a ‘far more fundamental’ struggle than any war unleashed by ‘differences among political ideologies and political regimes’.

Civilizations, however, are not self-enclosed entities. They are ‘civilizations’ precisely because they are porous, fluid, open to wider influences. Because they are open to diversity.

There are no historically transcendent civilizational values. There is a view of European civilization as developing along a linear line from Ancient Greece through the crucible of Christianity to the Enlightenment and modernity. Yet, what many today describe as ‘European’ values would have left most of the major figures in that European tradition bewildered - Aquinas and Dante, for instance, and even more so Augustine and Plato. On the other hand, Aquinas and Dante certainly would have understood the values of many of their Islamic contemporaries, such as the great philosophers Ibn Sina or Ibn Rushd, values that many would now consider as existential threats to the very being of Europe.

There is, in other words, no single set of European values that transcends history in opposition to Islamic values. Nor is there a single Islamic tradition that transcends history. Norms and practices have inevitably varied over time and space. They inevitably mutated in a faith that has lasted for almost 1500 years. They inevitably diverged in an empire that once stretched from the Bay of Bengal to the Bay of Biscay, and do so even more in a community that is now spread out across the globe from Indonesia (which has the largest Muslim population in the world) to America, from Scotland to South Africa.

Consider a recent poll of British Muslim attitudes that generated a national debate. The poll revealed a deep well of social conservatism within British Muslim communities. Just 18 per cent of Muslims thought that homosexuality should be legal (compared to 73 per cent of the general population), 4 in 10 thought wives should always obey her husband. A third wanted girls to be educated separately to boys. Almost 9 out ten thought that the law should not permit mockery of the Prophet.

Some people wrote that this opens up to the unacknowledged creation of a nation within the nation, with its own geography,

its own values and its own very separate future. Because Europe's Muslims refused to 'abandon their ancestral ways: the integration of Muslims will probably be the hardest task we've ever faced'.

Seen by itself, the poll might indeed lead one to such a conclusion. But any poll provides at best a snapshot of the views of people in one place, at one time. People, and communities do not, however, exist as a snapshot.

Had you taken this poll 30 years ago, when I was growing up, you would have found very different results. For the contemporary social conservatism of British Muslims has not always been present. The first generation of Muslims to Britain were religious, but wore their faith lightly. Many men drank alcohol. Few women wore a hijab, let alone a burqa or niqab. Islam was not, in their eyes, an all-encompassing philosophy. Their faith expressed for them a relationship with God, not a sacrosanct public identity.

The second generation of Britons with a Muslim background – my generation – was primarily secular. Religious organizations were barely visible. The organizations that bound together Asian communities (and we thought of ourselves as 'Asian' or 'black', not 'Muslim') were primarily secular, often political.

It is only with the generation that has come of age since the late 1980s that the question of cultural differences has come to be seen as important. A generation that, ironically, is far more integrated and 'Westernised' than the first generation, is also the generation that is most insistent on maintaining its 'difference'. Much the same process can be sketched out in France, in Germany, in the Netherlands. It is a paradox that questions the conventional view of the relationship between diversity and integration. Yet it is one that is rarely discussed.

One reason for that is that we rarely take a step back to give ourselves a broader perspective on social problems. What one might call the 'snapshot' view of communities and cultures has become central to much of the discussion about diversity and integration. According to the claim that British Muslims 'don't want to change' and 'still hold views from their ancestral backgrounds'.

The real problem is, in fact, the very opposite. British Muslims *have* changed. But many have changed by becoming *more* socially conservative. The question we need to address, therefore, is why has this change taken place? But blinded by a snapshot view of Muslim communities, most policymakers and ask the opposite question: Why hasn't any change taken place? If we cannot even ask the right questions, it is little wonder that we fail to find the right answers.

At the same time, the fact that significant sections of British Muslim communities have become conservative, even reactionary, on many social and religious issues, does not mean that all have. No community is homogenous. To say that Christians have become more liberal on issues of gay marriage over the past thirty years is not to deny that there is a diversity of Christian views on this issue. The same is true of Muslims. There is evidence that British Muslims have become more polarized on social issues – that a large proportion have become more conservative, while small minority is far more liberal than much of the population at large. There is polling evidence, too, that Muslims in many European countries, and in the USA, are more liberal than Muslims in Britain.

And this leads us to another of the ironies in the way we think of diversity. Many who view society as diverse often fail to see the diversity of minority communities. This is as true of those who welcome diversity as of those who fear or reject it.

Consider social policy in France and Britain. As forms of public policy, French assimilationism and British multiculturalism are generally regarded as polar opposites. Yet, from very different starting points, both kinds of policy have come to foster narrower visions of social identity, and both have tended to ignore the diversity of minority communities, treating them instead as if each was a distinct, homogenous whole, each composed of people all speaking with a single voice, each defined by a singular view of culture and faith.

'What, in today's France', asks the novelist and filmmaker Karim Miské, 'unites the pious Algerian retired worker, the atheist French-Mauritanian director that I am, the Fulani Sufi bank employee from Mantes-la-Jolie, the social worker from Burgundy who has converted to Islam, and the agnostic male nurse who has never set foot in his grandparents' home in Oujda? What brings us together if not the fact that we live within a society which thinks of us as Muslims?'

Of the five million or so French citizens of North African origin, just 40 per cent think of themselves as observant Muslims, and only one in four attend Friday prayers. Yet, Miské observes, all are looked upon by French politicians, policy makers, intellectuals and journalists as 'Muslims'. Government ministers often talk of France's 'five million Muslims'.

The use of 'Muslim' as a label for French citizens of North African origin is not accidental. It is part of the process whereby the state casts such citizens as the Other – as not really part of the French nation. Faced, as are politicians in many European nations, with a distrustful and disengaged public, French politicians have attempted to reassert the notion of a common French identity. But unable to define clearly the ideas and values that characterize the nation, they have done so primarily by turning Islam into the 'Other' against which French identity is defined.

In his 1945 essay *Anti-Semite and Jew*, Jean Paul Sartre had suggested that the authentic Jew was created by the anti-Semite. Miské makes the same point about the authentic Muslim: that it is the way that the outside society treats those of North African origin that creates the idea of the authentic Muslim, and indeed of the Muslim community itself.

Much the same is true of Britain. British multicultural policies do not, as in France, seek to define national identity against the Other, but rather portray the nation as 'a community of communities', as the influential Parekh report on multiculturalism put it. The authorities have attempted to manage diversity by putting people into particular ethnic and cultural boxes, defining individual needs and rights by virtue of the boxes into which people were put, and using those boxes to shape public policy.

One consequence of this perverse way of thinking about diversity is that the most progressive voices within minority communities often get silenced as not being truly of that community or truly authentic, while the most conservative voices get celebrated as community leaders, the authentic voices of minority groups.

The ways in which we conventionally look upon diversity, then, turn migrants into the Other, stripped of individuality, even, ironically, of diversity. Minority communities have become seen as homogenous groups, denied the possibility of transformation, defined primarily by culture, faith, and place of origin.

The clash between the reality of living in a diverse society and the official insistence on putting people into cultural or ethnic boxes, and the creation of a more parochial, more tribal sense of identity, can have grave consequences.

Consider, for instance, the second issue that, together with the migration crisis, dominates much of contemporary European political discourse: the growth of homegrown jihadists. The recent attacks in Paris and Brussels have brought the two issues together in many people's minds.

The problem of jihadism, the argument goes, is a problem of migration, because it is the arrival into Europe of those with fundamentally different values and beliefs, and with a hatred of European civilization, that lies at the root the European jihadist problem. Close off the borders, stop the influx of Muslims, and Europe will begin to be able to deal with the issue of jihadism within.

It is an argument that flies in the face of the facts. The vast majority of European jihadis are not migrants, but second or third generation Europeans, and their relationship with Islam is far from straightforward. A high proportion – up to 30 per cent in France – are converts to Islam.

Many studies show, perhaps counter-intuitively, that individuals are not usually led to jihadist groups by religious faith. A British MI5 'Briefing Note' entitled 'Understanding radicalisation and extremism in the UK', leaked to the press in 2008 observed that 'far from being religious zealots, a large number of those involved in terrorism do not practice regularly'. The French sociologist Olivier Roy similarly observes of contemporary jihadis that 'Very few of them had a previous story of militancy, either political… or religious'.

‘When we talk about diversity, what we mean is that the world is a messy place, full of clashes and conflicts’

We often look at the issue of European jihadism the wrong way round. We begin with jihadists as they are at the end of their journey - enraged about the West, with a black and white view of Islam, and a distorted moral vision - and often assume that these are the reasons that they have come to be as they are. That is rarely the case.

Few jihadists start off as religious fanatics or as political militants. Radical Islam, and a hatred of the West, is not necessarily what draws individuals into jihadism. It is what comes to define and justify that jihadism.

So, if not religion or politics, what is it? ‘The path to radicalization’, as the British researcher Tufyal Choudhury put it in his 2007 report on ‘The Role of Muslim Identity in Radicalization’ ‘often involves a search for identity at a moment of crisis… when previous explanations and belief systems are found to be inadequate in explaining an individual’s experience.’

Jihadists, in other words, begin their journey searching for something a lot less definable: identity, meaning, respect. There is, of course, nothing new in the youthful search for identity and meaning. What is different today is the social context in which this search takes place. We live in a more atomized society than in the past; in an age in which many people feel peculiarly disengaged from mainstream social institutions and in which moral lines often seem blurred and identities distorted.

In the past, disaffection with the mainstream may have led people to join movements for political change, from far-left groups to labour movement organizations to anti-racist campaigns. Such organizations helped both give idealism and social grievance a political form, and a mechanism for turning disaffection into the fuel of social change.

Today, such campaigns and organizations often seem as out of touch as mainstream institutions. What gives shape to contemporary disaffection is not progressive politics, as it may have in the past, but the politics of identity. Identity politics has, over the past three decades, encouraged people to define themselves in increasingly narrow ethnic or cultural terms.

At the same time social policy has, as I have already observed, exacerbated these trends, helping create a more fragmented, tribalized society.

A generation ago, today’s ‘radicalized’ Muslims would probably have been far more secular in their outlook, and their radicalism would have expressed itself through political organizations. They would have regarded their faith as simply one strand in a complex tapestry of self-identity. Many, perhaps most, Muslims still do. But there is a growing number that see themselves as Muslims in an almost tribal sense, for whom the richness of the tapestry of self has given way to an all-encompassing monochrome cloak of faith.

Most homegrown wannabe jihadis possess, however, a peculiar relationship with Islam. They are, in many ways, as estranged from Muslim communities as they are from Western societies. Most detest the mores and traditions of their parents, have little time for mainstream forms of Islam, and cut themselves off from traditional community institutions. Disengaged from both Western societies and Muslim communities, some reach out to Islamism. Many would-be jihadis, Olivier Roy observes, ‘adopt the Salafi version of Islam, because Salafism is both simple to understand (don’ts and do’s)’ and because it is ‘the negation of… the Islam of their parents and of their roots.’ It is not through mosques or religious institutions but through the Internet that most jihadis discover both their faith and their virtual community.

Diversity

How, then, should we look upon diversity? I have questioned the fear of diversity. But why, and how, should we value it?

When we talk about diversity, what we mean is that the world is a messy place, full of clashes and conflicts. That is all for the good, for such clashes and conflicts are the stuff of political and cultural engagement.

Diversity is important, not in and of itself, but because it allows us to expand our horizons, to compare and contrast different values, beliefs and lifestyles, make judgments upon them, and decide which may be better and which may be worse. It is important, in other words, because it allows us to engage in political dialogue and debate that can, paradoxically, help create a more universal language of citizenship.

But the very thing that is valuable about diversity – the cultural and ideological clashes that it brings about – is precisely what many fear. That fear can take two forms. On the one hand there is the nativist sentiment: the belief immigration is undermining social cohesion, eroding our sense of national identity, turning our cities into little Lahores or mini-Kingstons.

And on the other there is the multicultural argument, that respect for others requires us to accept their ways of being, and not criticize or challenge their values or practices, but instead to police the boundaries between groups to minimize the clashes and conflicts and frictions that diversity brings in its wake.

The one approach encourages fear, the other indifference. The one approach views migrants as the Other, whose otherness poses a threat to European societies. The other approach views the otherness of migrants as an issue that society must respect and live with.

Few events better express both the fear and the indifference than the fallout from the events of New Year’s Eve in Cologne. Large numbers of women were allegedly robbed and sexually assaulted by men that evening, many of whom were described as being of Arab origin. At first the authorities tried to cover up the events, pretending that nothing had happened. When details eventually emerged there was inevitably outrage.

The authorities’ initial response stemmed not just from a fear of the reaction and of racists exploiting the issue, but also from a sense that such events were inevitable in a diverse society in which different values and beliefs and practices clashed, and it was better quietly to let ‘Arabs be Arabs’ than to have a robust and difficult public debate about the issue. And when the truth began to filter out, public fury was directed not just at the men responsible for the sexual attacks, nor just the authorities who tried to cover up the incident, but also at migrants as a whole, becoming a reason for opposing all migration to Germany. Both perspectives view migrants as the Other, as people fundamentally different from Us, though they differ in how to deal with the otherness. Fear and indifference, indifference and fear, twisted into a tight knot.

What neither approach begins to address is the question of *engagement*. Engagement requires us neither to shun certain people as the Other with values, beliefs and practices that are inevitably and fundamentally inimical to ours, nor to be indifferent to the values and beliefs and practices of others in the name of ‘respect’, but rather to recognize that respect requires us to challenge, even confront, the values and beliefs of others. It requires us to have an robust, open public debate about the values, beliefs and practices to which we aspire, accepting that such a debate will be difficult, and often confrontational, but also that such difficult confrontational debate is a necessity in any society that seeks to be open and liberal.

