

**FRAMIS**  
**IN**  
**PROGRESS**

# FRAMIS IN PROGRESS

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# ALICIA FRAMIS: UNFOLDING MENTAL SPACE

MIRJAM WESTEN, HEDWIG SAAM, BEATE ERMACORA,  
MICHEL DEWILDE, MANUEL OLVEIRA

Mirjam Westen, curator, Arnhem  
Museum for Modern Art (MMKA)

Hedwig Saam, director, Arnhem  
Museum for Modern Art (MMKA)

Beate Ermacora, director, Galerie im  
Taxispalais, Innsbruck

Michel Dewilde, curator, Bruges  
Cultural Centre

Manuel Oliveira, director, MUSAC,  
Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de  
Castilla y León

A woman always walks a mile more. The darkness tells me I cannot take short cuts in the city,' wrote the Spanish artist Alicia Framis while staying in Berlin in 2002. There she was advised to avoid certain neighbourhoods where women, especially those of colour, were regularly attacked by right-wing extremists with dogs. This inspired her to develop the *anti\_dog* series (2002), which consists of several golden yellow garments made from an innovative impenetrable textile. Designs by famous fashion designers served as the basis for this line of clothing. This 'restructured' the fear and defensiveness that can lead to you want to make yourself invisible in threatening situations into eye-catching theatrical shells that focused attention on the visibility of the wearer instead. A similar inversion was effected a year later, by embroidering highly offensive profanities that are usually hurled at women and immigrants onto the golden-yellow fabric. On pavements and flights of steps in the city of Birmingham, England, models stylishly displayed these gowns adorned with exclamations such as 'Get out of my life you ugly bitch' or 'This is not your country' followed by ©, the copyright symbol. By applying this symbol, Framis arrogated the right to curb the use of such insults in a manner that was as ironic as it was symbolic.

Performativity is one of the most important strategies that Alicia Framis employs to re-claim public space, to intervene in the normality of life. In 1997 she established her name with *Walking Monument*, for which she received a first prize in the Prix de Rome, the prestigious Dutch art award: 160 people clambered one on top of the other at Dam Square in Amsterdam in order to create a living likeness of the 22-metre-high National Monument that commemorates the Second World War, which had temporarily been removed for restoration. All the aspects that would play an important part in Framis's later work were already present in this human pyramid: concerted action, closeness, play and shared experiences. Her work soon came to be described as 'social sculpture', but this characterization is far from adequate, as demonstrated by this solo exhibition that brings together work from the last 15 years under the title 'Framis in Progress'.

Alicia Framis wants to bridge the distance between artist and audience. She believes that the standard art object is too limited to transmit ideas and emotions and thinks that as an artist you can best reach the public via direct contact, with interaction. Her work, which is interdisciplinary and displays overlaps with fashion, architecture and design, often aims to bring about unexpected encounters and experiences. For example, in 1997-98, for 40-day periods she offered her services as a *Dreamkeeper* in various cities for people who wanted company at night while they slept. She also designed a miniature relaxation space that toured various art events and was exclusively accessible to women, somewhere they could have themselves pampered by a male 'comforter'. Her contribution to the Festival a/d Werf in Utrecht in 1997 was *Compagnie de Compagnie*, an escort bureau staffed by identical twins who accompanied solo travellers to the festival venues. The successful *Inventions against Loneliness* project that was staged in various European cities in 2000 involved her inviting professionals such as architects, designers and sociologists to share their solutions for the loneliness in cities with the public.

For Framis this is not just about closeness and interaction in and of itself by which she calls our subject position vis-à-vis public space and social issues into question; these seem to be merely the means in her approach to a closely related umbrella theme in her oeuvre: the exploration of the boundaries of mental space and endeavouring to extend them. The human condition, with all its possibilities and shortcomings, visions and limitations, is analysed and laid bare, with all its vulnerabilities and strengths. Framis surprises and confronts us time and time again by unfolding a vision with her designs, installations and performances in which it is not only herself, but also us, the spectators and participants, who are invited to reflect on our relationship to what is going on in our time and in our own living environment, in our personal fears and visions. One remarkable aspect of Framis's richly variegated oeuvre is that her approach to human shortcomings invariably goes hand in glove with finding solutions, proposing changes, with thinking in terms of possibilities rather than impossibilities.

We are especially honoured that the 'Framis in Progress' exhibition allows us to focus attention on the extraordinarily original and multifaceted oeuvre of this inspired artist. It brings together a cross-section of her work over the last 15 years and is being presented on the basis of three themes, which focus on the interaction with the public. In the 'Fitting Room for Demonstrations' visitors can become acquainted with the garments that were components of projects including *anti\_dog*, *100 Ways to Wear a Flag* and *Mamamen*, and can try on this clothing themselves. The 'Studio of Social Architecture' presents Framis's drawings and prototypes for social sculptures and spaces of interaction, which she is making available to the public. The third theme, 'Wishing Wall', comprises projects by Framis that relate to dreams, wishes and yearnings. In the same way that Alicia Framis unfolds her visionary concepts in 'Framis in Progress', here she presents a new *Wishing Wall*, to which visitors can entrust their wishes and thus dream a future.

We would first of all like to thank Alicia Framis for her unbridled drive and commitment in realizing this publication and the exhibition, which will be presented at several art institutions. We are also grateful to the lenders for their willingness to place work by Framis at our disposal for the duration of this touring exhibition. And last but not least we want to thank the Mondriaan Fund for its financial support in producing this companion publication.



# **SOCIAL ARCHITECTURE**

# SOCIAL ARCHITECTURE

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# GUANTANAMO MUSEUM 2008

## INSTALLATION, PERFORMANCE, DRAWINGS, CD AUDIO

The Guantanamo Bay detention camp is a US military prison operated by Joint Task Force Guantanamo since 2002 at Guantanamo Bay Naval Base, which is on the shore of Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. The detainment areas consist of three camps within the base: Camp Delta, Camp Iguana and Camp X-Ray (which has now been closed). The USA has classified the detainees being held there as 'enemy combatants'.

Since the start of the war in Afghanistan, 775 detainees have been brought to Guantanamo and held without trial! Prisoners are housed in small, mesh-sided cells and the lights are kept on day and night. On occasion many of the detainees have been denied access to the Quran for daily prayer, due to alleged 'high-security measures' and as a form of preparation for interrogation. Detainees are kept in isolation for most of the day, are blindfolded when moving within the camp, and are forbidden to talk in groups of more than three. Red Cross inspectors and released detainees have alleged acts of torture, including sleep deprivation, the use of so-called truth drugs, beatings, and being held in confined and cold cells. Human rights groups argue that indefinite detention constitutes torture.

Spanish artist Alicia Framis decided to come forward, basing her aesthetic ideas on the future of Guantanamo. She assures us that in the not-too-distant future Guantanamo Prison will be transformed into a Museum.

Human beings have a remarkable tendency to transform everything and every place into a museum. On this occasion the artist explores the memory of places of horror like Auschwitz and Alcatraz, analysing the historical process of something so awful being converted into a place for tourists, a souvenir.

One of the main questions that arose during Framis's investigation was: What is the real importance of a 'memorial'? Maybe they are necessary: perhaps people forgetting about something is worse than domesticating it!

During the first stage of the investigation the artist experimented, producing a sketchbook of notes called *Welcome to Guantánamo Museum*. In these sketches and notes she displays and documents all the components of a hypothetical museum and installations at the US detention centre in Cuba. Scale models, drawings, floor plans and structures were exhibited together at the Helga de Alvear Gallery in Madrid, Spain.

The second part of the project is 'Guantanamo Museum', which is composed of a diversity of component parts.

The main piece, *Guantanamo Museum: The List*, is an installation of 274 motorcycle helmets, displayed on a 16-square-metre platform. However, these are not regular helmets for standard use: to protect the motorcyclist in case of an accident. On this occasion Framis uses the helmets to represent the 274 prisoners who were still being held in Guantanamo at the time; she altered them by making an angular, sharp and forceful cut across the crown, turning this protective object into its opposite in order to symbolize the legal void and sense of vulnerability that someone must experience when imprisoned as an 'enemy combatant' under the fractured laws of the current administration in the USA. It is the representation of an existence consisting of torture and uncertainty.

This installation is completed by sound and light. People can hear the voice of Blixa Bargeld continuously repeating the proper names of the prisoners, which Enrique Vila-Matas compiled for this occasion.

The lighting of the room changes constantly thanks to a sensor, intensifying or dimming depending on the tone of her voice. When Blixa remains silent, the room goes completely dark.

*Guantanamo Museum: Sketches* shows the artist's reinterpretation of the prison spaces, using 3D renderings to explain how they could be transformed into her museum proposal.

The exhibition also includes an intriguing cabinet of curiosities, *Guantanamo Museum: Workshop*, which presents a group of objects and videos that Framis describes as 'things to forget'.

Students and participants in Alicia's workshops designed these objects to make people forget Guantanamo.

There is one video in particular that explains the use of each of the objects on display. It also shows dresses and suits that are all designed with the fabric of orange prison overalls, and the pair of high-heeled shoes for men designed by the artist and executed by HANGAR (Centre for Arts Production, Barcelona). They were designed to be converted into killing shoes, by hiding a lethal pill inside one of the heels.

On the opening night there was a performance, an intriguing show with live music that featured the rapper Tara DeLong. DeLong included Enrique Vila-Matas's list of prisoners in her lyrics and performed in the midst of the 274 sawn-off helmets.

As usual, Framis worked on this project with a multidisciplinary team of professionals: musicians Blixa Bargeld and Tara DeLong; writer Enrique Vila-Matas; curator Montse Badía; architect Uriel Fogue; graphic designer Alex Gifreu; fashion designers; participants in the workshop at the Can Xalant Centre for the Creation of Visual Arts (Mataró), and students from Felicidad Duce School of Fashion and Design (Barcelona) and the IED European Design Institute (Barcelona and Madrid).

This project was presented at the Centre d'Art Santa Mònica in Barcelona in 2008. However, the artist intends to continue showing it at other art institutions in various countries, as a work in progress that will involve local artists at every venue.