The retreat from engagement is perhaps best expressed in one of the most explosive issues of recent times - that of free speech, and the question of where one draws the boundaries, especially in the giving of offence. From the global controversy over the Danish cartoons to the brutal slaughter at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, the question of what is, and should be, acceptable in a plural society has become one of the defining conundrums of our age.

There has come to be an acceptance in many European nations that it is morally wrong to give offence to those of different cultures or faiths or beliefs. For diverse societies to function and to be fair, so the argument runs, we need to show respect not just for individuals but also for the cultures and beliefs in which those individuals are embedded and which helps give them a sense of identity and being. This requires that we police public discourse about those cultures and beliefs, both to minimize friction between antagonistic groups and to protect the dignity of those individuals embedded in them.

As the British sociologist Tariq Modood has put it, that 'If people are to occupy the same political space without conflict, they mutually have to limit the extent to which they subject each others' fundamental beliefs to criticism.' One of the ironies of living in a plural society, it would seem, is that the preservation of diversity requires us to leave less room for a diversity of views.

I take the opposite view. It is precisely because we do live in a plural society that we need the fullest extension possible of free speech, because it is both inevitable and important that people offend the sensibilities of others. Inevitable, because where different beliefs are deeply held, clashes are unavoidable. Almost by definition such clashes express what it is to live in a diverse society. And so they should be openly resolved than suppressed in the name of 'respect' or 'tolerance'.

But more than this: the giving of offence is not just inevitable, it is also important. Any kind of social change or social progress means offending some deeply held sensibilities. Or to put it another way: 'You can't say that!' is all too often the response of those in power to having their power challenged. To accept that certain things cannot be said is to accept that certain forms of power cannot be challenged.

The notion of giving offence suggests that certain beliefs are so important or valuable to certain people that they should be put beyond the possibility of being insulted, or caricatured or even questioned. The importance of the principle of free speech is precisely that it provides a permanent challenge to the idea that some questions are beyond contention, and hence acts as a permanent challenge to authority. Once we give up the right to offend in the name of 'tolerance' or 'respect', we constrain our ability to confront those in power, and therefore to challenge injustice.

It is not, however, simply Muslim, or minority, sensibilities that should be able to be offended. Liberal or European sensitivities, too, should be open to affront. Yet, too often those who demand the right of newspapers or novelists to offend Muslims, often are less robust when it comes to views that may offend liberal norms. Double standards are rife.

The fundamental importance of free speech is that it is the very material of social engagement. When we restrain freedom of expression what we are really restraining is the capacity for social engagement. But social engagement has to be a two-way street, or it is nothing at all. Double standards undermine the very possibility of real engagement.

So, finally, let me return to the question that is the title of this talk: how should we live in a diverse society?

First, we need to recognize how narrow a view of diversity we have today. And that our narrow concept of diversity is at the very heart of many of our problems. If we look upon our differences in political or moral terms, they are often negotiable. If we see them in ethnic or cultural or religious terms, almost by definition they are not. Our peculiar perception of diversity has therefore made social conflict more intractable.

Second, we need to combat the pernicious impact of identity politics, and of the way that social policies have accentuated that pernicious impact. The

The fundamental importance of free speech is that it is the very material of social engagement

combination of the two has ensured that social solidarity has become increasingly defined not in political terms – as collective action in pursuit of certain political ideals – but in terms of ethnicity or culture. The answer to the question 'In what kind of society do I want to live?' has become shaped less by the kinds of values or institutions we want to establish, than by the group or tribe to which we imagine we belong. From this perspective, diversity becomes a prison rather than the raw material for social engagement.

Third, we need to recognize that the issue of social fracturing is not simply an issue of migration or of minority communities. One of the features of contemporary Europe is the disaffection that many have with mainstream politics and mainstream institutions. It is one of the reasons for the rise of populist and far right groups, a disaffection fuelled by a host of social and political changes, that have left many, particularly from traditional working class backgrounds, feeling politically abandoned and voiceless, and detached from mainstream society.
There are certainly issues specific to immigrants and minority communities, but they are best understood in the context of the wider debate about the relationship between individuals, communities and society. Societies have become fragmented because these relationships have frayed, and not just for minority communities.

Finally, a guiding assumption throughout Europe has been that immigration and integration must be managed through state policies and institutions. Yet real integration, whether of immigrants or of indigenous groups, is rarely brought about by the actions of the state. Indeed , the attempts by the state to manage diversity has been at the heart of many of the problems.

Real integration is shaped primarily by civil society, by the individual bonds that people form with one another, and by the organizations they establish to further their shared political and social interests. It is the erosion of such bonds and institutions that has proved so problematic and that explains why social disengagement is a feature not simply of immigrant communities but of the wider society, too. To repair the damage that disengagement has done, and to revive what I call a progressive universalism, we need, not so much new state policies, as a renewal of civil society.

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THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

Things to remember
Photo: Maarten Nauw

Memory Machine

Keep it complex, stupid!

Europe as a shared space: this is the right time for dialogue

Time to take up the dialogue, writes ex-Speaker of the Knesset Avraham Burg. The question of what lies ahead of Europe is not a simple one, but the potential of starting a discussion is great. More people, more opinions, more topics and much more hope.

By Avraham Burg

As long as everything is calm nobody sees the need for dialogue. When crisis erupts and disturbs the comfort of life, many will say 'now is not the time, let the storm pass', or: 'now is not the time for talking, let's act'. And when the storm has passed just a few are left with the energy to revisit it, talk about it and understand it. 'Its over, isn't it?' they tell us. The reasoning and timing for dialogue is always tricky.

For a few years now I am engaged in Castrum Peregrini and support their mission to use the past for thinking about a better and more inclusive future for our societies. If we take cultural diversity as a fact of our global societies today, what then is it that enables us to deal with it or even to exploit it in a positive way? The Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said: 'Canada has been strong not in spite of our differences, but because of them.' I wish I could say the same for Israel. But apart from the national models, the question that triggered us was how we as humans deal with diversity. Is there a moral compass to inform our policies and actions?

In the many conversations I had at Castrum Peregrini the one with Kenan Malik especially triggered my imagination. His analysis poses questions that require dialogue that does not look for easy solutions, but acknowledges the complexity of human nature and our societies. But how to best talk about that complexity in a way that delivers some insights that can be fruitful for others?

Today 140 characters in a Twitter message are almost an international policy or at least a beginning of a public discourse. Long-term conversations are rare and almost extinct. Against that hasty public debate we decided to create a safe space, in which we could go deeper into the reasons for and causes of our current conflicts and beyond the superficial headlines and shouting contests of populist politics: the Castrum Peregrini Dialogue was initiated as part of the Intellectual Playground activities.

With Kenan Malik's questions in mind, Ram Manikkalingam (Director of the Dialogue Advisory Group) and I dreamt up a dialogue scheme with a fascinating core group of Europeans from many different backgrounds: Christian, Jewish, Muslim, atheist, black, brown, white, artist, (ex-)politician, activist and writer. They committed themselves to come together for three consecutive meetings of two full days to talk with one another. Ram and I would moderate.

Each of the participants represents a different cultural, political or spiritual background, yet they share one crucial common denominator: the readiness for dialogue with other dialogists. We could bring on board the Pauwhof Fonds as supporter and the European Cultural Foundation as a partner in this dialogue series, and we hope to draw the circle wider so as to make the outcomes of our conversation fruitful for a broad network of people that can make a difference.

The mission we took upon ourselves is ambitious: Try to comprehend what is ahead of Europe. More integration or less? Many more Brexit's or not even one? Back to nationalistic politics? New balances between open and closed societies or something entirely new?

Our assumption for now is a simple one: for many future generations Europe will be a space shared by many Europeans; each and every one of them is unique and different, yet equal and the same. Europe is the forefront of diversity, challenging old world orders and urgently requiring a shared language of belonging. It is our goal in this project to find this language and an expression of it.

In long and intense sessions we planned to focus on expressing our thoughts and listening carefully to others to support and develop the syntax needed to communicate across fault lines in an era of profound suspicion, mistrust and fear. We believe that an ongoing conversation between dissimilar actors is a crucial building block for a wealthier social advancement and improvement. These conversations are not necessarily comfortable but always essential for a shared society.

The first meeting of the group took place in autumn 2016 and we were all stunned by its intensity and necessity. The confidentiality of the safe space requires that we wait until the end of the first year to publish summative outcomes. So far we got to know each other better, we explored together – and as individuals - what Europe means for us in terms of values. It is not just a terrestrial continent or a defined value system but rather a rich fluid area of identities vis-à-vis European neighbours. Its multifaceted character is an invitation for human solidarity and we challenged ourselves to identify and discover its magnetic fields that attract and reject.

We began to draw the human and contextual map of Europe and its different experiences and expectations. Even those among us who believe in an open society realized that somewhere there is always a border. And even though the official state borders seem quite fluid to some, only those who are privileged can travel across them and many others cannot. Citizenship can therefore become a manifestation of various discriminations. So much so that we moved on to look for different viewpoints to the existing conventions: how to enable people to 'subsist' in more than one dimension of recognition, in a multilayered citizenship, in which the identity and belongings are not just a mere expression of administrative regulation? Civil society can and should add additional and complimentary belongings. We explored both the human perspectives and the state principals, and discovered some of the most significant stumbling blocks. To create a language of change we must begin with the decolonization of our minds and then continue with the recognition that we live in societies of many histories simultaneously. This requires the acknowledgment of diverse knowledge and diverse centres of information. It is key to have an education system which is sensitive to complexities and encourages the discovery of other legitimate points of view, to develop the understanding of processes and values to choose between without compromising the respect and appreciation of other positions. This creates the potential for a continuous renewal of the common good.

These are first but clear directions of thought we identified. Now we need to dig deeper. For that we agreed upon two mottos to guide us through the further dialogue:

1. KICS: Keep it complex, stupid
   (as opposed to KISS: Keep it simple, stupid)
2. Always distinct between the various layers of our contributions:
   - Listen and talk
   - Communicate and persuade
   - Understand and take a stand
   - Act and be ready to fight

It was but the first meeting of many. We all agreed that the need is there as well as the potential to make a difference. We are highly motivated and are looking forward to expanding our circle. More people, more opinions, more topics and much more hope.

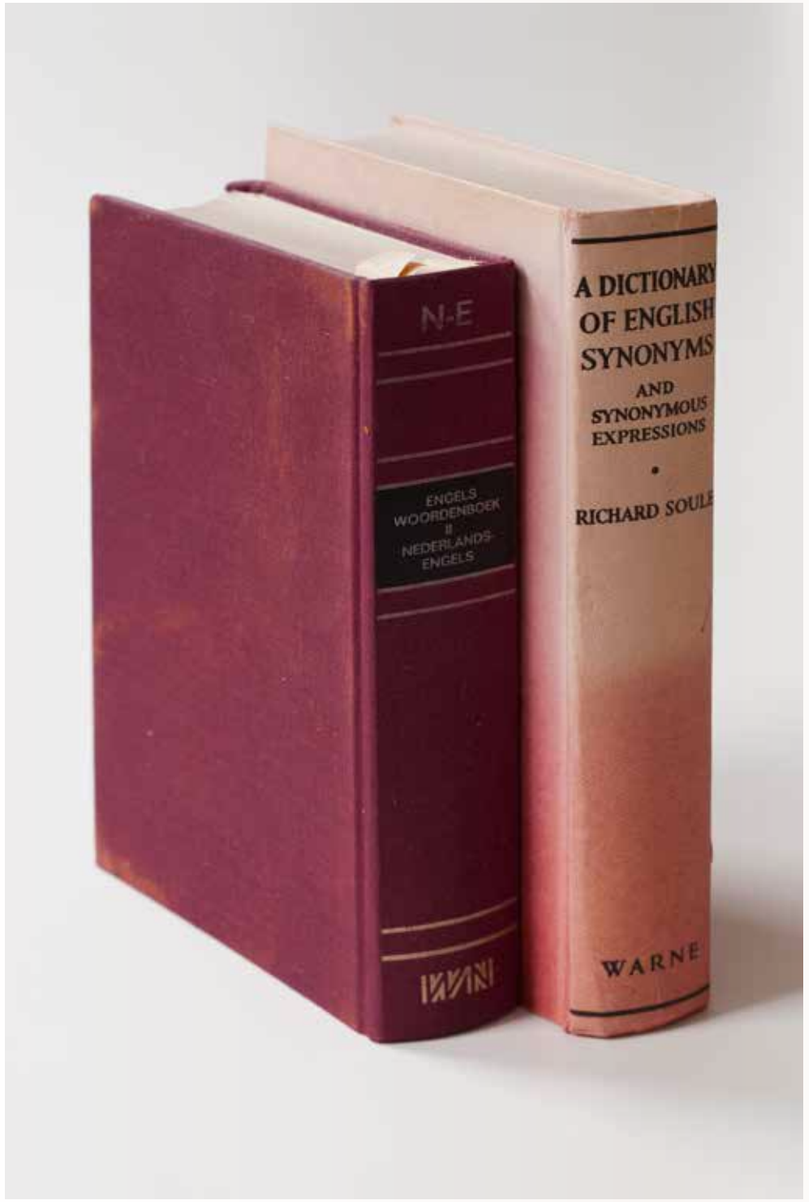
Avraham 'Avrum' Burg is an Israeli author and left-wing politician. He was a member of the Knesset, chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, Speaker of the Knesset, and Interim President of Israel. He criticizes Israel for continuing to follow Zionism as a national ideology and supports a binational Jewish-Arab confederation with open borders and part of a regional union. He is a member of the Board of Recommendation of Castrum Peregrini and is involved in the Think Tank of Castrum Peregrini, Intellectual Playground, on which he reflects in this text.

The 2016/17 think tank meetings of Castrum Peregrini Intellectual Playground are are financially supported by the Pauwhof Fund and organized in partnership with partnership with the European Cultural Foundation and the Dialogue Advisory Group.

Important Souvnirs
Amie Dicke

THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

Important Souvnirs · Amie Dicke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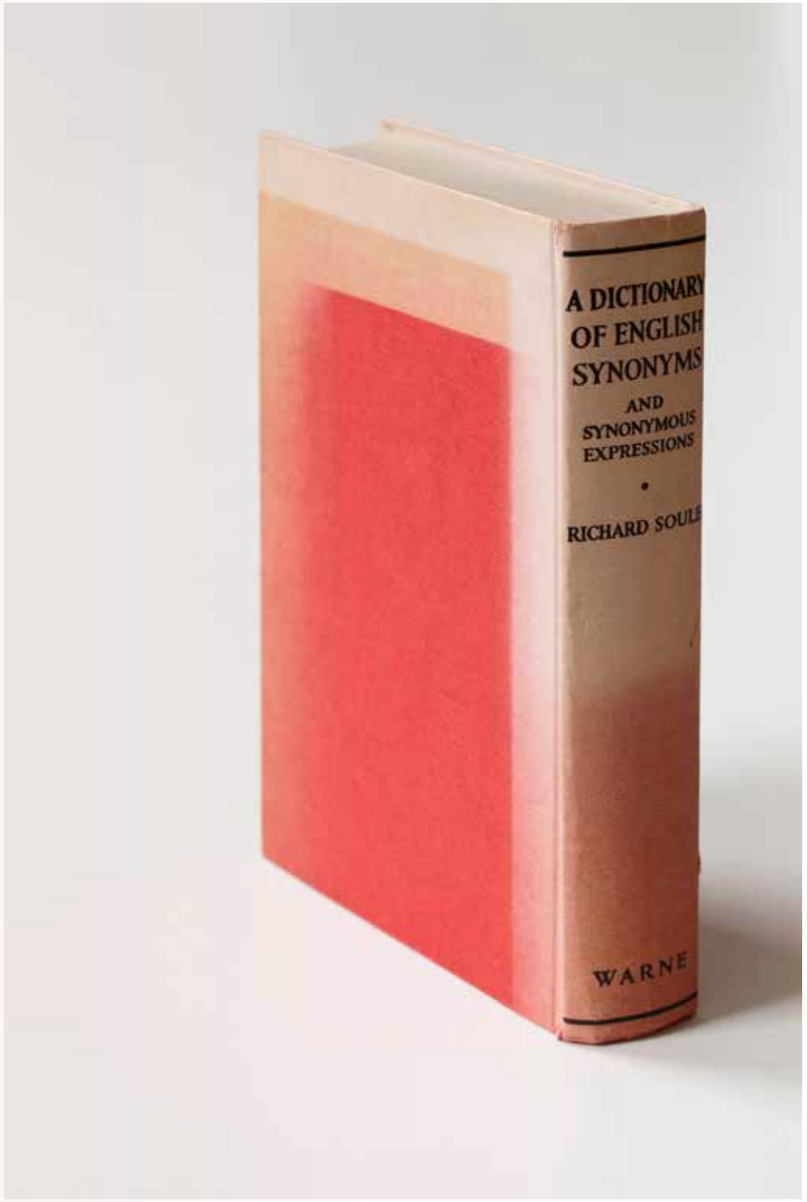
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Finding Gisèle

Amie Dicke shows us the intense residue left by a long and rich artist life

After Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht (1912–2013) died, Amie Dicke moved around the house at Herengracht 401 to find the essence of a life filled with art and an obsession for collecting. 'It's the paintings I did not paint that are the most breathtaking.'

By Wieteke van Zeil

How do you find someone who is no longer there? In what they said, or what they did? In their house? What, from all that is left, contains the essence and significance of their character? Which traces do you follow?

Reflecting on these questions made me think of this conversation:

'Observe the hand of the Madonna with the broad metacarpus and somewhat stiff fingers, the nails extending to the tips only. You will find this type of hand in other authentic works of Raphael, for instance, in the Marriage of the Madonna in the Brera; the Madonna dei Tempei in Munich; the small Madonna belonging to Lord Cowper, and others.'

'For goodness sake!', I cried, 'Leave such unsightly things as nails out of the question. The German and French critics would inevitably ridicule you if you were to tell them that even the nails where characteristic of a great master.'

'Everything may be turned into ridicule,' replied the Italian rather testily, 'especially by people who understand nothing of the subject. And, may I ask, are the nails more unsightly than any other part of the human frame, in the eyes of an anatomist?'

Giovanni Morelli is speaking, using the pseudonym Ivan Lermolieff in his book *The Work of the Italian Painters* (1880), about the importance of what goes unnoticed in art. It is a dialogue between a young Russian and an older Italian art lover about meaning and authenticity in art, and about connoisseurship.

Morelli was a doctor and an anatomist, and the first connoisseur to systematically focus on something so apparently trivial as, indeed, Raphael's fingernails or Botticelli's ears. He grew up in Bergamo and went to university in Munich and Erlangen, before abandoning his medical training in Paris in favour of his love of art. Morelli's unique perspective on art, which would later develop into the famous

Morellian Method, has its roots all along his life's journey. As a doctor in training, he learned to pay attention to the combinations of symptoms in order to reach diagnoses, and also his friendship with the scientist and geographer Alexander von Humboldt in Berlin, the founder of geographical measurements and monitoring, contributed to bringing him on a path towards art that other connoisseurs did not share: one in which looking, counting and analyzing form the basis and not the general impression, not the abstract. It is precisely the unemphasised details that have great significance, in Morelli's opinion; the work of art itself speaks. He looked down on any theoretician who passed judgement on a work of art without having stood right in front of it himself. Only what is material counts.

It led to a theory that was way ahead of its time, with as its foundation: the identity of the artist manifests itself best in the least emphasized details. Like a detective, Morelli compared shapes of ears, toes, hands or even nails (Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of Sherlock Holmes, also made references in his books to Morelli and his method).

A painter betrays his style in the details that are sometimes painted perfunctorily and perhaps even without thinking. The fingers of Bellini prove to be completely different from those of Fra Filippo Lippi, the ears of Bramantino, long and pointed, do not look like the wide question-mark-ears of the figures painted by Mantegna. Nowadays, there is renewed interest in Morelli's method, now that advanced computer programs can use algorithms to compare details in the oeuvre of a master at the touch of a button, as is the case in the Bosch Research Project.

'A painter betrays his style in details. The fingers of Bellini prove to be completely different from those of Fra Filippo Lippi'

Morelli's tracing of details also finds a kindred spirit in Amie Dicke's associative and precise view of the world. Her shape-sensitive way of pinpointing details that others would probably disregard — dried out pieces of soap, empty BIC-pen barrels, chalks, powder, even cigarette ends — is reminiscent of the patient eye of Morelli, always convinced that meaning and essence is to be found in those very details. Dicke creates through attentiveness: by looking, concentrating, leaving things out, being with the material and allowing the most unemphasized elements to speak; precisely those objects that elude a conscious, posed life. Amie Dicke has an eye for these 'unmade' elements: because she shines light on it, new form and meaning is produced.

DO NOT TOUCH
I am sorting important souvnirs

Gisèle d'Ailly van Waterschoot van der Gracht died on 27 May 2013 after a life that spanned almost 101 years. She spent 73 years of this life at Herengracht 401, that she called Castrum Peregrini, the 'castle of the

pilgrims', which she had moved into as a pied-à-terre in the summer of 1940. A life as an artist, collector and patroness of a cultural circle, that had begun in the fearful days of the Second World War in Amsterdam, when a friend and his followers found refuge from the Nazis with her.

Gisèle supported the people in hiding by producing works of art on commission and the group kept their spirits up by discussing their shared love of art and poetry. After the war, the house was given a new character; a publishing house was set up with the wartime friends. Gisèle spent half the year in Greece, where she collected extensively. This love became visible in her collection and in the living environment on the Herengracht – in the eighties, she built her studio in Amsterdam, modelled on the studio she had in Greece. In later years the people Gisèle had met during the war held regular cultural gatherings in the house.

'You see her moving around the house, among her things, back and forth between now and then, asking questions, organizing things'

In addition to paintings, the owner's archive and own works of art, the house is full of extraordinary trinkets. Small stones, minerals, shells, little dishes, tiny vases, small works of art, paper, photos, books — the result of decades of painstaking and almost obsessive beachcombing. And notes. Small pieces of white and yellow paper with annotations, sometimes no more than a question mark. Words from Gisèle to herself, her later self, when she would come into contact with the things again. And sometimes even short dialogues: *Did I send Dominique Lepez a Christmas card in 2007 — she lives in Echt, Limburg. NO.*

Gisèle kept in touch with her own reality and memories with slips of paper and a marker. Sometimes by simply asking a question, sometimes by stating that something had been completed: DONE is a frequently recurring note, lying on a pile of something or other. THIS IS ME, she wrote in ballpoint on the back of a photo frame. You see her moving around the house, among her things, back and forth between now and then, asking questions, organizing things.

Amie Dicke continued this movement after 2013, when Castrum Peregrini had to continue without Gisèle. She was not a stranger to either the owner or the place — Dicke had previously spent a period there as an artist in residence and had exhibited — and in a sense she inconspicuously took over the habitual pottering of the late artist. To find Gisèle — in essence. Amie Dicke walked around in the house for more than two years, weekly, with the exceptional opportunity of being the first to explore the residue of a long life. Each room in the house felt like a carefully created story that, together with the other rooms, constitutes the memory of a full life.

What made her who she was? Her work? The people she surrounded herself with? The things she collected with pride, or the details in the margins? And were those details made and kept consciously, or not? How much does what is seen in the house today say about her, and how much does it say about the person who is doing the looking?

The aforementioned note, DO NOT TOUCH — I am sorting important souvnirs, lay in Gisèle's studio on a pile of all kinds of things. It was difficult to work it out. Here, in this note, a message was contained: everything is important. Potentially. And nothing was to be touched just for the moment.

Each new glimpse is determined by many,
Many glimpses before.
It's this glimpse which inspires you — like an occurrence
And I notice those are always my moments of having an idea
That maybe I could start a painting.
Everything is there already in art — like a big bowl of soup
Everything is in there already:
And you just stick your hand in, and find something for you
But it was already there — like a stew.
There's no way of looking at a work of art by itself

Willem de Kooning, fragment from: *Sketchbook I: Three Americans*, 1960

The slow dance with the house, the owner and the history is conveyed in this book. The process of looking, first from a distance and subsequently from closer up. First with an iPhone, then with the photographer Sander Tiedema. A stairwell with a crack comes closer in a following image showing part of it in detail, a cupboard opens in a subsequent image, the eye of the camera shifts from one area of the faded floor to another, from the brushes to the small stones close by, over the thick layer of dust on a series of books, published by Gisèle and her friends, as if you can brush the layer off with your fingers. A completely mysterious yellowed photo from, I would say, the seventies, shows a dry landscape, a truck, fence and a woman watching in a red skirt.

It looks like there is barely a second between the two images, but Gisèle is walking away in one of them and she is not to be found in the other. What happened here? A stool covered with scratches in the wood, apparently cherished but without an explanation. Did something go wrong, did she scratch between her legs, along her thigh? Was it an instrument?

Amie Dicke's exploring eye provides new associations: a sheet of paper with scratches and curls in different colours gains new dynamism next to a detail of a man with a curved vein on his forehead. A paper snake hanging from the ceiling dangles next to a pair of tights that has been hung out — both weightless and transparent because the sun is shining through the window from behind. Images move towards each other: a childhood photo with children and a young Gisèle swinging in the tree, and the copper bells hanging from the branches in front of a Greek house. The wobbly wooden bar stool, feet just apart, and the detail of the man's legs, ankles just off the ground.

But it was the opportunity offered by the camera and the context that enabled Amie Dicke to make rigorous choices. As always in Dicke's work, she left out more than what remains, in search of what is, for her, the essence. Just as with Morelli, you get the feeling that you may be seeing something that was never meant to be focused on — the deceased is revealing herself by accident, like a child that gives itself away by looking towards a secret place. This is what the unintentional details of Gisèle reveal, in the eyes of Amie Dicke: she kept her life open with possibilities. Much in the photos is discoloured, faded, and yellowed — these colour transformations produce new compositions, made by the sun and by leaving things like books, a photo frame, suitcase or a matchbox undisturbed. Impressions of time and patience. Amie Dicke shows that also the things that Gisèle apparently disregarded — for her, her paintings were real art, her other collections and things she made were just for fun — have an incredible consistency and beauty. Corrections in photos — also photos of herself, such as a scratched face that has become a comic mask. A torn piece of fabric. The label 'Nothing to see — here' on a video makes the implicit message clear: what cannot be seen is also worth keeping. Dicke places the label 'possible', written with a blue felt-tip pen, on the following page, followed by the poetic photo of five ring binders, black and numbered. Each is neatly labelled with the contents of the folder; on the middle one it says: EMPTY. Whether or not she intended to, Dicke shows that even an archive folder is a promise in the life of Gisèle.

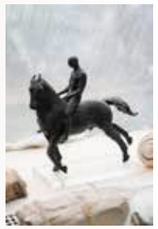
'You get the feeling that you may be seeing something that was never meant to be focused on — the deceased is revealing herself by accident'

Here is where the traces of Gisèle and the attentive, organizing eye of Dicke coincide. Moving slowly at a pace that is right because of the continuous poetic similarities that Dicke finds in what she encounters, a new dynamism develops. From curled up paper and dried plants, from pointing fingers — those of Gisèle, those of other people, and their shadows. The images gain new significance: a converging of what is personal and what is shared. Cautiously, a common ground is established across which we as onlookers move together, and communicate. To which we may add our eye — does this image make us think of something in our own life? A memory, a place, a smell? This is not a history of objects that have been kept deliberately. Amie Dicke certainly skipped eighty per cent of the house. No documents and archives, no memorable events to recreate the deceased, in the way we are used to doing with prominent people. Here, in this book there is everything that escapes from a biography and yet even the 'left over' traces of this house are very personal. In the same way as Gisèle shared the house and her life with others, Amie Dicke makes it possible to share these traces with us.