**Guantanamo Museum**  
Audio piece with Enrique Vila-Matas and Blixa Bargeld

**Alicia Framis with Blixa Bargeld**

**Guantanamo Museum**  
Performance with Tara DeLong

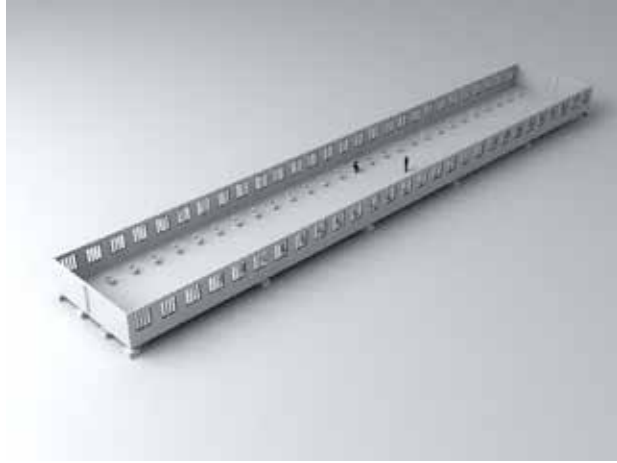
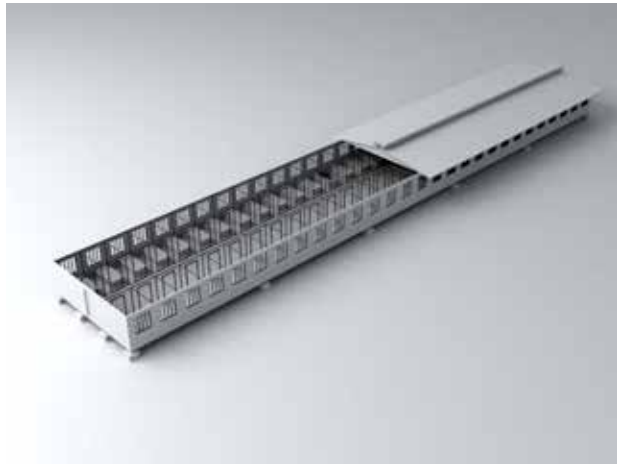
**Enrique Vila-Matas**  
Photographer: Elena Blanco





Guantanamo Museum. The List — Installation with 274 motorcycle cut helmets, displayed on a 16m<sup>2</sup> platform — Collection De Bruin-Heijn





**LIST  
OF  
LAST  
PRISONERS  
IN  
GUANTANAMO**

Zia	Yunis	Rasho	Kari
Ijaz	Fahd	Yahya	Saad
Uthman	Husyan	Salman	Iqbal
Feroz	Thafir	Riyad	Abbas
Muaz	Amri	Sulaiman	Mohamedou
Faruq	Sayer	Yakub	Mahdy
Ibrahim	Mohsen	Mahrar	Schmed
Idris	Saeed	Dawd	Haza
Mujahid	Sarem	Tariq	Awal
Ali	Humus	Salid	Shams
Majid	Fouzi	Sufian	Rohullah
Abdel	Latif	Hamuda	Qalandar
Sayf	Muslim	Moazzan	Sabar
Abdulah	Ebrahim	Qari	Candan
Assem	Nashi	Ulla	Nabi
Sultan	Ghanimi	Jalal	Shahwali
Omar	Salih	Mansoor	Ayoub
Yahya	Tarique	Zamel	Katar
Njeb	Badi	Sabri	Nasrullah
Yusif	Al Qarani	Slah	Ullah
Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul

Mohammad	Sadeq	Mosa	Zahar	Rahmatullah
Muhammed	Laacin	Bader	Aziz	Raqif
Abu	Mehrabamb	Bakri	Khirullah	Bina Bashir
Shaker	Habib	Yusef	Adel	Tolfiq
Amer	Salam	Bahtiyar	Shed	Nassar
Ahmed	Mubarak	Haji	Padsha	Shawali
Mahmud	Hussain	Saidullah	Arkan	Taj
Kareem	Khalid	Hajiakab	Taaher	Mammar
Amr	Fayiz	Farg	Zaban	Juma
Abdul	Martin	Mutij	Ayman	Sharifullah
Mani	Sabir	Dawut	Khalid	Rahmatullah
Yaser	Boudella	Abdulli	Usama	Hafizullah
Ali	Lakhdar	Adel	Sameur	Baridad
Omar	Hassan	Emam	Kudhai	Alif
Tarek	Shakhrukh	Uqla	Mustaq	Kako
Mazen	Majeed	Mahoma	Lufti	Shabir
Nadim	Uthman	Rami	Mandouh	Nasrat
Shah	Muaz	Muieen	Zuhair	Feda
David	Hamza	Hozaifa	Zakirjan	Aminillah
Salim	Matruq	Yaslam	Kamalludin	Salem

Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul
Sufyian	Allal	Bessam	Anwar	Abar
Ahmad	Adil	Wasim	Fawaz	Chaman
Fawzi	Sharif	Sami	Naman	Sada
Gholam	Ridoune	Rashid	Emad	Akhtiar
Asif	Hisham	Mohy	Fayad	Habib
Rhunhel	Mujamma	Bezan	Ghazi	azimullah
Sofiane	Rabai	Jalad	Abdelrazak	Sharbat
Wallid	Aydha	Jabber	Ghalib	Mahbub
Brahim	Maji	Saha	Abdalaziz	Kakani
Mustafa	Issam	Maizal	Fahmi	Jumma
Adel	Hamid	Hani	Suftian	Mullah
Ben	Othman	Malu	Khalifa	Mussa
Ismail	Rashed	Shia	Jabran	Sanad
Sassi	Jabir	Sher	Wazar	IslamAl Hall
Said	Salem	Abib	Jamal	Binyan
Mesut	Sulayman	Khan	Ravil	Al Salam
Abdallah Aiza	Muhsin	Umir	Noor	Mahfouz
Mullah	Allah	Fiazaulla	Fethi	Boudella
Fahed	Mansur	Masiyad	Jihad	Lakhdar
Nasser	Rahman	Abess	Hafez	Mahfouz

Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul	Mohamed, Ali, Abdul
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**Welcome to Guantánamo Museum**  
Exhibition view at gallery Helga de Alvear, Madrid, Spain  
Collection "la Caixa"

**Welcome to Guantánamo Museum**  
Exhibition view at gallery Helga de Alvear, Madrid, Spain  
Collection "la Caixa"

# NEW BUILDINGS FOR CHINA 2007 — 2008

## 3D DRAWINGS, MODELS

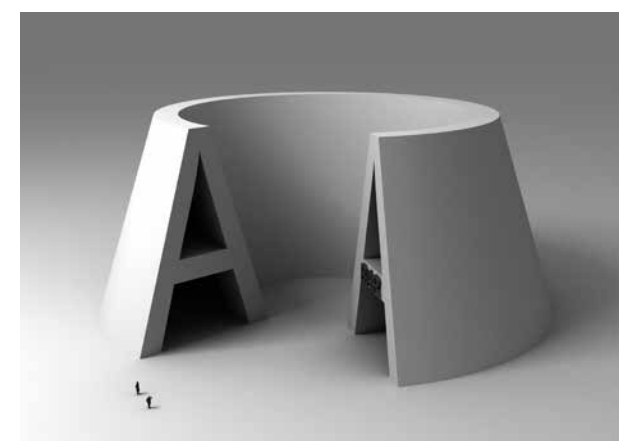
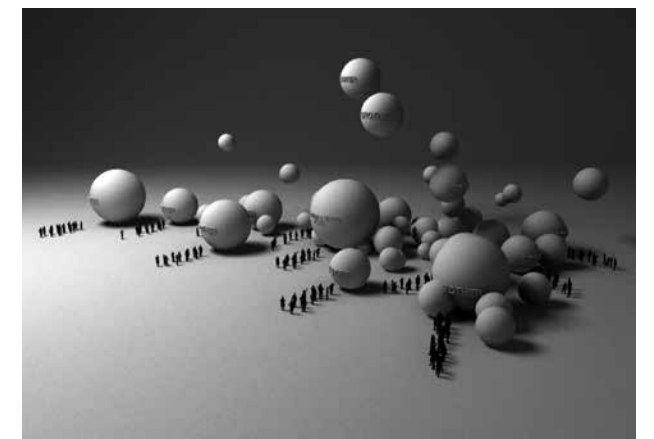
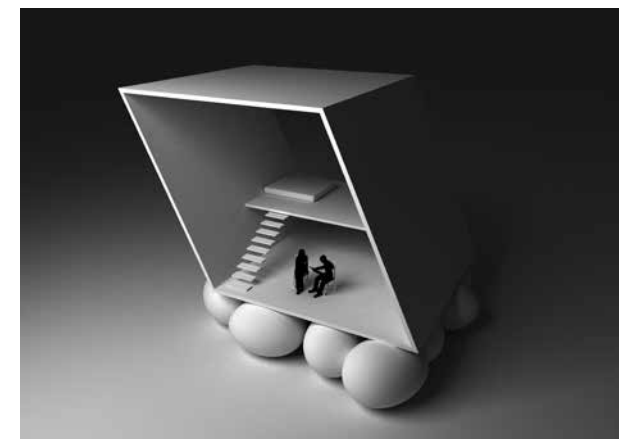
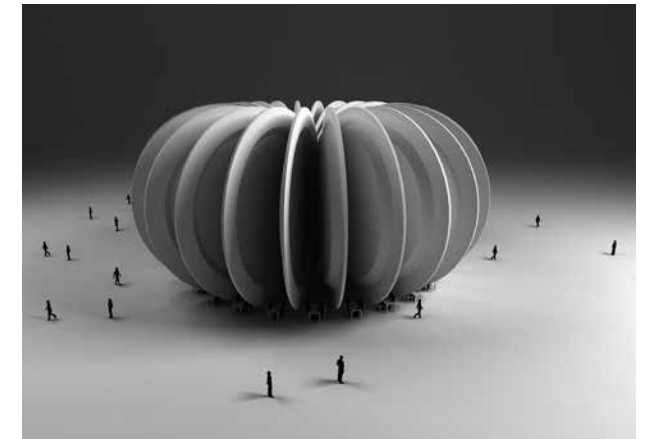
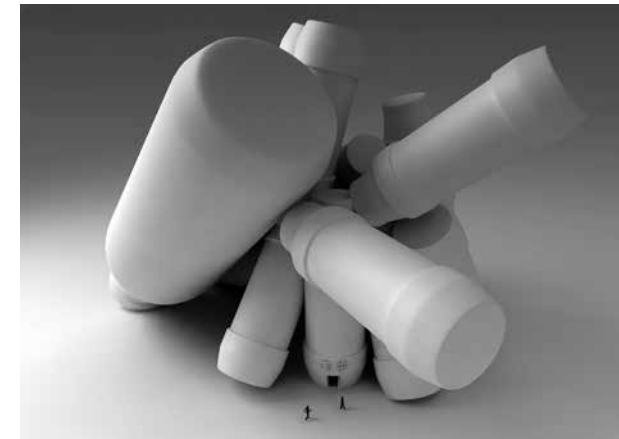
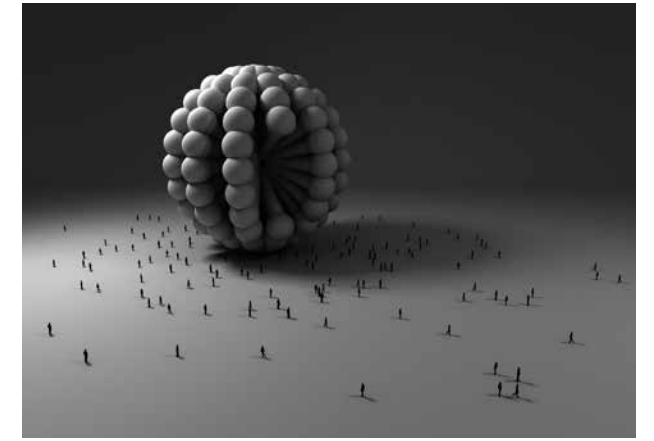
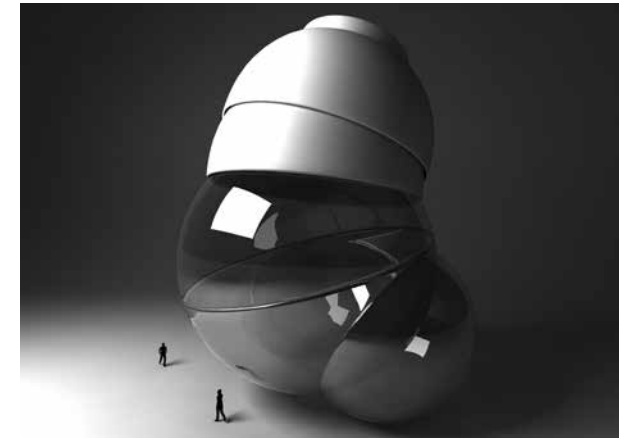
This project is a collection of architectural models that reflect the social strategy of China. Models and drawings in a ironic, apocalyptic way. Framis explores the relation between urban space and the radical impact of this economical development.

### AABAR, 2007

AABar is an uncommon bar without alcoholic drinks, for those who were capable of comeback to daily life. Instead of alcohol people can find: meetings with serenity, a gather point, a place to talk to each other and not to a bottle. They will find a bar for fearless.

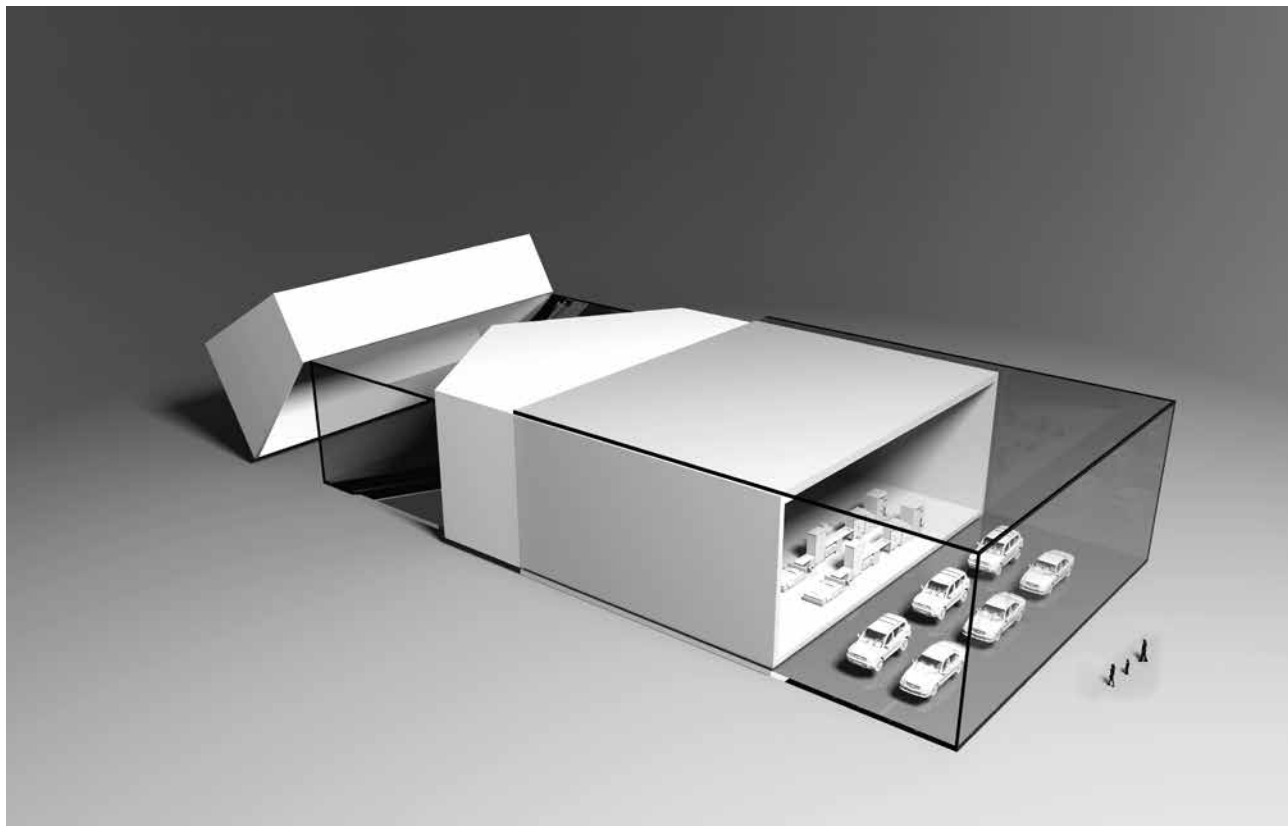
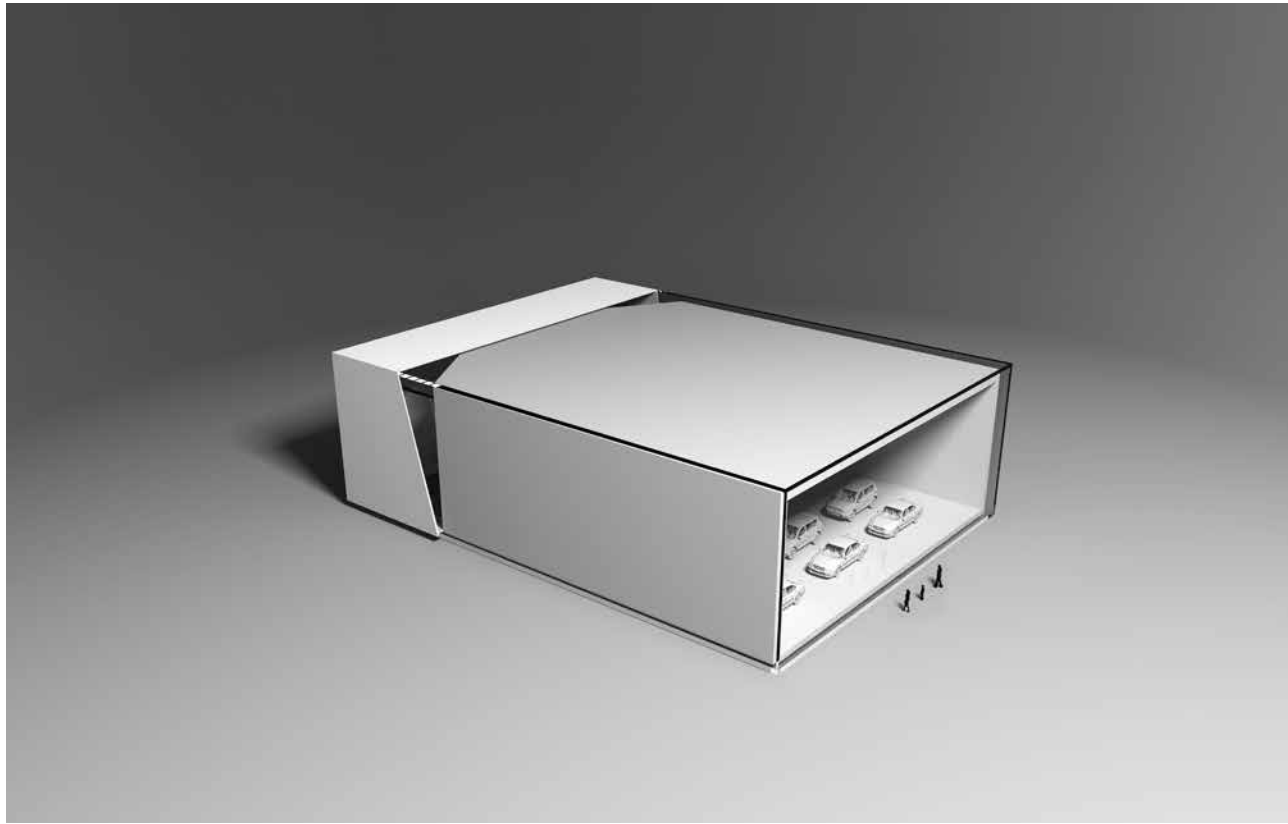
### FAKE PAVILION, 2007

- Fake life
- Fake bags
- Fake style
- Fake friends
- Fake love
- Fake future
- Fake worker
- Fake house
- Fake fuck
- Fake true
- Fake politic
- Fake leather
- Fake beer
- Fake furniture
- Fake father
- Fake letter
- Fake milk
- Fake fake