It distances itself from a narrative, but brings you close to the place. Closer than a history of imagined stories could have come.

'It's the paintings I did not paint that are the most breathtaking. They capture visual emotions that make manmade mediums impotent', wrote Gisèle in ball pen on a piece of paper at 7 o'clock in the morning. And I think of all those traces of life that have been erased. The things left undone. The snipped tree leaves, modified postcards and the small notes. Disregarded details in the life of kings and artists, the details of Bramante, Mantegna, Bellini and Raphael that Giovanni Morelli could not see because they were not considered to be valuable enough, and I wonder how history would look if we were allowed to move through their lives in this way.

Wieteke van Zeil is a Dutch art historian who writes for de Volkskrant. *This text is a reflection on Amie Dicke's book* Important Souvnirs. *Follow Amie Dicke on important-souvnirs.com*



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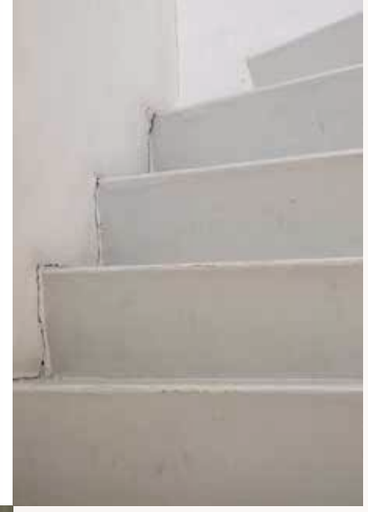

Photos: Herman van Bostelen

Atelier Gisèle

Seven forms of forgetting

‘Without forgetting, people are unable to live a happy life’

Since the beginning of human history, forgetting was the rule and remembering the exception. The Internet changed all this. But how, is still unclear. Historian Aleida Assman reflects on the importance of forgetting in our modern society and what role it plays in our cultural memory.

By Aleida Assmann

With the recent boom of the study of social and cultural memory, we have come to believe that remembering is something culturally valid and that there is even an ethical imperative of remembering. This point has been stressed by Jan Philipp Reemtsma who argues that:

‘*We live with the consensus that we need to remember and that we must fight forgetting. (…) But what should be positive about remembering? Remembering and forgetting are human capacities that are neither positive nor negative per se, but are both needed for coping with life.*’

There is no intrinsic reason why remembering should be given precedence over forgetting. The meaning and value of forgetting solely depends on the social and cultural frames within which it is constructed. For this reason,

‘Remembering is negation of and resistance to forgetting, a veto against the destructive power of time’

I will focus on some of these frames, analyzing the dynamics of remembering and forgetting in specific socio-historical contexts, analyzing ‘seven types of forgetting’, hoping to thereby gain a deeper insight into its modes of functioning.

1. Automatic forgetting – material, biological, technical – and its limits

Let me start with the observation of a basic asymmetry: not remembering, but forgetting is the default mode of humans and societies. Remembering is negation of and resistance to forgetting, usually involving a will and effort, a veto against the destructive power of time. Just like the cells in an organism, the objects, ideas and individuals of a society are periodically replaced. This slow process of (ex)change is considered natural and does not raise any alarm. Forgetting happens silently, inconspicuously and ubiquitously, while remembering is the unlikely exception from the rule, requiring conscious efforts and specific frameworks.

Generally speaking, it is only a minimal part of what has been experienced, communicated and produced that actually outlasts a human life. A photo, a necklace, a piece of furniture, a proverb, a recipe, an anecdote – that is, at most – what grandchildren retain from the lives of their grandparents. Individuals may be strongly affected by this ongoing destruction of material remains, but from the perspective of the society as a whole these everyday occurrences are perfectly normal and healthy, evolving smoothly and automatically, attracting no attention whatsoever.

Two motors of forgetting are involved in this silent process. *Social forgetting* in the bio-rhythm of generational change depends on devaluating and dismissing the experiences of an older generation by a younger generation. In the modern time regime of Western societies, each new generation is eager to create its own defining memories, values and projects by means of which it aims to usurp the place of the former.

The other powerful motor of continuous forgetting is *disposal of material waste*. The force of generational change and the economic acceleration of mass production are not naturally given universals, but consequences of the time regime of modernity in Western societies with its strong emphasis on technical and economic innovation. It is the flip side of this innovation that commercial products have to be replaced in ever shorter intervals.

This form of forgetting consists in the routinized replacement of the old by the new, which is an unchallenged and constituent part of cultural evolution in the domains of science, technology and economy. At the dawn of the industrial revolution in the 19th century, the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson analyzed this process of modernization as a dynamics of innovation and obsolescence. He identified destruction and forgetting as two powerful factors of progress. In order to create something new, he claimed, many things have to disappear ‘in the inevitable pit which the creation of new thought opens for all that is old’. In an influential essay published in 1841, Emerson enthusiastically described the modern time regime as driven by an irreversible and inexorable ‘fury of disappearance’:

‘*The Greek letters last a little longer, but are passing under the same sentence, and tumbling into the inevitable pit which the creation of new thought opens for all that is old. The new continents are built out of the ruins of an old planet: the new races fed out of the decomposition of the foregoing. New arts destroy the old. See the investment of capital in aqueducts made useless by hydraulics; fortifications, by gunpowder; roads and canals, by railways; sails, by steam, by electricity.*’

As a strong supporter of evolution, progress and modernization, Emerson also became an advocate of forgetting. He testified to an exclusive orientation towards the future and described himself as ‘an endless seeker with no past at my back’. The emphatic orientation towards the future automatically withdraws value and attention from the past. As long as the future is the central resource for hope and progress, remembering the past must appear as an obstinate, backward and even pathological deviation from the norm. The limits and problems of this position become obvious as soon as we are dealing with a traumatic past. In 1918, for instance, the American poet Carl Sandburg wrote a poem about the great battlefields of the 19th and 20th century, from the perspective of the grass:

Pile the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo.
Shovel them under and let me work -

I am the grass; I cover all.

And pile them high at Gettysburg
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun.
Shovel them under and let me work.
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor:

What place is this?
Where are we now?
I am the grass. Let me work.

The cynical tone of the poem suggests that smooth transformation of history into ‘nature’ is unacceptable where human violence, suffering and massive losses are involved. It becomes even more scandalous if it plays into the hands of perpetrators who profit from automatic forgetting in the passage of time. In W.G. Sebald’s novel *Austerlitz* there is a passage in which the narrator muses ‘how little is it that we can keep and hold fast in our memory, how much and how many things continuously slip into forgetting with every

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extinguished life, how does the world as it were empties itself out, shedding all the stories, that had been connected to innumerable places and objects, which are no longer heard, recorded or transmitted.'

This quotation sounds like an accurate description of inevitable automatic forgetting: after each generation the world, as it were, empties itself spontaneously and stories and memories irrevocably disappear along with the deceased. This, however, is not what the Sebald narrator has in mind in this passage. The narrator, in this case, muses about the loss of stories connected to very particular traumatic places: the fortresses of Breendonk and Terezín, which the Nazis turned into a prison and a Jewish Ghetto.

If we replace natural death with torture and murder, the context is drastically changed. In light of the suffering of the victims, the automatism of forgetting becomes morally scandalous. In order to separate himself from complicit forgetting, Sebald's narrator returns to these places of trauma, searching for traces of a lost past and trying to recollect and remember some of the innumerable stories attached to objects and places in order to recover, acknowledge and transmit these stories. The grass of forgetting is not selective - it grows anywhere. Humans, on the other hand, are able to choose between forgetting and remembering which can involve an ethical decision, mobilizing cultural efforts to rescue historical experience from the general pit into which the past always tends to disappear.

2. Preservative forgetting – the entry into the archive

When we focus on the unlikely case of something being retained and extracted from the ongoing stream of time and forgetting. Collectors and visitors of flea markets are agents of delay; they protect specific objects from decay by integrating them into their collections. The human urge to attach value to objects and to collect them is the foundation of many a library, gallery or museum. But it is only when the collection is given the protective roof of an institution, that an object has the solid chance of an extended existence. Institutions providing such a social guarantee for preservation include the archive, the library and the museum. Historical archives have evolved rather recently; they were introduced at the time of the French Revolution and have become a stronghold of Western democracies and historical thinking.

The historical archive must not be confused with its predecessors, which it has supplanted but not annihilated: the political archives of the state, the church and other institutions of power. While these archives were used as instruments of claiming prestige, establishing legitimation and exerting power, historical archives are intended to serve the commonality: They preserve documents and relicts of the past that have lost their immediate function in the present. It is this form of maintaining elements of the past, cut off from immediate use, that I refer to as 'preservative forgetting'. Material preservation of what was once thought or done makes possible its reentry into cultural memory. In this way, the archive creates a space of latency between passive forgetting and active remembering.

It is well known that Nietzsche slandered this institution of the historical archive with his scathing polemic, denouncing the mere storage and accumulation of historical knowledge as a dangerous burden for individual, society and culture. Intentionally or unintentionally, Nietzsche is invoked whenever the problem of data accumulation is addressed in terms of a 'threatening flood of information' that is uprooting the sense of identity and orientation. In modern societies, this overload of knowledge production cannot be solved by operations of deleting information, but only with the help of individually applied criteria of selection that separate the relevant from the irrelevant. While the media focus attention and highlight a certain canon of cultural products, it must be emphasized that individuals in Western democracies are no longer told what to remember and what to forget, but are encouraged to make their own choices and develop their own criteria for selection.

But of course they never do this in a void. Humans live in the 'semiosphere' (or semiotic ecosystem) of a culture that over a long-term period has gradually established a massive framework for remembering and forgetting. Cultural memory in Western societies relies on a dynamic exchange between two institutions, which I refer to as the canon and the archive. The canon here stands for a small number of cultural

'Cultural memory relies on a dynamic exchange between two institutions: the canon and the archive'

messages that are addressed to posterity and intended for continuous repetition and re-actualization. This active form of memory includes sacred texts of religion, important historical events and eminent works of art that future generations – to put it in the words of John Milton – 'will not willingly let die'.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is the archive, a storehouse for cultural relicts. These relicts have become decontextualized and disconnected from those frames, which had formerly authorized them or determined their meaning. Through this decontextualization, these messages have lost their immediate addressees as well as their direct meaning and function. They are, however, not forgotten and thrown away. Instead, they are seen as a source of historical information and are therefore preserved for re-inspection. As part of the archive, these documents exist in a state of latency or transitory forgetfulness, waiting to be rediscovered as fragments of relevant information, to be placed into new contexts and to be charged with new meaning through acts of interpretation. The archive provides the basis on which future historians will be able to reconstruct a past that was once the present.

3. Selective Forgetting – the power of framing

Not only the dynamics of cultural memory but also the dynamics of individual remembering are hinged on processes of selection. While storage space can be infinitely extended and supplemented, memory space remains a rare resource. While the external storage space of computers is growing exponentially, our brains will have to go on working on the more or less limited and invariant basis of their biological infrastructure. This accounts for the huge difference between storing and remembering: while storing provides a device *against* forgetting, remembering is always a co-product of remembering *and* forgetting. For this reason, all processes of remembering include various shades of forgetting such as neglecting, overlooking, ignoring. In other words: the gaps created by forgetting are an integral part of remembering, providing its contours.

What, then, are the selection criteria of the economy of memory? How is the relevant separated from the irrelevant, what is to be included or excluded? Nietzsche recommended forgetting from both a practical and moral point of view. To start with the practical perspective: for him it is the aim of the 'man of action' to bring memory under the control of his will. Men of action were admired by Nietzsche and Bergson for their capacity to call up only a small segment of relevant memories, which can serve as a motivational impetus towards an intended goal. Everything that cannot be used to achieve this goal has to be 'forgotten', as Nietzsche put it.

Today's cognition psychologists speak of the 'executive function', emphasizing the cognitive capacity of ignoring all irrelevant associations in situations of processing information, decision-making and acting. The following sentence in Nietzsche's text shows that the cognitive and moral dimensions are not always

easily separable: 'Cheerfulness, a clear conscience, joyful action, trust in the future – all of that depends, in the individual as in a nation, on a line that divides the visible and bright from that which is dark and beyond illumination.' The moral perspective comes to the fore in a famous aphorism, in which Nietzsche shows how memory can become the accomplice of forgetting. In this process, moral issues of guilt and responsibility are glossed over by the stronger socio-psychological norm of face-saving:

'I have done this, says my memory.
I cannot have done this says my pride
and stays adamant.
Finally, memory gives in.'

In contrast to Freud who developed a theory of repression, Nietzsche worked on an apology for forgetting which he considered to be an anthropological necessity. He legitimized forgetting from the point of view of the strong male ideal of a person who has to act, wield power and muster courage. All of these acts are based on a positive and confident self-image. Maurice Halbwachs transferred these selection criteria from a socio-psychological to a sociological level. He introduced the concept of 'social frames' into memory studies, emphasizing the fact that such selection criteria are in fact not defined ad hoc by individuals themselves but are imposed on them by the groups to which they belong. It is thus the desire to belong that regulates the interaction between remembering and forgetting. Each social frame necessarily excludes a whole spectrum of memories which are either considered not relevant or not acceptable from the point of view of the group. It is only when one memory frame is replaced by another, that excluded memories have a chance of being reappropriated by the group.

National memory is usually organized by collective pride, which means that memories of guilt and responsibility have great difficulty entering the historical conscience and consciousness of a society. Next to pride, suffering has also gained a high priority in the construction of national memory. For a long time, West-German post war memory was selectively focused on the suffering of Germans. It took four decades to move from the Germans as victims to the victims of the Germans. One memory frame functioned as a 'shield' eclipsing the other: if the national focus is on victimhood this makes it virtually impossible to also accept responsibility for historical crimes.