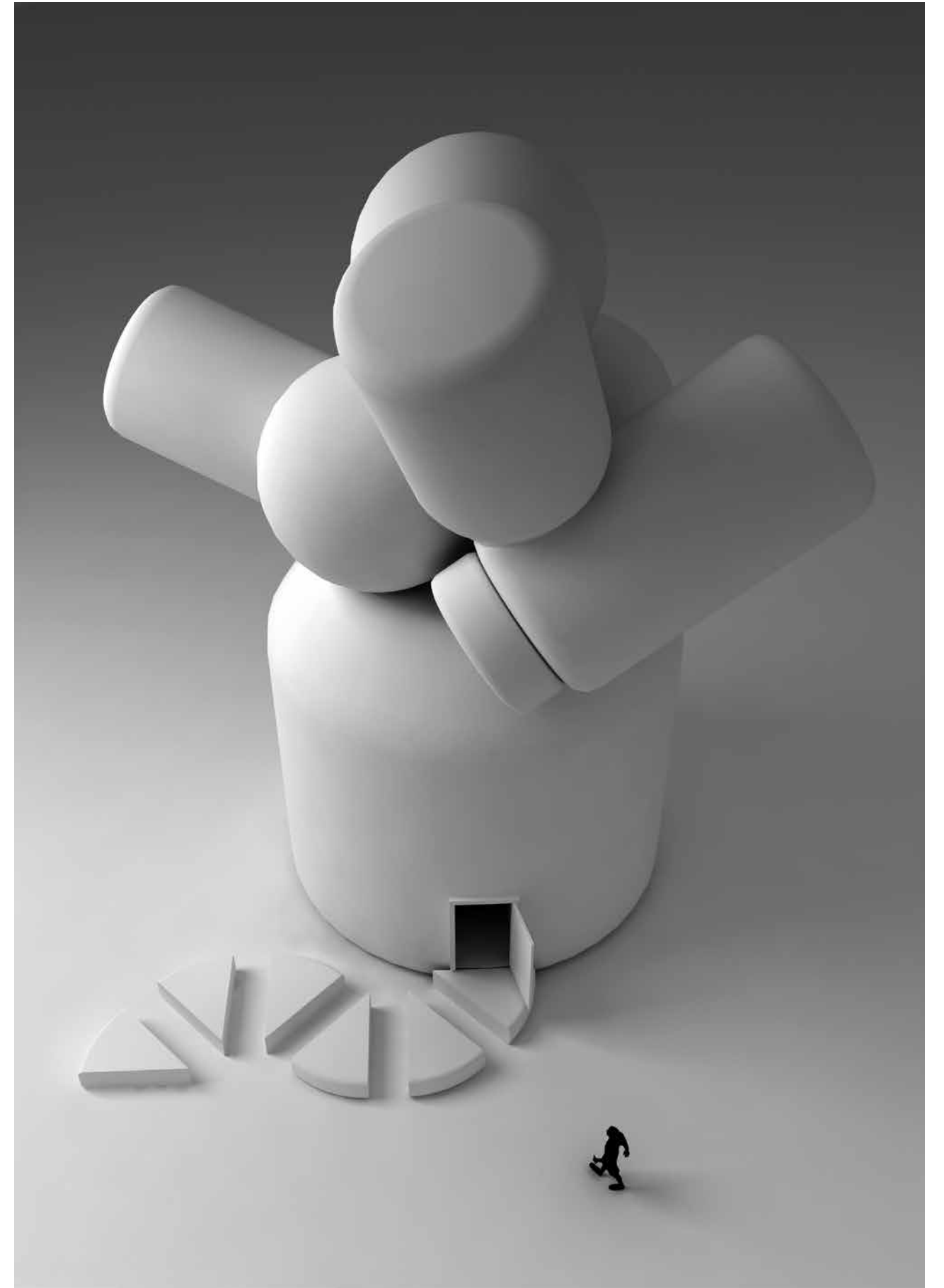


**Censured Room I** — Drawing 3D — 210 x 297 mm  
**Clarity** — Drawing 3D — 210 x 297 mm  
**Something Is Wrong** — Drawing 3D — 210 x 297 mm  
**AABar** — Drawing 3D — 297 x 420 mm

**Microphone Square** — Drawing 3D — 840 x 1188 mm  
**Lost In Translation** — Drawing 3D — 840 x 1188 mm  
**Brothers and Sisters** — Drawing 3D — 840 x 1188 mm  
**Everybody** — Drawing 3D — 840 x 1188 mm



Marlboro House — Drawing 3D — 297 x 420 mm



Bloody Weekend — Drawing 3D — 297 x 210 mm



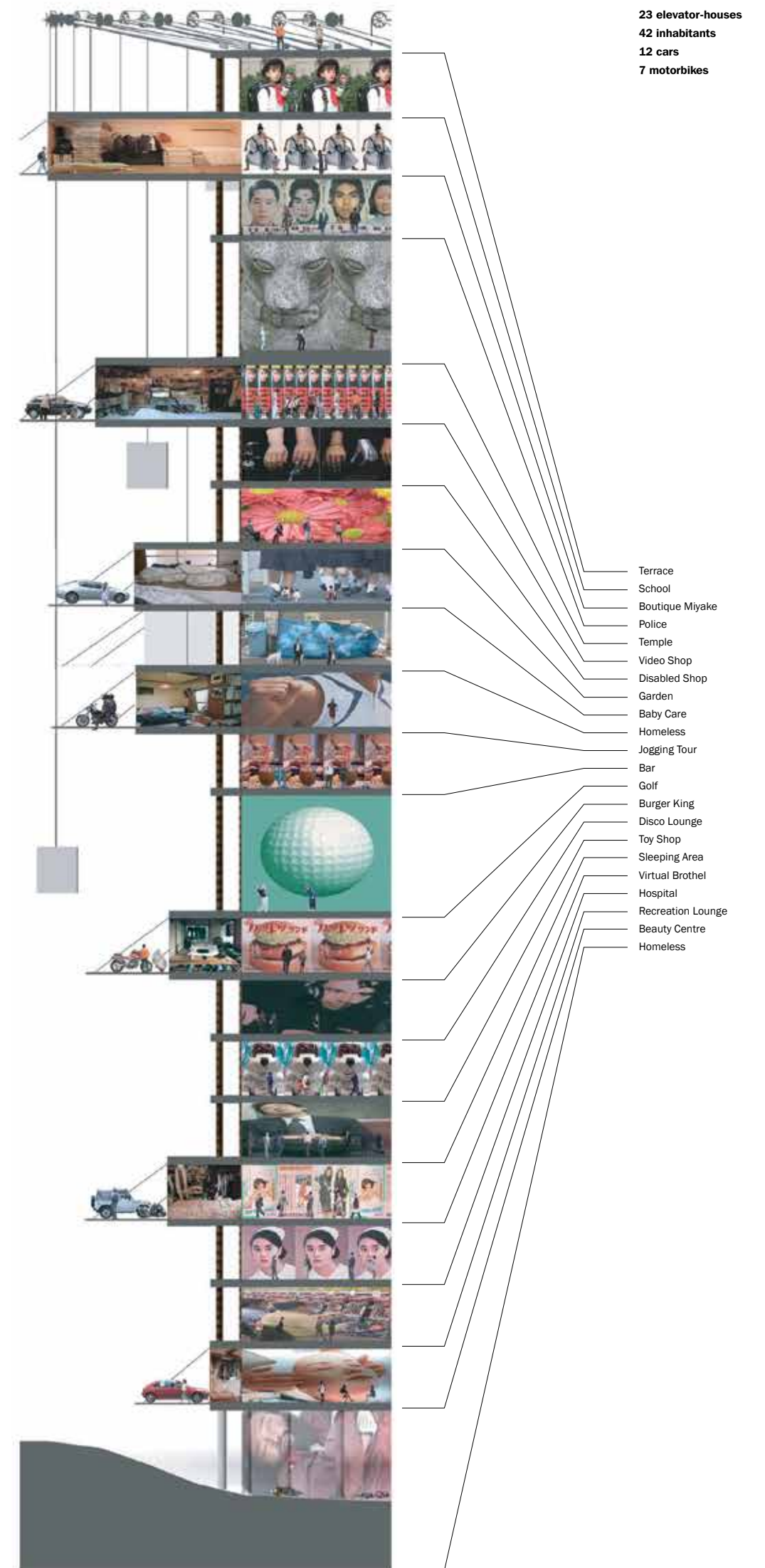
# MIYAKE HOUSE 2000

## PHOTO DRAWING



This project represented living in a shopping mall with 23 'elevator-flats'. We no longer move; the house moves instead. We can change where we want to 'stop off' at any time. Living in a shopping mall is a critique of today's society, where we can be dropped off anywhere to consume. Wherever architecture envelops our desires we no longer have any contact with our neighbours or nature. It's all a scenography of our dependency.

We can drop in at 22 different levels: cemetery, school, restaurant, gym, beauty centre, swimming pool, churches, temples and so on.



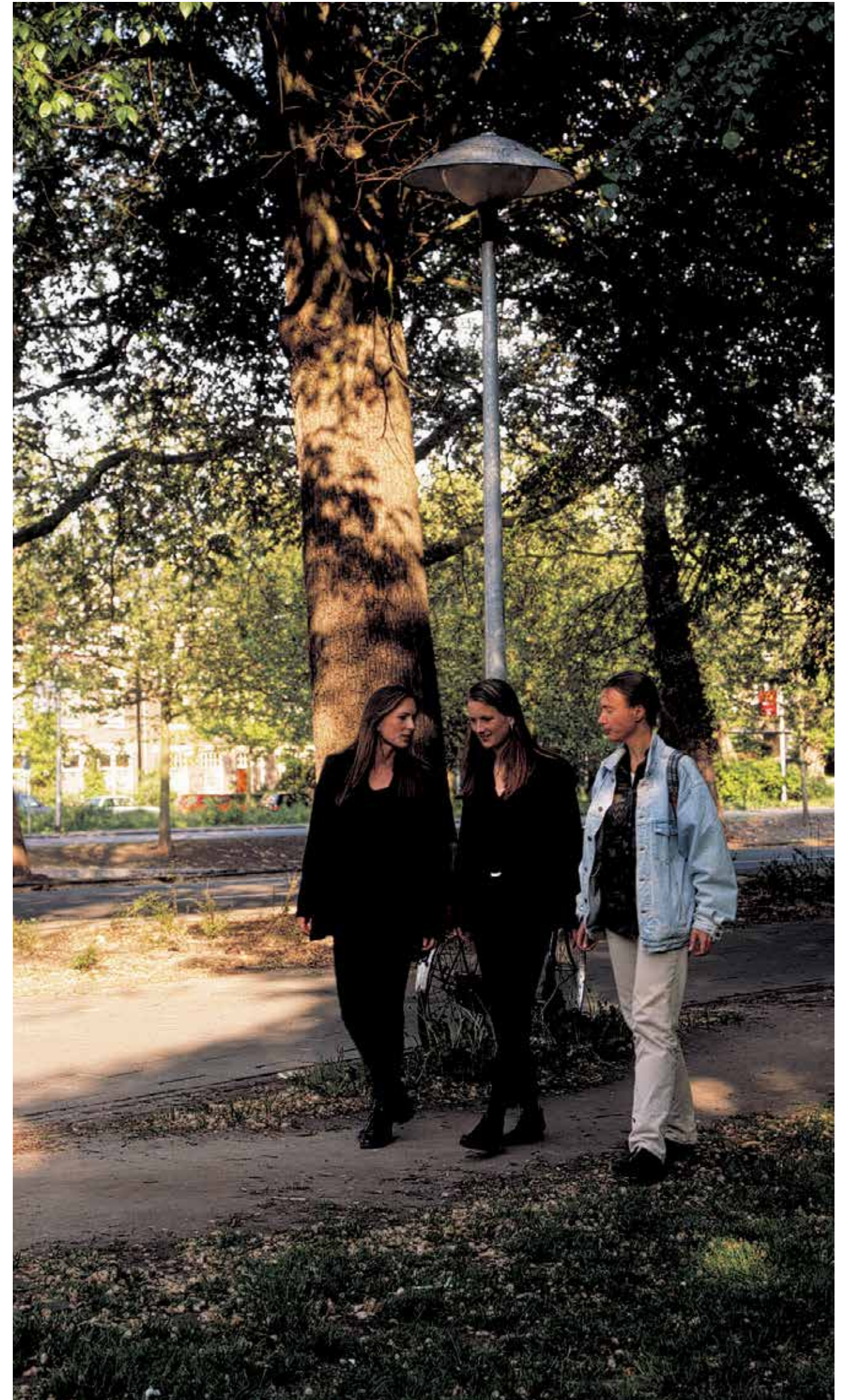


# COMPAGNIE DE COMPAGNIE 1996

## PERFORMANCE

This project was set up exclusively for the Hoog Catherijne shopping mall in Utrecht, which becomes deserted and very depressing after 6 p.m. This is when all the shops close, and the junkies and all the other people 'who don't want to go home' appear.