The problem with national narratives is not so much 'false memory' but extremely selective and exclusive memory frames. It was only in the 1990s that we could witness a shift in the construction of national memories, moving from purely self-serving narratives to more complex configurations that also integrate negative and shameful aspects into the collective self-image. An obvious new feature of this shift is the ritual of public apologies, which has introduced world wide a new politics of accountability and regret. Rooted in human rights, it is designed to focus not only on a nation's own suffering but acknowledges and integrates also one's victims into the national memory.

'National memory is organized by collective pride, which means that memories of guilt hardly enter the historical conscience'

4. Damnatio memoriae – repressive forms of forgetting

In the case of *damnatio memoriae,* forgetting takes on the form of punishment. If a culture values fame and notoriety, considering it a blessing to live on in the memory of posterity, the eradication of a name and other traces of an individual life are considered a serious punishment. In such a culture, 'memocide', the killing of a person's memory, is inflicted as a symbolic destruction on an enemy who has fallen from favour. Many cultures share the Egyptian conviction that 'a man lives if his name is being mentioned'. Those whose names were erased from the annals or chiselled off from monuments are doomed to die a second death.

Historical archives as part of a democratic culture that protects and values the alterity of the past in its own right are a recent institution dating back no later than the French Revolution. Political archives, on the other hand, housing the secret archive of the state as instrument of power and violence, have a much longer history continuing into the present. As long as archives remain sealed, past crimes cannot be historically investigated, as, for instance, the genocide perpetrated on the Armenians. In such a case the victims of violence are bereft of the right to their history. Such repressive forgetting and total control over the past are the topics of George Orwell's novel 1984. The famous motto of the novel's fictive state is:

'Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present, controls the past.'

Orwell's text features an archivist whose job it is to constantly adapt the knowledge of the past to the demands of the present. Making the past disappear, however, is a very hard job. Orwell focuses on the enormous efforts that go into this form repressive forgetting. The strategies of manipulating and distorting the truth include the constant rewriting of documents, the retouching of photographs, as well as more casual forms of denial, such as hushing things up, lying and dissimulation.

Though highlighted in a novel, these practices are far from being fictive. A famous historical example for such dissimulation is the film commissioned by the SS in 1944, presenting Theresienstadt, a Nazi ghetto for Jewish victims, as an ideal kibbutz. This film was created as an intentional deception to mislead the world about the repressive and lethal conditions of this ghetto. In this deception the genre of the 'documentary' was chosen to depict the 'reality' of the ghetto, creating the cynical illusion of an idyll. The cynicism of such repressive forgetting found a climax already in the 1930s with Hitler' question: 'Who today still remembers the Armenians?' Like the genocide of the Armenians that occurred under cover of the First World War, the genocide of the Jews occurred under cover of the Second World War and was meant to be forgotten.

Repressive forgetting can also be enforced less directly through forms of 'structural violence' (Johan Galtung). In patriarchal societies, women had little or no access to writing and printing, which has led to their effective exclusion from archives and libraries. Jane Austen wrote in her novel *Persuasion* in 1817: 'Men have every advantage of us in telling their own story. Education has been theirs in so much higher a degree; the pen has been in their hands.'

The same holds true for religious or racial minorities and other oppressed social groups. 'Structural violence' creates a cultural frame of power that allows some voices to be heard while others are notoriously silenced. Chakravorty Spivak's essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' is an icon of postcolonial discourse; it shows how difficult it is for some members of society to claim a 'voice'. Both the African Americans in the USA and the indigenous populations of colonial countries had similar experiences of an eradication and denial of their 'history'. Groups that never had a chance to express themselves in writing and who are not equipped with documents collected in archives used to be considered as 'void of history' in a Western perspective. Judged against the background of this normative standard, such 'historical silence' is today recognized as a manifestation of repressive forgetting. In order to break the silence and restore what has been forgotten to the realm of language and communication, both the structure of power and the cultural frames have to be changed.

5. Defensive and complicit forgetting (protection of perpetrators)

As soon as it becomes obvious that the system of power protecting them is about to collapse, perpetrators of dictatorships and autocratic regimes engage in acts of destroying relics and erasing

traces to cover up practices that will henceforth be classified as crimes. Towards the end of the war, the Nazi officials hastily destroyed archival documents of the mass murder of European Jews and material traces of the sites of theses crimes. While still in power, perpetrators can rely on their laws to guarantee them impunity; but when the legal system changes, they protest against a retrospective application of the new law, opting for amnesty and amnesia. In Argentina, the military junta destroyed all documents of their regime of violence before transitioning to democracy in 1976. And in 1990 the functionaries of the South African Apartheid regime destroyed tons of archival material in the same situation, eliminating potential evidence to be used against them at court.

Complicit silence also protects the perpetrators. The most conspicuous example publicly discussed in Germany throughout the year 2010 concerned the charges of sexual abuse brought against the institution of private schools and the Catholic Church. Charges had been made by the victims before, but the information was not passed on but hushed up in order to protect the officials and institutions. Those responsible reacted invariably by trivializing, postponing or ignoring the charges. They were confident that by turning a blind eye, this shameful problem could be made to automatically disappear. Taboos preserve a social status quo by exerting a strong conformist pressure. In addition, complicit forgetting is reinforced by the pressure of social taboos; it involves three forms of silence which mutually reinforce each other:

- defensive silence on the part of the perpetrators
- symptomatic silence on the part of the victims and
- complicit silence on the part of society.

When these three forms of silence reinforce each other, crimes can remain concealed for a long time. Nothing will really change as long as the victims are the only ones ready to break their silence and to claim their rights. It is the collective will of society alone which can change the situation and turn the tables. Only then will the testimony of the witnesses be heard and supported by the public media. In a similar way a change of values connected with the introduction of a new political notion of human rights in the 1980s created a new sensibility for the suffering of the victims of such traumatic histories of violence like the Holocaust, slavery, colonialism and dictatorships. After this global change of orientation, the response of the population was transformed from a protection shield for the perpetrators to a sounding board for the victims.

6. Constructive forgetting – tabula rasa for a new political biographical beginning

But forgetting is ambivalent and we must not forget its merits. The German poet Bertolt Brecht wrote a poem *In Praise of Forgetting*. It ends with the following lines:

The weakness of memory
is the source of human strentgh

(Die Schwäche des Gedächtnisses
Verleiht den Menschen Stärke.)

How otherwise could humans, bent down by experience and suffering as they are, ever find the courage to begin anew and to fight their daily battles against repressive conditions? Friedrich Nietzsche was also convinced that without forgetting, humans were unable to live a happy life and to face the challenge of the future: 'Cheerfulness, a good conscience, the happy deed, trust in what is to come - all of this depends on the individual as in the nation on a clear line dividing the ordered and clear from the in-transparent and dark.'

In contrast to repressive forgetting, which supports and maintains power, there is also a hopeful and constructive type of forgetting which supports a break and lays the ground for a new beginning. We can observe that in states that have undergone a political change, many things are speedily forgotten. The demolition of Lenin Statues and the changing of street names after the fall of the Berlin Wall are notorious examples. After the collapse of the GDR, history teachers asked their pupils to tear whole chapters form their textbooks in a spectacular collective act of organized forgetting. Jana Simon recalled such a scene of creating a tabula rasa in her memory novel:

'There is no place where they could retrace their childhood. Most of the clubs of their youth were closed, some of them, even the PW was burnt down, the streets had new names, as well as the schools. The furniture in their parents' apartments had been exchanged, their houses were renovated, the products of their childhood (...) it was all gone.'

It disappeared in memory, or, rather, in the great pit which the

'Nietzsche was convinced that without forgetting, humans were unable to live a happy life and to face the future'

creation of a new state opens up for all that is old, to pick up Emerson's phrase quoted above. In this case, however, we are dealing with a different form of forgetting; it is not caused by the driving force of modern technical innovation (Nr. 1), or instigated by a desire to efface traces in order to escape accountability (Nr. 5); rather, this form of forgetting is created by the strong desire to start over and to effectively adapt to new conditions.

In a recent book on forgetting Christian Meier reminded his readers of this positive and empowering quality of forgetting. He referred to historical cases when after civil wars forgetting was imposed as a means of ending wars and overcoming traumatic violence. With his book he wanted to question a conventional argument that poses remembering as inherently beneficial. But in fact the opposite is closer to the truth, Meier argues, as remembering can perpetuate destructive energies by maintaining hatred and revenge, while forgetting can put an end to conflict and thus appease opposing parties. While it does not possess the power to prescribe individual remembering or forgetting, the state can pass laws that punish public discourse which re-opens old wounds by mobilizing old resentments and aggressions. Such laws of forgetting were frequently passed to end civil wars; examples for this practice include the Athenian polis after the Peleponnesian War, the edict of Nantes in 1598 and in the peace treaty of Münster-Osnabrück in 1648.

In these cases, legislation imposing forgetting indeed promoted a political and social integration. The most recent example named by Meier is the First World War, which the Germans remembered much too accurately and persistently. This memory was in fact used to fuel the mobilization of Germans for the Second World War. After 1945 it was the weakness of their memory that gave the Germans that had survived the war the strength to start over. The therapy of forgetting was also applied by the former allies to overcome past hatred and to lay the foundation for a new Europe. Here is Winston Churchill's plea for forgetting that he made in a speech in Zurich in 1946:

'We must all turn our backs upon the horrors of the past. We must look to the future. We cannot afford to drag forward across the years that are to come the hatreds and revenges, which have sprung from the injuries of the past. If Europe is to be saved from infinite misery, and indeed from final doom, there must be an act of faith in the European family and an act of oblivion against all the crimes and follies of the past.'

7. Therapeutic forgetting – leaving the burden of the past behind

Over the last three decades, constructive forgetting has been rivaled by a new positive form of forgetting, which I call 'therapeutic forgetting'. On a global scale people could have the experience that traumatic pasts do not simply disappear but return and claim attention, recognition, restitution and remembrance. Forgetting, in this case, was replaced by new efforts of

‘We assume that forgetting does its work silently and automatically, like a invisible servant who is always on duty, but no’

remembering as the preferred strategy. But, as I want to show, this form of remembering is also connected to forgetting and perhaps even directed towards it.

Therapeutic or transitional ‘remembering in order to forget’ is not a new discovery in Western culture. In the ritual framework of Christian confession, for instance, remembering is the gateway to forgetting: sins have first to be articulated and listed before they can be erased through the absolution of the priest. A similar logic is at work in the artistic concept of ‘catharsis’: through the re-presentation of a painful event on stage, a traumatic past can be collectively relived and overcome. According to the theory of Aristotle, the group that undergoes such a process is purged through this shared experience. Forgetting through remembering is essentially also the goal of Freudian psychotherapy: a painful past has to be raised to the level of language and consciousness to enable the patient to move forward and leave that past behind. This was also the aim of staging remembering in South Africa. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission designed by Bishop Tutu and Alex Boraine created a new form of public ritual, which combined features of the tribunal, the cathartic drama and the Christian confession. In these public rituals a traumatic event had to be publicly narrated and shared; the victim had to relate his or her experience, which had to be witnessed and acknowledged by the perpetrator before it could be erased from social memory.

Postscript:

I started this survey with the observation of a basic asymmetry: forgetting, we had assumed, is always stronger than remembering because there is no ‘automatic mode of remembering’, which is the reason why ‘the greatest part’ of a former present is always ‘lost’. We had assumed that forgetting does its work silently and automatically, like a servant who is invisible, always on duty and doesn’t need to be paid. Recently, however, we had a wake up call, reminding us that with the Internet, we can no longer rely on ‘automatic forgetting’. The alarm came about with a judgment of the European Court in May 2014 enforcing ‘a right to be forgotten’, thus answering the demand of individuals to be protected against incriminating personal information by deleting it in the collective memory of the Internet.

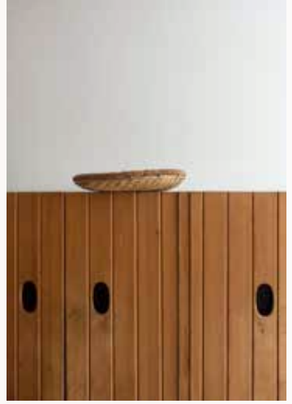
This new form of legislation made manifest that our new digital technology of writing, storing and circulating has overturned deeply rooted premises of our culture. One commenter has written: ‘Since the beginning of human history forgetting was the rule and remembering the exception. (…) Due to the invention and dissemination of digital technology forgetting must today be considered as the exception while remembering has become the rule.’

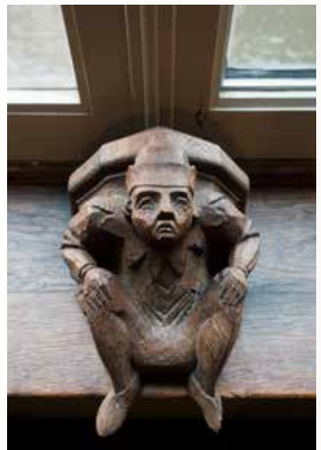
Until recently, it was far from clear whether forgetting or remembering took precedence in the information economy of the Internet. There were two theories competing with each other; the first being: „The net forgets nothing’ and the second: ‘what is stored is forgotten’. These contradictory approaches to the Internet teach us that we should not indulge in a technological determinism but rather seek to understand how the new media interacts with human demands and their social, cultural and legal frames. The new legal frame answers a human demand in creating a personal protection shield relating to sensitive information that was hitherto within the reach of only very few and is now, in the virtual archive, publicly accessible and indiscriminately circulating. Generalizing, we may say that the Internet has introduced two dramatic changes into our economy of information, knowledge and communication. One is the function of easily storing, preserving and rendering searchable a hitherto unknown mass of data. Andrew Hoskins, specialist for digital memory and editor of the Journal *Memory Studies* is a proponent of the theory that the Internet forgets nothing (like Freud’s Unconscious, we may add). He has described this change as ‘the end of decay time’, which is to say that the Internet arrests the flow of time and suspends its erosive effects. The other dramatic change involves the indefinite enlarging of the public realm through radically new possibilities of access to and availability of information. Under these circumstances in which knowing has become a potential within (almost) everybody’s reach, not knowing has to be consciously produced under the auspices of legal supervision.