*Compagnie de Compagnie* was a stand measuring four metres square with 13 pairs of identical twins. They were placed there to be the companions of people wandering past the Hoog Catherijne at night. The members of the public always determined the route. This performance by 13 pairs of twins was a complement to the inhuman nocturnal architecture in which we have to live.







Compagnie de Compagnie — Performance at Hoog Catherijne, Utrecht, The Netherlands



# REMIX BUILDINGS 1999 — 2001

**METRO WITH CEMETERY**  
**CREMATORIUM WITH 24 H WARM SPACE**  
**BLOODSUSHIBANK**  
**KIDEA**  
**ANOREXIC CENTRE**  
**AUTOBAHN WITH MEMORIAL**  
**CINEMA WITH HOSPITAL**  
**CUPBOARD FOR THREE REFUGEES**  
**IMMUNITY SQUARE**  
**MINIBAR**  
**MOVING HOUSE FOR PARAPLEGICS**

The idea of coexisting structures arose from the observation that specific aspects of human life – illness, decay, death – seem to be ascribed to particular physical spaces which are kept separate from the everyday living space that surrounds us. Architecture as a means of organizing human relations in space and time is subject to a strong orthodoxy as to where certain functions are to be located in the urban landscape. A trendy restaurant would scarcely choose to settle next to a crematorium, let alone share the same building. While contemporary architecture does support the ideal of multifunctional structures – i.e. along the lines of the American mall offering a vast range of shopping and entertainment facilities ‘on the spot’ – it would never occur to a city planner to mingle spaces of life with spaces of degradation. Frequently located at the periphery of the city, it is as if the spaces of death and decay – cemeteries, hospitals, sanatoriums – were cast out of reach of our bodily conscience. Does architecture not physically achieve what consumer society tries to implement mentally, namely that death, and the idea of it, have no place in a society praising the virtues of youth, mobility and success? Or rather than no place at all, do we not assign well-defined, but always camouflaged and introvert topographies to old age, immobility and failure?

The idea of *Remix Buildings* was born of the necessity to imagine new territories for living. The photographs feature models in which Alicia Framis mixes architectural concepts with contradictory functions with the intention of re-introducing the notion of death into our daily lives. She combines existing structures, thereby creating new architectural meanings, re-allocating forgotten semiotic values to familiar places along the lines of the DJ technique of remixing. These models open up spaces embracing existence as a whole. Tools for imagination, they also hint at possible means of integrating invisible social groups and advocate a liberation from existing, unsatisfactory life structures. With surprising frankness, they disclose all disruptive elements of reality in its tough moments.

## METRO WITH CEMETERY 1999

Walking through the corridors of the Châtelet metro station in Paris, busy travellers halt to look at the names of recently deceased people. The urns are encased in a stylish wall alongside a larger-than-life Dior advertisement. Sleek aesthetics play an essential part in the articulation of this underground environment.



## CREMATORIUM WITH 24 H WARM SPACE 1999

The most prominent meeting place in Paris is warmed by heat conveyed from a crematorium. Couples, pickpockets, businesspeople, friends and tourists meet on the transparent platform. Beaubourg has now also become the city's only free warm space. Users were asked not to consume here.



## BLOODSUSHIBANK 2000

This *Remix Building* is meant to show that the act of giving blood could be part of a daily decision, like the one about where to go to have dinner. Nowadays giving blood is generally connected with a suspicious feeling of illness or with the risk of infection. This makes us forget about the nature of the precious act of giving life to some anonymous person.

*Bloodsushibank* is conceived as a cylindrical box, totally closed in itself. When the benches are moved backwards to open the cylinder, the central platform turns out to be rotating in a steady rhythm, clockwise. The smooth movement of a sushi bar is at the same time the smooth movement of a blood bank. Both the aesthetics and the asepticism of functions as different as donating blood and eating sushi seem to have something in common.





## KIDEA 2000 — 2001

Kidea is a hiding place for children only. In the middle is a smoking room where they can park their parents; a reversal of common situations like IKEA or McDonalds.

Kidea can function as a market for the children's own ideas and/or objects. They can sell their belongings, show their abilities, tricks, treasures, computer games and collections. They buy and exchange things without permission from their parents.



## ANOREXIC CENTRE 2000

The lightweight architecture of this institution is sensitive to its inmates' foremost desire. The centre for anorexic people brings the psychological state of the patients into the open and participates in their endeavour to detach themselves from the physical weight of their bodies.



## AUTOBAHN WITH MEMORIAL 1999

The apparent incongruity of a memorial inscribed with the lines of a motorway points to the inherent paradox of static names which the viewer can only decipher when standing still. Memorials and the inscriptions they bear are intrinsically linked to the notion of time, past and present, of the time we take to read about the end of someone else's time. When confronted with a moving subject in time and space they bridge the points of departure and arrival of the beholder's journey and the stranger's past existence. As they slow down, drivers experience themselves as travellers through their own lives.



## CINEMA WITH HOSPITAL 1999

Fiction touches reality in this building that combines the essence of a movie theatre and a clinic. The certainty of death, re-enacted in film and physically encountered in the emergency room, is inscribed in an ethereal space of both movement and immobility. Pain, illness and death are no longer screened; imagination and sensation join under one roof for a full experience of the human condition: we watch as we die, we die as we watch.





## CUPBOARD FOR THREE REFUGEES 1999

Designed to serve as a functional shelter for three refugees, this toy-like structure floats between the safe world of dolls and the dark spots of real life. The cupboard speaks of the living conditions of emigrants as well as the deliberate omissions in children's education.



## IMMUNITY SQUARE 2000

The shadow of the palace casts its authority on the Dam. The periphery of Amsterdam's central square marks a territory of diplomatic immunity. From now on, illegal immigrants may seek temporary asylum in the heart of the city. By order of the Queen, nobody who reaches this open embassy will be bothered by the authorities.



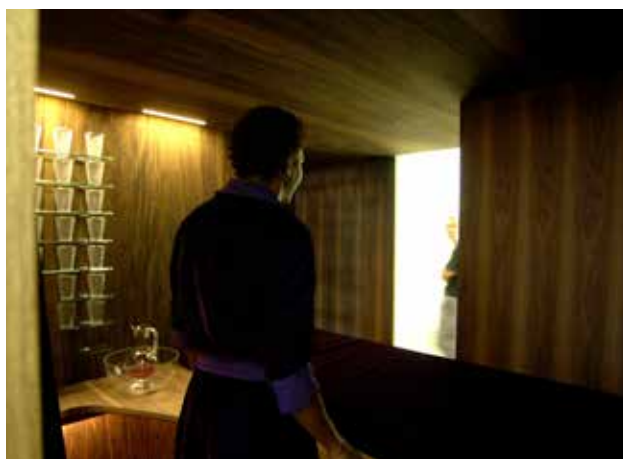


## MINIBAR 2000

Minibar is an elegant structure accessible to women only. Architecturally divided into three modules, one man takes care of the visitor's comfort.

The lower level is the fantasy room, for the voyeur. On the middle level women can enjoy the services of the so-called comforter. This comforter is there to provide a state of comfort, not only in a primarily physical sense, but in psychological as well as social senses too. He provides some basic needs like conversation, relaxation, sharing ideas, laughing...

On the upper terrace women are accomplices in an intimacy that is discreetly guarded. The friendly relationship between women normally takes place in small groups, consisting of no more than three people. Here the comforter serves an aphrodisiac cocktail, especially developed for Minibar by the Hexenbar in Zurich. For reasons of discretion, these clients can only see the comforter's hands.



## MOVING HOUSE FOR PARAPLEGICS 2000

Elevators, escalators, rotating restaurants: mobility in architecture is primarily implemented for the comfort of the physically able. This model focuses on the physical constraints of paraplegics and the psychological dismay these entail. It does not pretend to be a substitute for the irretrievable loss of movement, but visibility and movement reflect the sensations of the life outside and inside.



# THE SPACE AS A SUBJECT FOR THE IMAGINATION

## BART CASSIMAN

1 — *Arte Habitable*, Deurloosstraat 35, Amsterdam. From 1 September to 5 November 1995 (private period); from 5 November to 10 December 1995 (public period).

The *Arte Habitable* project was an experiment.<sup>1</sup> Four young artists – Alicia Framis, Lin de Mol, Michael Nitschke and Patricia Spoelder – spent a total of three and a half months living and working in an Amsterdam house. Their purpose was to explore the possibility of creating and displaying art in an everyday environment, or, in other words, to examine the feasibility of inhabiting an art project. The house at 35 Deurloosstraat gradually became a kind of platform, but without relinquishing all the experiences and connotations associated with domestic life. As the process of creation progressed, the place where they both lived and produced their art was gradually transformed into a different kind of habitat, geared to their personal desires. This allowed the foursome to specifically explore questions concerning boundaries and boundary situations: the boundary between inhabiting a space and art, between art and life, life and work, work and thought, thought and imagination, imagination and production, and so forth.

After just over two months the house was opened to the ‘outside world’. Framis, de Mol, Nitschke and Spoelder sent out personal invitations to friends, neighbours and appropriate parties from the art world, asking them to visit the experimental house where the foursome would be inhabiting their art for a further five weeks. This invitation marked the end of the first phase in the experimental project and the start of the public phase. ‘With this invitation the house and our daily life became public property,’ Alicia Framis explains. ‘Things changed for us at that point; we began to communicate more with each other because we had lost our private life. We asked ourselves if it was possible to make art from our daily life, and to present the results of our work in the place where it had been conceived. The house was a fragmented body which mingled memories from the residents and the house.’ It was Alicia Framis who outlined the contours of the *Arte Habitable* collaboration, setting interaction between the various artists as a prime objective. However, after a while it became clear that the three artists who had accepted Alicia Framis’s invitation needed to make some kind of personal statement within this joint project. On the principle that ‘the various parts strengthen the whole’, they produced a large number of individual works, alongside and in combination with explicit examples of interaction, such as Lin de Mol’s outside mirrors, Alicia Framis’s chambrettes, and the numerous actions and performances which were the fruit of this joint venture.

Nitschke performed two acts that differed greatly in nature and impact. He hung four yellow rain suits (symbolic of shelter) in the hall by the front door.

The artists put these suits on whenever they entered the building, as if they needed extra protection in the strange, bare, empty house. Wearing the suits also served as a metaphor for the foursome’s unity of purpose, reinforcing their sense of community and uniformity, exemplifying the individual ego subsumed in a group. The yellow suits were uniforms, but the need to wear these uniforms decreased as ‘the’ house was transformed into ‘their’ house. The suits had completely lost their purpose by the time the first phase reached completion: from then on they were left hanging on the hallstand, silent witnesses to the foursome’s joint endeavour. A symbol had become a relic. Nitschke’s second act was totally different in nature: he applied a continuous line of stickers on the walls and doors in the space that led to the other rooms. It would be hard to imagine a clearer demarcation of territory. So the only area in the house that could be called a room (as its only purpose was to separate or connect the other rooms) acquired an entirely individual countenance: a formless corridor gained a certain structure. The height at which the stickers were affixed (about 70cm above the floor) was somewhat surprising, as it suggested there was a child in the house, a child who had literally left a trail and taken possession of a space to which the adult residents were blind, a child who had transformed a non-place into a place.

Patricia Spoelder’s artistic acts were conducted in two extremely claustrophobic crawlspaces beneath the floor. The first of these was under the original ‘living room’, the second under the ‘hall’ and the room which was used as a ‘dining room’. Spoelder used both these spaces to create a kind of contemporary variation on the theme of shelter or hiding place. For as ‘chance’ would have it, a Jewish family had actually hidden in the house during the Second World War. In order to stress and authenticate the extremely tough living conditions, Spoelder projected slides of the interior of her own home onto the ‘walls’ of the crawlspace (which could hardly be designated walls, as they were only about 50cm high). This confronted the public with normal living conditions in a bleak, uncomfortable space that allowed little movement. Spoelder added an extra dimension to this statement by inviting visitors to accompany her down into the hiding place, where she played them a Yiddish song on her violin.

In the other crawlspace Spoelder created a hidden garden, a metaphor for the current oppression of nature, which is often forced into hiding in the urban context. But nature also plays on the totality of our senses in a way that is almost unique.

Spoelder’s garden provided striking evidence of this: although hidden from sight for a long period, the garden filled the house; like a discreet perfume, its scent pervaded a number of rooms with a kind of aura. Once visitors had descended the steps to the grass of the garden, they literally found themselves in a *bortus conclusus*, a motif with a distinct iconographic history. Thus both crawlspaces were successfully based upon historical fact: the first on the most dramatic event of our century, the second on an important iconographic theme from medieval art in general, and Flemish Primitives in particular. The effect achieved by such a contrast was equally remarkable.

Symbols for purity and virginity had been created in the same material context as excesses. This powerfully represented the coexistence, virtual or otherwise, of the extremes that we as a species are capable of; the creation of beauty and cruelty as two sides of the same coin was so acerbically portrayed that we can safely assume Spoelder knowingly foresaw the context and theme for a splendid metaphorical layer.

In addition to the mirrors on to? the front of the house, Lin de Mol concentrated her attention on the two rooms at the rear of the building, renaming them the Waiting Room and the Lovers Room. However, on the first day of the project, before these two rooms were set up, a kind of cleansing ritual was held. Lin de Mol took a 'comprehensive bath' in a cross between a large bucket and a tub, which was filled to the brim with water. Water cascaded over the edge of this vessel onto the floor and even flowed out of the room, through the partition wall between what would later be called the Lovers Room and the Waiting Room, producing an accidental connection between these two rooms. A tangible silence reigned in the Waiting Room. Once inside, visitors could choose a piece of polystyrene foam on which to rest and/or wait in various attitudes/poses. The silence was only broken by a mysterious sound, caused by drops of water splashing every few seconds on one of the three mirrors. The visitor to the Waiting Room could only be sure that the source of the dripping had to be within the wall or from the adjoining room. Waiting intensified the visitor's questioning as to why and wherefore, and generated a curiosity which could only be satisfied once they were admitted into the Lovers Room. Here, in the room of personal contact, Lin de Mol invited the visitor to lie on a bed with her under a mosquito net. This net consisted of two compartments so that artist and visitor were separated by a well-nigh non-existent membrane. A structure of plastic pipes containing running water was installed above the net. These pipes branched off to the walls of the room, to which sugar cones were affixed. The pipe to the left exited the room and produced the dripping in the Waiting Room. To the right the water dripped onto the sugar cones, and the sugared water was collected and offered to the guest. This intimate 'event', on the threshold of wonderment and eroticism, endowed the *Arte Habitable* project with a warm, serene aspect. Visitors were confronted with their own hesitance in a low-action situation. There was no element of voyeurism: they encountered themselves (in the Waiting Room) and then, in the presence of one of the hostesses (Lin de Mol), were confronted with themselves for a second time in a completely different way, through the mysterious, sensual atmosphere of the Lovers Room. This intimacy and the relationship established between the residents and the guest (often between one resident and one guest) was a common feature of the *Arte Habitable* project as a whole. Visitors were invited to eat or drink something in the room for Nourishment and talk about the project. Patricia Spoelder repeatedly played her Yiddish song to a single guest. Alicia Framis also withdrew to the Aseptic Room to present her *Homesick* performance to a single guest. Blindfolded and seated on a chair, she placed the visitor's hand on her throat and then sang a melancholy Catalan song which penetrated flesh and bone. Alicia Framis acted as a kind of director for the entire project. This was a natural role for her to assume, given that the project was the product of her personal artistic path, a path which is constantly guided by reflection on models for living. This artistic investigation, and the various conceptions it produces, transcends the grouping of classic architectonic typologies. For both palaeontologists and archaeologists, living in a specific space, in a dwelling, is a pre-eminent sign of civilization, the prime evidence that a form of social organization exists. And in the search for self the dwelling plays the role of an instrument. '*Sans, il serait un être dispersé*' ('Without [a dwelling], man would be a scattered being'), to quote Bachelard. Framis's artistic practice covers a field that begins with the world-renowned *Saint Jerome* by Antonello da Messina and ends with Absalon's *Cellules* and the work of Gregor Schneider. However, Framis's work also shows affinities with the visualized ideas developed around these works by Bruce Nauman, Mario Merz (the *Igloos*) and especially Luciano Fabro (*In Cubo*, 1966; *Concetto Spaziale – Tautologia*, 1967; *Lo Spirato*, 1968–78; *Concetto Spaziale d'après*

*Watteau*, 1971; *Habitat*, 1981) on the one hand, and West, Iglesias, Thomas Schütte (the *Studios* and the *Villas*) and Thierry De Cordier (*Villa pour une personne [devient maison aveugle avec système d'auto-nutrition]*, *Jardinière* and so on) on the other. All these examples demonstrate how, in related and yet totally different ways, artists have imagined space and visualized models which pertain to the issues and the relationship between the artist and the outside world.

Framis's artistic concerns also deal with withdrawal, accentuating the relationship with (and often the distance from) the (or some) outside world. They provide a contemporary commentary on *la condition humaine*, which is also timeless and constantly expressed in a different way. In a quest that aims to plot the boundary between life and thought, Framis endeavours almost silently to transform the house into a home: charting the position of the ego (the artist) and the interrelated social network with which it is randomly affiliated in myriad ways.

Framis based the *Arte Habitable* project on the concept of a community that has changed considerably over the past few decades – mainly through the rise in individualism. This meant that the model for a dwelling presented by modernism could no longer be employed: people living alone (celibates) are a relatively new phenomenon with considerable influence on the modality of living. During the course of the project four individuals lived together, or at least that was the intention. This situation created the usual tensions, which will be considered later. Framis focused her attention on the tension between privacy and community. She sought a model that allowed people to live together while retaining their own identity. This led her to construct three chambrettes made of polystyrene foam, cardboard and wood, which were suspended in the air and used as sleeping boxes. These three cubicles were, to quote Framis, 'a present-day interpretation of the need for people to be alone within a community, a theme that has been relevant throughout the history of architecture and art, but always takes new forms.'

Framis's action was far from self-evident, for she positioned the boxes in what she described as the Public Room. Originally the living room, this space retained its public function throughout the *Arte Habitable* project, but also served as a kind of dormitory above the public area. It took the dichotomy and the reconciliation between individual and public to the extreme. At the same time the potential for withdrawal in the house created a bizarre relationship with events that were happening outside the house, because of the specific form of the sleeping compartments. The size of a box's cross-section was determined by the surface area of the windows, which created an immediate connection with the outside world. During the residents' withdrawal it was possible for them to make contact with chance (or deliberate) passers-by or with people from the neighbourhood: they were visible to the 'outside' world while withdrawing from the 'inside world'.



This disrupted the experience of localization, with the Public Room also serving as a sleeping space. However, the act of sleeping did not make this room a bedroom; it remained a public room, thereby assailing the topological principle and disengaging the relationship between a specific room and its normal function. This occurred on various occasions during the *Arte Habitable* project. By the end of the project, Lin de Mol's sleeping cubicle had become a small aviary. This shift in localization, this change in use – in this case sleeping cubicle/sleeping cage to bird cage – was a particular characteristic of this project. The visitor was repeatedly confronted by this shift, which compelled him or her to adopt a permanent attitude of reflective viewing. The 'strange' localization and the inextricably associated de-localization of the Waiting Room, the Lovers Room and the secret garden could also be considered from this perspective. The word 'garden', for example, evokes an image. 'Garden' is a place and its essence is determined through that place. There is a medical connotation to a waiting room. These terms, which in nearly all circumstances refer to places (and their function) in a dwelling, were constantly questioned by the residents/artists, debated, undermined and adapted to their need to create and further their society. For architecture always exists in relation to human life and the needs of this life; unlike art, architecture cannot be based on a negation. Its relationship with reality is fundamentally different; it cannot avoid reality and requires a positive approach. Architecture seeks *commoditas* (satisfaction), a term with humane overtones which has implications that include and also transcend functionality, efficiency and perfection. For *commoditas* contains the words 'comfort' and 'to comfort'.