Conclusion

One thing should have become obvious in my overview, and that is the fact that remembering and forgetting cannot be neatly separated from each other. They interact in different ways, as I tried to show in the different forms of forgetting. Nor are remembering and forgetting inherently good or bad; their quality depends entirely on the uses to which they are put. Looking back at the various social frames and cultural contexts that I have analyzed, we may say that the first three forms of forgetting can be described as morally neutral; they are linked to the inbuilt temporal dynamics of consumer culture and technological innovation, to archival preservation and to the indispensible frames of selection in cognitive processes. Types 4 and 5 carry negative connotations; they show how forgetting is used as a weapon, as a means of maintaining power and as a protective shield for perpetrators. The last two forms of forgetting, on the other hand, have distinctly positive connotations. They represent two forms of marking a break in values and introducing a new beginning.

The radical strategy of creating a tabula rasa, however, seems to be more and more given up in favor of a new form of rupture and forgetting. While in the first case, the page is simply turned over, in the second case, the page must be read before it is turned. Therapeutic forgetting thus invokes remembering as its first stage and is thus the result of a memory that has been reworked and processed. And one more general observation: forgetting is not necessarily final: much can be retrieved and reinterpreted after shorter or longer intervals. What can be recovered and used, however, always depends on cultural values inscribed into social frames of selection. As remembering can be re-inscribed into forgetting, remembering is always framed by forgetting. It was Francis Bacon who found a simple and striking image for this complex interaction: ‘When you carry the light into one corner, you darken the rest.’



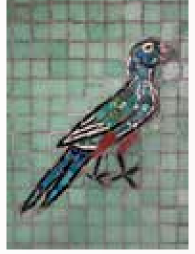


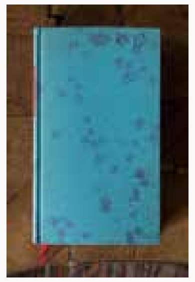
Photos: Herman van Bostelen

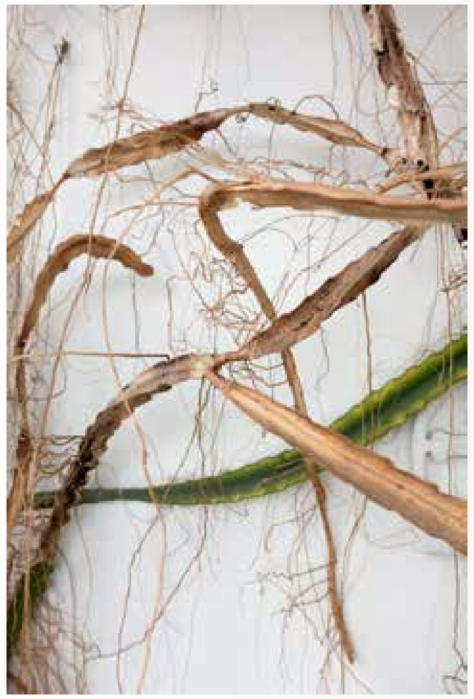
THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

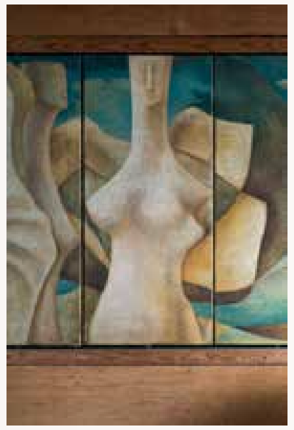
Castrum Peregrini

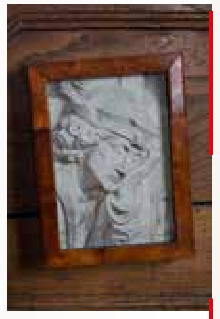
THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

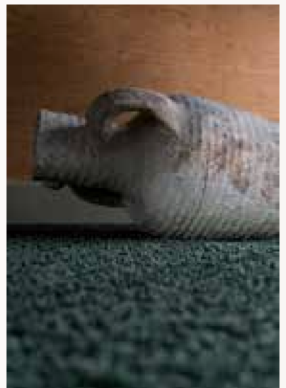


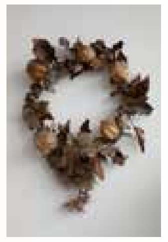












Photos: Herman van Bostelen

Castrum Peregrini

Making space for alternate histories

We need multiple perspectives on our history

There is not one history. There is not one story that is able to represent the true version of our past. We need different viewpoints, as was demonstrated by the exhibition *include/exclude, alternate histories*, curated by Vincent van Velsen.

By Vincent van Velsen

In his essay *On the concept of history* (1939), the philosopher Walter Benjamin wrote that 'the true image of the past continuously slips away'. In it he refers to history as 'the history of the victorious' which includes only heroic and positive aspects as part of our collective memory. The negative elements are marginalized or omitted. Dark chapters and differing viewpoints are deliberately excluded. From these unilateral narratives, the prevalent classes identify themselves with the rulers, conquerors and welldoers of the past. In that same history there is hardly any space for the common or marginalized man, as nobody wants to identify with a subordinate position. This issue of representation partakes simultaneously on several levels - class, gender, ethnicity and geography - and comes about motivated by biased interests. An issue that can also be viewed in current American and European politics, relating to the historically based essence of an inclusive identity and potentiality of belonging.

Biases and unilateral narratives affect not only our knowledge about history, but are equally important to our modern day relationships. The grand narrative of a culture is based on a shared history which consists of a specific selection of historical affairs. Thus the contemporary cultural canon and historical highlighting testifies to the implicit goals and values of our current society. At the same time it proves that one's collective history is a malleable substance. Therefore the possibility exists to represent new and other histories within future inclusive narratives.

Decisions about the inclusion and exclusion of such narratives, ideas, individuals and groups therefore should be constantly questioned and reconsidered. The valorization of diversification and the voicing of other, alternative views next to a more traditional or commonplace perspective should be provided significant space and proper attention. Knowledge does not exclude other knowledge, as more forms, ways and views can be present within one social arena, and create a richness of the mind and ways of being together. In that sense, writer Fred Moten justly pleads for 'a life invested in preservation rather than destruction, recognizing that [maybe] strangely, creation and preservation are all bound up with differentiation; and destruction is all bound up with sameness'.

So, if 'we are what we remember', the first question should focus on the way this remembrance comes about. As the title of the exhibition *exclude/include, Alternate Histories* indicates, the aim was to reflect on the processes of exclusion and inclusion relating to perspectives, narratives and histories. The ability to voice one's viewpoints in society directly relates to the question of history making: those in charge and with power – political, social, cultural or financial – are allowed to speak, and thereby able to shape our collective memory and thus our history. The aim of the exhibition was on the one hand to demonstrate this Benjaminian notion and its implications and explications. On the other hand, it aimed to provide space for other narratives: not of those of victors or rulers, but for those marginalized, overlooked, forgotten, underrepresented and underappreciated. It is important to say that the aim was not to focus on questioning the position of 'minorities' in a one-dimensional way – including gender, sexual orientation, cultural, religious, ethnic or geographical background. It did not propose an idea in which the works render a final version, or a single alternative to a supposedly more truthful truth. The exhibition intended to give an incentive towards a critical attitude towards presented stories in general, and the concept of history in particular. In the presented works the conventional art canon was addressed, together with conspiracies, coincidences and the politics of power. Furthermore, specific individuals that were excluded from history in exceptional ways were given attention, the opaque motives of large institutions and archives were featured, the importance of (pan-)national organizations were reflected on, and the origins of post-colonial positions disclosed. All subjects came with a conscious reflection on, and consideration of the framework and mechanism that is called History.

At the same time it became clear that any adjustment, alteration or addition bears consequences for the entire spectrum. How we view the world today, with its social relationships that emerge from the past, is substantially influenced by our historical knowledge as well as our vision of and justification of contemporary positions based on that same narrative. In that sense our collective knowledge and worldview should contain multiple perspectives and highlight their inherent value: showing that no one (hi)story is able to (re)present the true, correct or complete version, as 'the true image of the past continuously slips away'.

Vincent van Velsen is a Dutch critic, writer, researcher and curator with a background in art and architectural history. He debuted as a curator in 2015 with the exhibition exclude/include. Alternate Histories *at Castrum Peregrini within the framework of the programme Memory Machine – We Are What We Remember. Together with Alix de Massiac he won the 2015 curatorial price organized by the Netherlands Association of Corporate Art Collections (VBCN). He researched notions of alterity as a 2016 resident at the Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht.*

The magic Zmazonka

‘The word held mystery and a strange feeling of coming home to a country I had never known’

The Dutch poet and artist Maria Barnas learned just one word from her Polish grandmother: ‘Zmazonka’. A magic word from a country Barnas had never seen. This text was delivered at the opening of *include/exclude, Alternate Memories*, an exhibition made for Castrum Peregrini by Vincent van Velsen.

By Maria Barnas

A tall woman dressed in stark blue polyester enters the train. This violent and practical blue only means one thing in a Dutch mind: KLM, The Royal Airlines. Why does this blue make me cringe? It may be because I imagine it is horrible to wear. Easy to clean, yes. But also non-breathing, sweaty and itchy. How different would it be to see flight attendants dressed in a cool, airy cotton.

Part of my unease with this blue is also the reference to the royal family – blue blood – hierarchies and old systems of harsh suppression and exclusion.

The stewardess sits down and starts putting blue eye shadow around her slant eyes.

An elderly lady gripping a small panting dog in her lap says bitterly: you are beautiful already.

The stewardess distractedly replies: ‘Thank you’.

The dog woman: ‘Where are you flying off to, today?’

The stewardess seems to awake, sits up straight and with a sigh, a short melody leaves her mouth. In perfect Polish she says ‘Warszawa’. The name of the city spreads a ripple of calm and a tinge of excitement through the cabin, with echoes from the east and other places we might call our home.

‘Excuse me?’ exclaims the dog woman.

‘Warszawa’, repeats the stewardess with an absent smile on her face. She must have been away from home for quite a while.

Distressed, the dog woman almost strangles the animal in her lap. She does not understand what the woman is saying to her. She looks around for help. Should I intervene?

‘I don’t understand, where the hell is that?’, the dog woman cries out.

‘The capital of Poland, the stewardess replies curtly.

‘OOOh’, says the dogwoman. ‘Warsaw!’ Laughs. ‘Honey, WE say Warsaw.’

The WE is shoved between the two like a tight, irrevocable wall.

All my terror of humanity is instilled in this wall.

Am I part of the dog woman’s WE?

Am I, because she considers me as such?

She is making me part of a WE as she speaks.

‘WAR.SAW.’ the dog woman repeats slowly, as if speaking to a deaf person – her triumphant face far to close to the freshly powdered face of the stewardess who snaps her make-up box closed, an inch removed from the dog woman’s nose.

When my Polish grandmother fled to the Netherlands as a girl, feeding herself with nettles along the road she made a pact with her sisters to all trap a Dutch man into marriage. Dutch men were known for feeling obliged to marry once they made a girl pregnant. The three sisters succeeded in some sense. They raised strong, happy families in homes that were always open to anyone, offering food in frightening abundance.

But for a few words, they never spoke Polish. But they made ‘zmazonka’.

My mother made zmazonka too, a way of making scrambled eggs on festive occasions. If we made zmazonka on just any odd day, the day became an occasion as by magic. I never really liked scrambled eggs, but zmazonka I could not refuse. Zmazonka held mystery, magic and a strange feeling of coming home to a country I had never known.

My grandmother, a gifted storyteller, had many histories. Depending on her mood her past was like a fairy tale or a dark human hunting game. Sometimes she insisted there was no past to speak of. Sometimes she said that other people took fragments of her past and spread them around the world, it would be impossible to put her back together. Now I understand that she was speaking about history in general.

It was time for me to intervene and bond with the stewardess. When I proudly said the only word I know in Polish, to show her I was not part of the dog-woman’s WE, she looked at me, aghast.

‘Zmazonka!’ I tried again.

‘Scrambled eggs?’ I offered.

She shook her head, as she got up to leave. She shook off all the absurd hostilities she had been confronted with. She said that she had never heard of the word.

When I google the word, there is no recognition.

Maria Barnas is a Dutch writer, poet and artist. Both in her novels, poetry and essays as well as in her visual work, she focuses on how description shapes reality. In 2014 she co-curated the exhibition Shapeshifting *at Castrum Peregrini together with Danila Cahen. She is also engaged in the Think Tank of Castrum Peregrini, Intellectual Playground. With this text Maria opened the exhibition* include/exclude, Alternate Memories *within the framework of of the programme Memory Machine – We Are What We Remember at Castrum Peregrini on 24 April 2015.*

The Castrum bubble

A culturally constructed safe house in the midst of barbarism

As a cultural construction of a safe house in the midst of barbarism Castrum Peregrini was the code name in World War II for the house on the Herengracht 401 in Amsterdam. A safe house full of poetry for people on the run from Nazi barbarism. How did Gisèle and Wolfgang Frommel manage this constructed space?