This disruption and de-localization was necessary in order to make the Deurloostraat house a liveable place for the four residents/artists. The everyday experience of space was also invested with metaphorical layers and meanings, for these changes and dysfunctions produce images which simultaneously described and explained. Obviously the artists who accepted Framis's invitation all embarked on this adventure with different expectations, so conflicts were inevitable. One of the invited artists (there were originally four) left the project after a while, partly on her own initiative, partly at the insistence of the others who did not agree with her ideas and contribution. For a while this affair cast a shadow over the project, as it put a heavy strain on the idealistic foundation of *Arte Habitable* from the very beginning. At the same time, however, this conflict situation was inherently associated with the set-up of *Arte Habitable*: it formed an inextricable part of the project. For how can an experiment be justified if there is no argument, contradiction, conflict and the like? The essential structure of an experiment requires problems to be identified and tackled. An experiment which lacks these features can scarcely be called an experiment. Everything, but everything, was debated during the first two months, and opinions were divided on everything. But once the debate was over the residents reached a consensus that was (more or less) acceptable to everyone. All 'disagreements' were resolved during the public phase of the project (from 5 November to 10 December). However, this does not mean they were glossed over; a number of them remained resolutely visible. For example, visitors could immediately see there were only three sleeping cubicles for the four residents. From the start Nitschke had been uncomfortable with the idea of sleeping in a personal cubicle, so he spent the night somewhere else. In retrospect this was a stroke of good fortune, as there were only three identical windows in the Public Room and these windows determined the dimensions of the cubicles. The *Arte Habitable* experiment was undoubtedly an adventure, for to live in the midst of something that can ultimately

be defined as an art project is no ordinary event. To reflect in a visualized form on living in a house, on the relationships between the residents, their mutual interaction and their relationships with 'outside' for a period of two and a half months, with the intention of subsequently opening the site where one has lived, worked and thought to the public – this is a highly ambitious and extremely complex undertaking. Besides giving form to a specific subject, the artists simultaneously lived and worked within their subject. This involved more than working *in situ*; the site was also their theme.

The approach to such a project is fundamentally different to the way in which a decision is taken to start a painting or create an object or installation. A self-evident observation, but all the more remarkable given that two of the artists who participated in *Arte Habitable* rose fully to the challenge presented by the project, despite making paintings (Patricia Spoelder) and objects (Michael Nitschke) in their normal artistic practice, which are disciplines that have absolutely nothing in common with the underlying principles of *Arte Habitable*. Their commitment undoubtedly points to the urge to work together with other artists to free themselves from social conventions, and the need to formulate fundamental questions concerning our identity in a manner unfamiliar to them.

This project relates to both perceptible reality and the art world in a manner designed to provoke questions. Framis wished to situate it in the world, where it could be seen and experienced as part of the world. Hence her repeated reference to architecture, for once it has been created architecture becomes ipso facto part of reality. Thus her propositions are more than propositions for they embrace the preconditions for potential existence. Projects of this kind are conducted in a double-conflict situation, vis-à-vis the operative art world and reality. For how should we approach *Arte Habitable*? As a fact? As an event? *Arte Habitable* offers fuel for a chain reaction of questions. Am I walking through a work of art? Am I walking through a project? Am I in a house? And so on.

The house in Deurloostraat became a house of imagination in which identification, opposition, projection, unrest, indefinable feelings of rejection and attraction, and questions of every kind, rose to the surface, asked and unasked. *Arte Habitable* successfully managed to impose images on the reality of living in a house, images which shook certain assumptions. The project became an imagined space in which the myth of inner life (the house) was opened up and expanded. *Arte Habitable* gave form to a new variety, enriching the species known as 'dwelling'.



# BILLBOARDHOUSE 2000 — 2009

## HOUSE

The *Billboardhouse* is an open-sided cube made out of three billboards. Inside it is divided into hard and soft areas, a layout that departs from the traditional separation of the house into kitchen, bathroom, living room and bedroom. We have continued to use the house this way throughout the centuries, but it is no longer appropriate for today's lifestyle.

In the end a house is not a container for domestic functions but a place where the body has the opportunity to rest: soft and pleasant and at the same time protected against bleakness and aggressors.

The idea of the *Billboardhouse* was inspired by a working period in Tokyo, where houses are so small that the domestic functions have been transferred outside the home. Eating, washing clothes, receiving friends, watching television and using the bathroom are done in the city. The house itself has been reduced to a place to relax and to store personal belongings. In Japan the woman has been liberated from her domestic tasks thanks to the fact that the houses have decreased to the minimum living space and many domestic functions have been transferred to the city, outside the home. The woman is liberated of all functional hierarchy. In Tokyo's Ueno Park the homeless use their shelter of blue plastic in the same way as the architect Isaka: their home is a place to return to, but not a place where privacy is shared with others.

The *Billboardhouse* costs nothing: companies pay for the structure of the house with their advertisements on the billboards. It is not only for the poor, but also for everyone who lives a modern life in which we have finally freed ourselves from the house as a machine of oppressed family commitments, thus transforming the city into appropriated domestic spaces. This means we no longer need to have dinner with the family (family can be a friend), but are able to choose with whom and where we dine.

This house provides the opportunity for people who either want to or need to live like this to have a free home. Social issues are no longer about poor or rich, but about a way of living.

The *BillboardThailandhouse* was specially designed for Thailand, so it is set high above the ground for the rainy seasons and needs only curtains instead of doors or windows. The house is part of a group of houses that are being made progressively for Land, a project in Thailand organized by Rirkrit Tiravanija.

*BillboardBarcelonahouse* was designed for a site near Barcelona's orbital motorway. It has two storeys to attract more attention and the billboard is illuminated to achieve 24-hour publicity.



**BillboardThailandhouse**  
House made of 3 billboards — 396 x 396 x 379 cm





BillboardThailandhouse — House made of 3 billboards — 396 x 396 x 379 cm

BillboardThailandhouse — House made of 3 billboards — 396 x 396 x 379 cm



# LA BOULE DES ENFANTS 2005

## HOTEL FOR CHILDREN

The Atomium is a symbol of the atom concept, because it represents a crystal molecule of metal. It was made in 1985, at a time when the belief in progress, science and modernity was immensely strong. Nowadays we know the project of modernity needs to be revised. The faith in progress has been tempered by slowly diminishing natural resources.

For the interior design of one of the Atomium's huge balls Framis wanted to preserve the optimism of the era when the Atomium was built, combining it with modern technologies and references to atoms and science, but in a manner that reflects the insights of the world in the 21st century.

She created *La boule des enfants*, a space for children where they can play, eat, have workshops and sleep in the large 'water molecules'. Water will be the gold of this century. Everything will be made out of special recycled materials. The idea was to upgrade the perception of recycled materials, by inventing combinations of high-quality materials, so that recycling will be considered classy and sophisticated.

The ball of the Atomium was divided into separate functions: water molecules, a floor for workshops/playground, a 'petit club sandwich' and sanitary facilities.

### RAIN MOLECULES

Fifteen H<sub>2</sub>O molecules hang from the ceiling, three metres above the floor. These water molecules are translucent with lights inside, serving as huge lamps while suspended.

The floor can then be used for workshops for children. At night the balls 'fall' from the sky, like raindrops. When they reach the floor they can be used as little shelters to sleep in. The space is transformed into a small city of water molecules.

### WORKSHOP/PLAYGROUND

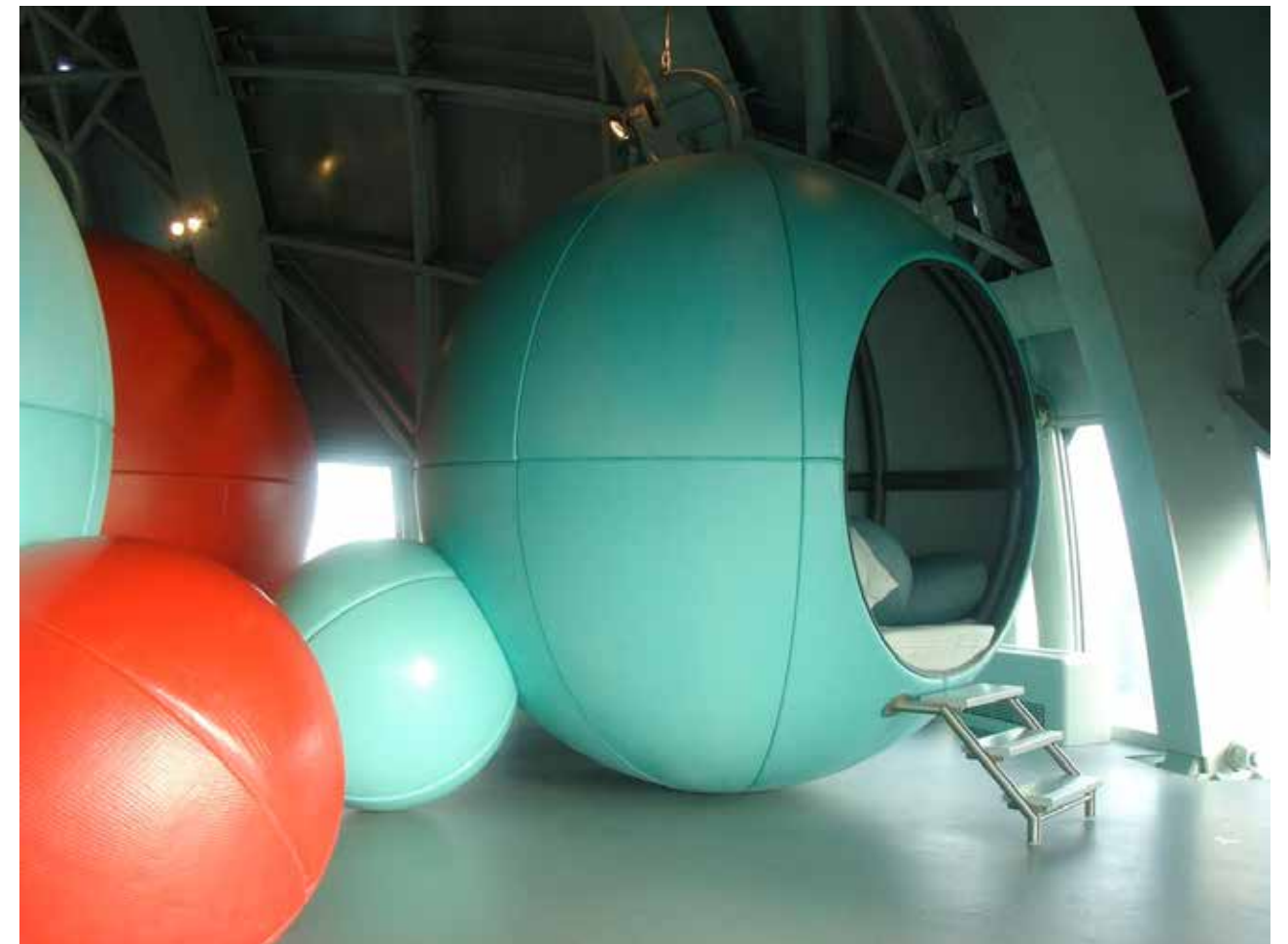
The floor is made of soft recycled material. During the day it is a large space with tables and chairs and objects to play with. Depending on the age of the children there are objects that can be accumulated like Russian dolls or can be used for other kinds of games. The place can be rearranged quickly.