By Lars Ebert

'Interpretation was important, reading was more important. When we read poetry we had to stop whatever we were doing at that very moment. This was, formally speaking, our first and only commandment.' writes Claus Victor Bock in his memoires about his time in hiding at Herengracht 401. (Untergetaucht Unter Freunden, p. 77, translation by the author)

Gisèle and Wolfgang Frommel together with their network of friends and colleagues provided shelter for a small group of youngsters against persecution. The code name of this safe house on Herengracht 401 was Castrum Peregrini, the pilgrim castle. In this ordinary, tiny, vulnerable, rental flat, without a kitchen, without a bath, they imagined their reality as a safe castle, themselves as pilgrims, bound to one another by a similar destiny. This social space required hard and continuous work of building up and maintaining in order for it to hold such different characters, ages, dreams, talents, longings, genders, religions, cultural references and bring them into alignment. It was a constructed space by itself, a bubble amongst many. 'The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space […] we live inside a set of relations', quoting Michel Foucault. But what enabled Gisèle and Wolfgang to establish such a set of relations and maintain a cultural, cultivated space in the midst of barbarism? 'What held us together was a magical ring, no chain, no tie. We experienced freedom inside, not outside. Our pilgrims' castle consisted of only a few square meters. All the more it was important to maintain peace and quietude. Huffiness, emotional explosions, negativism did not stay away. In such moments concentration proved of value, concentration on poetry, on ones activities or on prayer.' (Untergetaucht, p. 85)

Concentration was a methodological necessity. The educational aspect of this utopia was evident and Wolfgang Frommel largely motivated it by referring back to the German poet Stefan George. I can only guess what those must have felt and thought who had been forced to to disappear from the surface of earth when hearing or reciting words as 'Render your spirit to rest, Under immaculate clouds, Send it to harkening rest, Long in the terrible night, Till it is tempered and strong, And you are freed from your shell, No longer silent and numb, When you are roused by the god, When softly called by your love.'

This journey through a dark and horrible night had a meaning, it was there to set you free as an individual being. That was the magic spell, the hope, the love, that kept them going. Young pilgrim 'Buri did though say every now and then "as long as we write poetry nothing will happen to us"… then a feeling of rest and security permeated us' (Untergetaucht, p. 85f)

We owe the notion to Henri Lefebvre that space is a complex social construction in which values and cultural references produce the meaning of a social group. He calls this the Third Space. 'Space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols.' In the memories of the hiders and that of Wolfgang Frommel and Gisèle it becomes clear that the continuous reception of cultural highlights from antiquities to the current times, the active and creative engagement of each individual, was needed to build a group as a safe space in which differences were made fruitful through cultural references and cultural production being the catalyst: 'We were six: Wolfgang, Buri, Chris, Vincent, Reinout and Claus. Again we read from 'Der Stern des Bundes'… During these readings there were only participants, no audience and certainly no spectators. Whoever stands up in a circle reading verses aloud, faces up to a poem in a way which is never demanded from someone reading silently. Reading aloud involves me in a creative process with a poem…' (Untergetaucht, p.57) The metaphor of a circle and the recitation may remind us of religious ceremonies as similarly constructed spaces. But the meaning-making mechanism was much more fundamental and much broader in a cultural sense. 'But what held the artists [of the group in hiding] … together was the mental space, in which they stood, and that each of them expressed in their own way. … If in the beginning literature was more dominant, at the end of the war it were the visual arts… Many of the drawings and paintings were realised during the last war winter at the Herengracht, badly illuminated by a single oil lamp or the same smoking wick fattend in hair grease' (Untergetaucht, p.91)

Looking back Claus Victor Bock writes in 1985: 'I measure my benefit rather against the fact that the years 1942-45 still touch my heart, against the fact that I still see and still approve of the unique that happened *in* time but also *out of* time. (Untergetaucht, p.5)

There was something universal in this experience, an essence of life that became solid like gas under high pressure, a notion that we construct spaces, on smaller or bigger scales – and this is what is called culture: memory in action. It enables us to trust, find friendship and love and ultimately bring us closer to acquiring a free mind. We owe democracy to have art stitched in all aspects of our societies, to build constructed spaces where you and I can meet, against all odds.

The Constructed Space

Meanwhile surely there must be something to say,
Maybe not suitable but at least happy
In a sense between us two whoever
We are. Anyhow here we are and never
Before have we two faced each other who face
Each other now across this abstract scene
Stretching between us. This is a public place
Achieved against subjective odds and then
Mainly an obstacle to what I mean.
It is like that, remember. It is like that
Very often at the beginning till we are met
By some intention risen up out of nothing.
And even then we know what we are saying
Only when it is said and fixed and dead.
Or maybe, surely, of course we never know
What we have said, what lonely meanings are read
Into the space we make. And yet I say
This silence here for in it I might hear you.
I say this silence or, better, construct this space
So that somehow something may move across
The caught habits of language to you and me.
From where we are it is not us we see
And times are hastening yet, disguise is mortal.
The times continually disclose our home.
Here in the present tense disguise is mortal.
The trying times are hastening. Yet here I am
More truly now this abstract act become.

W.S. Graham

Lars Ebert was born in Heidelberg, Germany and holds a degree in Protestant theology. He has lived since 2003 at Castrum Peregrini, where he is responsible for the cultural programme and European projects. He is also active internationally as a consultant for educational institutions of higher arts.

'Untergetaucht unter Freunden. Ein Bericht. Amsterdam 1942-1945' by Claus Victor Bock was published by Castrum Peregrini in 2004, ISBN 9789060341001.

'As long as we write poetry nothing will happen to us'

Family affair: the Castrum Peregrini family

‘The true platonic meaning of friendship: growing together, working together, enjoying together, and making decisions based on true feelings’

For ten years Reli Avrahami and Avner Avrahami have wandered throughout Israel, portraying families for the newspaper *Haaretz*. Their series of pictures accompanied by short interviews is famous in Israel. They are portraits of everyday lives, of Jews and Arabs, of Muslims and Christians. For their exhibition in Amsterdam in 2015, ‘Family Affairs’, they portrayed the Castrum Peregrini family.

Text Avner Avrahami
Photo Reli Avrahami

Castrum Peregrini family

Members: Lars Ebert (40), Frans Damman (48), Michael Defuster (59)

The house: In the city centre, a traditional Amsterdam building from the 17th century, tall and narrow, built of brown bricks, with wide windows framed in white. It has seven stories and a terrace on the roof, and is located on the Herengracht canal. The building was renovated in 1920, and the Dutch artist Gisèle rented the third floor in 1941. She gradually purchased the entire building.

Gisèle: Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht (1912–2013), the daughter of the Dutch jurist and geologist Willem van Waterschoot van der Gracht, was an artist, a patron of other artists, a publisher and a Righteous Among the Nations, awarded by Yad Vashem. She lived in the US in her youth, studied in Paris and in the south of the Netherlands, produced etchings and paintings and created stained glass for churches. In 1941 she moved to Amsterdam, where she remained during World War II.

World War II: After Holland fell to the Nazis, Gisèle hid Jewish children in her home. She cited her strong faith in humanitarianism as the motive for this activity. A group of children

THE HOUSE OF GISÈLE

The Castrum Peregrini family, Amsterdam.
Frans Damman, Michael Defuster and Lars Ebert in the salon of Gisèle.
Photo: Reli Avrahami, February 2015

Family Affair: the Castrum Peregrini family · Avner Avrahami and Reli Avrahami

hiding in the home engaged in art under her tutelage. They remained there after the war. Over the years, Gisèle gradually purchased the adjacent building and created a maze of studios, a gallery, apartments, offices, hallways and staircases full of art and collectors' items.

Castrum Peregrini: Latin for 'Fortress of the Pilgrims', the name of a Crusader fortress in Atlit, south of Haifa (in present-day Israel), which provided shelter for pilgrims. It was the code name for Gisèle's house during the war and became the name of the foundation she set up in 1957, which operates from the house at Herengracht 401.

The house today: A cultural centre for artists, students, teachers, academics, producers and opinion makers, with its unique history providing inspiration for exhibitions, lectures, performances, discussions, workshops and seminars. The house is also home to Michael, Frans and Lars, run the foundation.

Roles: Michael – general manager. His duties include charting strategy, creating development programmes and establishing the centre as a brand in Dutch and international public discourse. Frans – responsible for the educational programmes, content development, marketing and communication. Lars – director of activities and, in particular, European projects.

Support staff: Judith Couvee, art historian – production; Leon – project assistance.

Biographies: Michael: Born in Kortrijk, Belgium, 1957, grew up in a large family, educated as an architect and landscape architect. Frans: Born in Amsterdam, 1968. Grew up with a brother and a sister, studied economics, worked in publishing and the museum world.
Lars: Born in Heidelberg Germany, 1976, an only child, grew up in Germany, studied Protestant theology, also works as a consultant for higher arts education and international networking in culture.

Life decision: 'To intertwine our private and professional lives and dedicate them to Gisèle and her heritage.'

How they met: Michael and Frans met at a class for publishers, Lars did an internship at Castrum when Michael was already director; they became friends and started to build a life together. Taking care of Gisèle was the final experience that made them a family.

On sharing life: 'The true platonic meaning of friendship: growing together, working together, enjoying together, and making decisions – not based on conventions, but based on true feelings and urgencies. We enjoy building and exploring together. Love, life, hard work and joy are all one for us. And having a joint purpose: contributing to society – in our case, opening up Castrum Peregrini to a broader audience, making that heritage fruitful for a healthy society, giving something back to society.'

Daily routine: 'We wake up at 7.30, and then have coffee (and the newspapers) together. The first disagreement: Do we read in silence or do we discuss the day (☺)?' The three then work in the house, are busy with meetings, guided tours, preparing exhibitions, lectures etc., or they travel to project meetings, write funding applications, and so on. Quick lunch at one o'clock, often used as a staff meeting to discuss the proceedings of the day. ('We try to stop by 6 o'clock.')

And if they are free, they do some sports and eat a bite at their favourite place - Café de Doffer. Mostly though, they entertain guests – friends or future collaborators, speakers, board members, authors, artists interested in a residency, and others. That means that Lars cooks and they prepare a nice table in Gisèle's studio and celebrate sharing food and thoughts for an evening.

Professionalism: Michael is an accomplished cook, but most of the time Lars cooks, enjoying the concrete work of preparing food, including hunting for its ingredients at local markets. Whoever cooks must not wash dishes. Michael does the laundry, while Lars is good at ironing; Frans takes care of the plants and birds, and the house in general.

House rules: 'No smoking. If someone withdraws, we respect privacy. In general, treat everything and everyone with respect.'

Outings: Seldom in Amsterdam ('too busy with our own house and activities') and more often when travelling. But they do try to attend openings, performances and films, and during the weekend go to (new) restaurants.

Dreams: Making Castrum Peregrini a sustainable place that can be fruitful for many future generations. 'We enjoy Greece, and maybe we'll build a beautiful existence there, also working and living together, developing a project (with olives?) and ourselves – growing with challenges.'

Longings: World peace, GT and sun.

Abroad: Greece, Pylos in Messinia, where they grow olives.

God: No.

Children: God forbid!

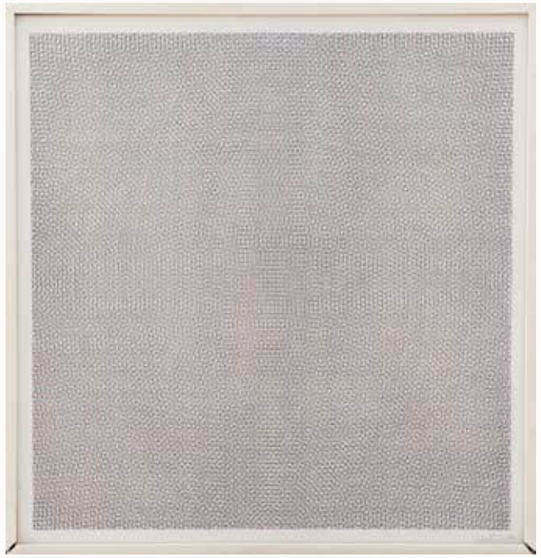
Most important: Friends.

Last will: 'Castrum Peregrini does not belong to us; it is an independent foundation. We hope that following generations will continue our work on the legacy of Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht and Wolfgang Frommel.'

Happiness (on a scale of 1 to 10): 8.5

Reli Avrahami and Avner Avrahami have wandered throughout Israel, photographing random families and questioning them about their daily lives, about their dreams and beliefs, their origins and their relations. She takes photographs, he writes; she navigates, he drives; she's a wife, he's a husband. They visited hundreds of families in their private homes – and others who live under one roof. Their portraits appeared regularly in the weekend supplements of Haaretz (and later Maariv), week by week, becoming a routine for Israeli readers. Encounters with a variety of people, born in the country or immigrated, Jews and Arabs, Muslims, and Christians, coming from Europe, Africa, and Asia. The format was always the same: a colourful photograph and a very personal text. The traces of tensions in the Israeli society, national and religious, social, political or ethnic, are visible in the ambience of everyday life, in the environment of living rooms and family stories. Of the hundreds of families and their stories, about 80 were selected for an exhibition in the frame of the programme Memory Machine – We Are What We Remember in 2015, curated by Galia Gur Zeev. For this occasion they portrayed the Castrum Peregrini Family.

Maker unknown
Woodcut, 32 x 39 cm



Sol Lewitt
Silkscreen, 37 x 37 cm , number 8 of 50 copies

Heiter Müller-Schlösser
Pencil on paper, 148 x 148 cm

Gert Weber, Komposition
Oil paint on canvas, 73 x 94 cm

The Legacy of Walter Euler and Sabine Euler-Künsemüller

Castrum Peregrini is thankful for the legacy of lateWalter Euler (†2008) and Sabine Euler-Künsemüller (†2016). Walter was an art historian, Sabine an art restorer and both were avid collectors of books and art. After a life in Darmstadt, Basel and Düsseldorf they left Germany in the 1980s to settle in Zeeland (NL) to live amidst their art and books. The couple knew Castrum Peregrini since the 1950s and sought contact when moving to the Netherlands. Their personal archive as well as their art was transferred to the Castrum Peregrini archive. The selection on this spread is displayed in a guest apartment at Castrum Peregrini that we named after Sabine and Walter. We are grateful for their support and will cherish the memory of their exceptional life in which freedom, friendship and art played a key role.

Hugo Claus
Invullen!

Hermann Josef Mispelbaum, 1988
Acrylic and pencil on paper, 40 x 29,5 cm

Maker unknown
Acrylic on paper, 23,5 x 16 cm

Attributed to Marcel Schaffner, 1980s/1990s
Mixed media on paper, 97 x 78 cm

Nicola Wisbrun-Irmer, Zonder titel, 1987
Mixed media on paper (acrylic), 100 x 69 cm

Maker unknown, 1984
Ink and pencil on paper, 14,5 x 10,5 cm

W.H (signed), Small Machine,
Acrylic and ink on cardboard, 35,5 x 16 cm

Josef Albers, 1972, Silkscreen, 32 x 32 cm,
nummer 288 van 380 exemplaren

Lothar Quinte
Silkscreen, 18 x 18 cm

Refuge for the *condition humaine*

In the Anne Frank House, the enemy is clearly visible: the Bad Nazi. In the House of Gisèle this image is more nuanced. How should we preserve the wonderful Herengracht 401?

By Riemer Knoop

Things are never what they seem. Things are what we attribute to them. That's how simply heritage works. Plato meets Aristotle, in a way: to Plato, being was being, to Aristotle, observing was being. Although this shift was not accidental, critical heritage theory employs both notions in its dynamic approach towards objects and their meaning. Things are as they are and at the same time - as they say - 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder'.

The extent to which something is attributed depends on circumstances and context: high pressure, scarcity, contestation or an 'emotional network' of proponents, opponents and bystanders.

When ABN AMRO bank was broken up abroad several years ago, many felt this was a sale of national heritage – shame! 'Next, they are going to take away our Saint Nicholas', said Minister Verdonk. Hands off our heritage! In this case the heritage qualification is a call to arms. Something *is* not heritage by itself and must therefore be defended. No, something is under attack and should be defended and therefore it becomes heritage. Such an attribution is never permanent. The multicoloured Zwarte Piet has already left the heritage arena. And who still cares about the national character of ABN AMRO?

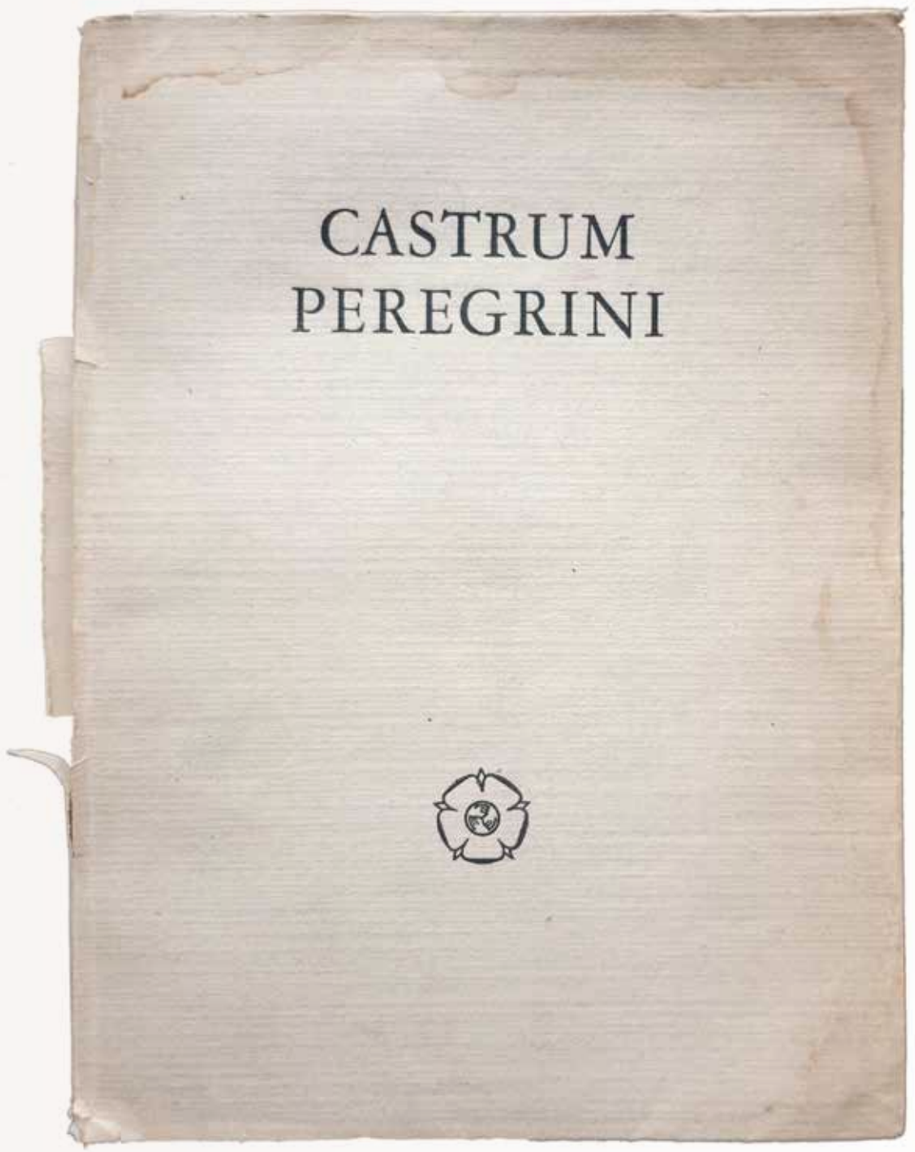
Which items, thoughts and rooms should be preserved in the house and refuge of Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht (1912-2013) at Herengracht 401? And why? The house, the spaces, the ensemble now seems a Wunderkammer. It illustrates, I think, a special, ongoing involvement with critical thinking about the *condition humaine*, in art, science and social life. The uniqueness lies in it being preserved down to the most bizarre detail, period by period: the interwar period, the war, the post-war period, and the more recent history.

These interiors are not merely snapshots, but rather accumulations of material and spiritual culture. In that sense, the House of Gisèle forms a *contramal*, an opposite, that complements the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam. The latter is a static and almost immaterial memorial, a contrast with the continuity and strong materiality of the memory of the House of Gisèle. The main character of the ensemble makes it more special to me than the famous house on Prinsengracht. In the Anne Frank House the enemy will, at least for most visitors, be obvious: the nasty Nazis. With Gisèle the situation is more nuanced. Although it starts in the same period and with the same dilemmas, it does not stop there. We still have to take shelter today: as artists, intellectuals, cultural, ethnic or gender minorities. We need shelter from progress, the silent majority, the well-meaning but over-eager neo-Marxism, from Reaganomics and Thatcherism, and until recently neoliberalism.

And now it's something that has no name, yet, but faces of politicians. Take *The Barbarians*, a book written by Italian philosopher Alessandro Baricco: do these faces represent something really new or is it just something we did not recognize so far? Or take Peter Inkei's 'Culture and the *Déplorables*': do we need cultural democracy tools to preserve our societies? Gisèle's house for me represents such a cultural tool for democracy. It could well become an unexpectedly impactful *hub* with all its objects, associations and attributions.

Riemer Knoop is a Dutch Professor of Cultural Heritage at Reinwardt Academy University of the Arts Amsterdam. He has a broad professional background in the areas of archaeology, built heritage preservation, museums and heritage, having held positions at the Dutch National Museum of Antiquities, the VU University, Amsterdam, and the University of Amsterdam. Riemer engages at Castrum Peregrini in the development of their heritage policy.

Opposite page: first publication bearing the name of Castrum Peregrini after the War in 1945. This 'Gedenkbuch' featured three portraits of and texts from war time friends that had not survived: Vincent Weijand, Percy Gothein and Liselotte von Gandersheim.



Against the beast

Civilization needs to be saved

Castrum Peregrini was perhaps the first cultural institution to recognize the danger of populists and adapt its programme accordingly. Now, almost ten years later, the prospects seem bleaker than ever, but Michael Defuster calls on artists and intellectuals to challenge the beast.

By Michael Defuster

It has been eight years since Castrum Peregrini outsourced its publishing work and started to organize activities. Since then, many cultural events have taken place, and during that time the cultural world was struck by the fact that they were organized around core values such as 'freedom, friendship and culture' — values considered 'heavy' and 'difficult'. In the early years of this millennium, the word 'intellectual' became an insult, one of the first signs of the frontal assault by populists on what they call the elite and the basic principles of the democratic rule of law.

Although we could not have foreseen just how big the movement would become, the vulnerable safe house heritage we preserve allowed us to instinctively sense that things could get a lot more serious than generally imagined. Under the contradictory banner 'Intellectual Playground', we organized thematic annual programmes centred on the themes of sensitivity to group fanaticism, freedom and friendship, and in our programme 'Memory Machine' we devoted attention to cultural memory and connection with identity. Now one can scarcely find a cultural institution that does *not* address identity politics and diversity.

All our activities centred on why innocent, intelligent young people had to hide for years from the outside world to avoid the gas chambers during World War II. We invited artists, academics, philosophers and curators (Philipp Blom, Zygmunt Baumann, Peter Sloterdijk, Rosi Braidotti, Kenan Malik, Wendelien van Oldenburgh, Vincent van Velsen, Nina Folkersma and others) to explore the question and shed light on their answers through exhibitions, lectures and plays. Without wanting to becoming moralistic, simplify issues or offer detached and hence meaningless historical accounts, we tried to grasp the reality in which we now find ourselves.

During that search, it became clear to us that the discrimination, xenophobia, racism and holocaust are deeply rooted in and unconsciously part of our human nature. In our annual programme entitled *We Are All Fanatics* (2012), we illuminated the bizarre ability of the human species to allow itself to be swept along by the masses and be tempted by irrationality and violence. The instinctive tendency of people to be drawn towards equals in terms of ethnicity, religion and social status, and thus to exclude others, was charted in *My Friend, My Enemy, My Society* (2013). Finally, the apparent inability of people to escape from the value system in which they were raised, their inability to appreciate the merits of other systems, and their tendency to elevate their truth to an all-destroying standard, provided the theme of the programme *Memory Machine* (2014-2016).

These are just a few of the insights we have gained. Therefore, and this does not sound very encouraging, despite all efforts taken after World War II to make the world a better place, there is no guarantee that the wild beast in us will not once again raise its head and plunge mankind centuries back into deep misery or even destroy us. To control this beast, parliamentary and democratic institutions have been established, constitutions of fundamental rights and obligations have been drawn up, and independent legal systems put in place. Since Freud, we know that civilization is essentially nothing more than an effort to restrain the monster inside us. While this demon has been nothing more than a ghost for more than half a century, in the western world at least, it has in recent years taken on human form, and acquired names and faces.

Of late, it has even assumed positions of power, and the first targets are the free press, the judiciary, and political

The Identity of Castrum Peregrini

The Castrum Peregrini Foundation is an independent cultural organization that advocates an inclusive society in which diversity is the norm.

It emerged out of a humanitarian community that survived in a safe house during World War II. It therefore wants to be a place where individuals come together to make a positive contribution to an inclusive society, irrespective of ethnicity, orientation, cultural background or opinion.

It opposes the normalization of the unacceptable through dialogue and cultural and academic activities. It detects signs of social change at an early stage and makes them understandable for a wide audience.

‘There is no guarantee that the dark demons in us will not gain the upper hand again and plunge us into deep misery’

parties with nuanced views – all of them institutions that were set up to maintain the delicate balance. And it is extremely one-dimensional: a message of maximum 140 characters on Twitter seems more important than a solemn election promise. Combined with vulgar demagogy, these omens raise fears that civilization is under serious threat and all our efforts are needed to save it.

These recent developments determine the direction that Castrum Peregrini will take in the future. Its history remains a source of inspiration: during the war the House of Gisèle provided a safe haven for Jews, Dutch, Germans, Catholics, Protestants, conservatives, socialists, homosexuals and heterosexuals. Despite their different interests, they formed a tight-knit community based on mutual respect and affection or love. Literature and art provided the unifying element as well as the means of keeping the beast from the door. They were forced to practice their art in secret, because the beast had sunk his teeth into that too, for art can be subversive and shake people out of their slumber. After the war, when the pressure from outside had disappeared, this heterogeneous group remained largely intact, which made it exceptional. This characteristic has determined the identity of Castrum Peregrini up to the present. For even today, apparent contradictions between people are left outside once they enter the house.

Up to now, Castrum Peregrini has confined its scope to research. We rarely adopted an open position. The inevitable question is whether this can be maintained in view of current developments in society and politics. We owe it to the founders of Castrum Peregrini, Gisèle van Waterschoot van der Gracht and Wolfgang Frommel, to oppose the unacceptable, the beast, by protecting a space of civilization in which humanity and inclusiveness are the norm, just as they did during the darkest days of modern European history. That is why we continue to invite artists, intellectuals and like-minded people, just as they did roughly seventy years ago, to help protect civilization from the clutches of the beast and let it prevail.

Michael Defuster (59) is director of Castrum Peregrini.

Credits

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Unique historic ensemble must be preserved for future generations

The House of Gisèle is a unique place, with a World War II hiding place, that has remained unchanged. It preserved civilization amidst barbarism. Times may have changed since the war but the *condition humaine* has not: the fundament of our culture is threatened again. The House of Gisèle reminds us of what can happen and remains a beacon of culture. **We need your help to preserve it!**

As an independent private foundation, Castrum Peregrinin has conducted a feasibility study of the future of this unique place. Together with our board of recommendation we have developed plans to renovate the historic spaces. They will allow better access for a broader audience, offer space for intellectuals and artists as well as cultural and think-tank events. They will also generate income to ensure the sustainable future and independence of the foundation and its home.

For this investment we need your support!
Donating to Castrum Peregrini can be beneficial. The cultural 'ANBI status' of our foundation makes your donation tax deductible. Individuals may deduct 1.25 times the amount of the gift from their income tax return. Companies can deduct 1.5 times the amount of a donation on their tax return. Feel free to contact us to discuss the form in which you wish to support Castrum Peregrini. There are also ways to connect with the House of Gisele for those who do not live in the Netherlands.

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Photo: Herman van Bostelen