### PETIT CLUB SANDWICH

This is something in between a kitchen and a bar for children. Bars are important as a place to be anonymous, to meet friends and relax. This venue is made with glossy recycled material, so it looks like an ultra-modern urban space. The teacher/adult stands behind the bar serving the food and drinks.







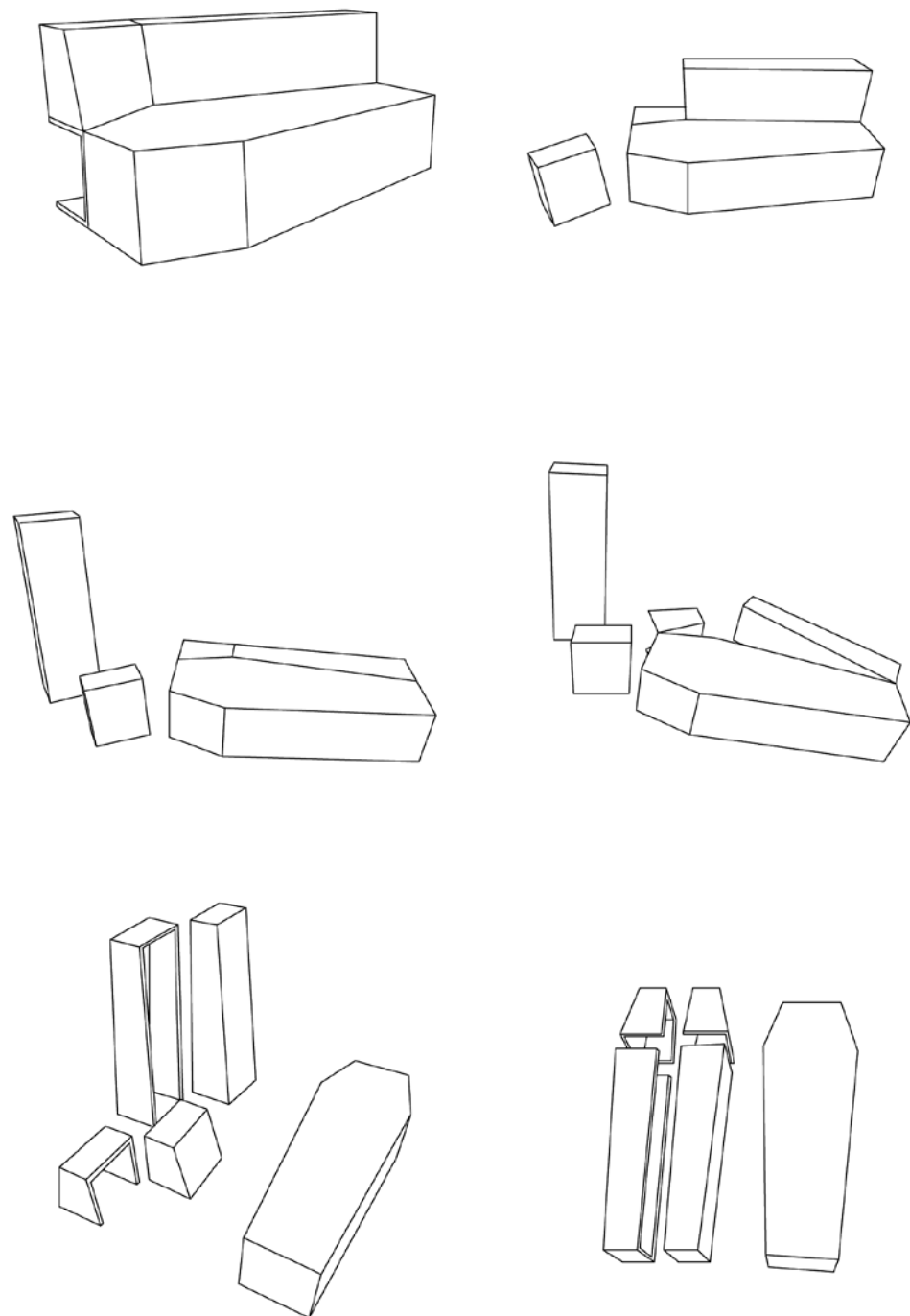
La Boule des Enfants — Hotel for children — Room for 30 children, petite club sandwich, toilets, play/workshop area

La Boule des Enfants — Hotel for children — Room for 30 children, petite club sandwich, toilets, play/workshop area



# ETERNAL RELATIONSHIP 2002

## REVERSIBLE ARCHITECTURE



*Eternal Relationship* is a modular piece of furniture which can be transformed from a sofa for two into two coffins, from sitting to lying, from life to death, as Rocío de la Villa

described it. It serves as a humorous commentary on the survival of romantic idealizations and the difficulties we have maintaining stable relationships in this day and age.

**Eternal Relationship** — Wooden coffins, pillows, shelf — 200 x 60 x 60 cm  
Collection Mercedes Vilardell

# PUBLIC PROJECTS AND EXPERIMENTAL DEMOS

## REIN WOLFS ON THE WORK OF ALICIA FRAMIS

There are many ways of approaching artworks, but some force you to adopt a new, unaccustomed way of 'receiving' them. Alicia Framis is an artist who produces such work, repeatedly requiring a different kind of perception.

With Alicia Framis you are inclined to refer to projects rather than artworks in the traditional sense. That makes her highly contemporary. In present-day society we also tend to refer to projects far more than in the past, and on the business scene 'project-based' operations have constituted an important mark of quality for some time now. Though highly 'modern', few of us know what they actually entail.

To my mind the work of Alicia Framis is highly experimental. The form she constantly pursues is as new as video and other so-called 'new' media once were. Video has long been accepted and has now become an almost traditional medium in the visual arts. However, Framis's formal syntax, which I am indeed inclined to describe as 'project-based', is still fairly new and in any event not widespread.

If you look for definitions of the word 'project' then it soon becomes clear that the criteria of 'goal', 'time' and 'organization' are crucial. In many project management courses a project is described as a well-organized, goal-oriented activity. Operations are structured in a so-called 'project organization', which is quite different from a regular 'line organization'. In art, you might describe the not-so-young medium of performance as a project-based medium. On the whole, young performance artists make deliberate use of these criteria.

In Alicia Framis's work the performative aspect is particularly important, yet her projects share little in common with the early years of performance art (especially of the 1960s). In that respect Framis and several other artists of her generation have quite a different interpretation of the 'time' and 'organization' criteria. Put simply, her works last far longer and involve far more people; earlier performance art was often a much more artist-focused activity of limited duration.

### LONELINESS IN THE CITY

The most impressive example of organization in Framis's oeuvre is, without a doubt, *Loneliness in the City*. She travelled to five very different European cities, looking each time for local possibilities and strategies with which to tackle a universal problem. For instance, in Helsinki, the mecca of mobile telephony, she examined that form of communication as a remedy for loneliness in the city, whereas Barcelona was dominated by the four different cultural groups living there, and in 'hip' Zurich the contemporary mixture of art, design, SMS-dating and party culture was a workshop theme.

In *Loneliness in the City* the project-based criteria were met in almost exemplary fashion. Together with her project manager Lilet Breddels, the artist set up a network of highly diverse contributors who were able to set off the artwork. One of the main initial decisions was to present the work as a travelling installation with an adaptable pavilion. Framis decided to ask the Dutch artist Dré Wapenaar to design a special tent, which could be set up and dismantled at various locations as a travelling pavilion and served as a headquarters and activities centre.

Many 'outsiders' – artists, architects, designers and the like – were expected to join in at each location, so spacious sleeping quarters were provided in the tent. In addition, it had two large 'projection eyes', making it possible to show a film programme on the spot. The marquee provided sufficient space for workshops, lectures, presentations, talk shows and small parties.

Although Framis, Breddels and Wapenaar initiated the enterprise, the project's actual organization only took shape as it progressed. For example, in each city a broad programme was devised in close collaboration with the relevant art institute, and a large network of active workshop participants, speakers, artists, performers, party organizers and other contributors was established.

Once the marquee had been erected and fitted out at a new venue, a dynamic programme unwound in the course of just over a week, involving people from many different disciplines, sometimes working together, sometimes independently, to develop strategies to combat urban loneliness. Architects and designers were regularly asked to contribute, because they are closely involved with the problems of urban public space. Workshops, spontaneous meetings and plenary sessions provided venues in which to work on the future, from a wide variety of viewpoints. Alicia Framis primarily assumed the role of initiator in this context, while Lilet Breddels and a project manager from the art institute in question steered the various processes. In the workshops participants worked on more or less concrete results, generally along non-hierarchical lines but within a strict timeframe and according to self-formulated primary and secondary objectives.

Apart from all the important intrinsic aspects, *Loneliness in the City* primarily showed how an artwork can evolve as a project outside museum space, over a longer period of time, with participation from a great many contributors and with a direct, socially relevant presentation. And that strikes me as not only being extremely new in the visual arts, but highly adventurous and very worthwhile as well.

### EXPERIENCE

Experience takes centre stage in Alicia Framis's work. However, that experience is mobilized in different ways. Sometimes an intuitive experience of installations requiring simple but imperative participation from the spectator will reveal a deeper significance. At other times a new 'truth' is discovered in a process of dialogue with other participants in a project, or a practical solution is found for a social problem. Framis is interested in individual as well as 'universal' drama. She thematizes both psychological and social processes, but always in a visual way.

In Alicia Framis's iconography, different visual disciplines are invariably fused into one. She not only uses the traditional visual syntax of art, or even mere conceptual formulas, but also and primarily wields elements from architecture and design in a professional way on behalf of and subordinate to her objectives. The project framework provided by Framis stimulates designers, architects, thinkers and sociologists, as well as other artists, to work together towards a shared result with a distinct 'Alicia Framis' signature.

In the various *Remix Buildings* in particular, contributors from various disciplines work towards an individual experience with a 'universal' expression. (I have deliberately put 'universal' in inverted commas, because that concept should always be seen as relative.) For me as a man, it is impossible to experience the *Minibar* installation in all its intensity, 'layeredness' and significance – given that it is 'for women only', as clearly indicated by the work – but I can appreciate that it contains a great many subtle moments of experience.

This cube-shaped mini-architecture made from special, high-grade wood has the aura of a Mediterranean, Roman Catholic confessional, guaranteeing the discretion and the intimacy necessary for the experience. When a woman enters she will largely be hidden from the view of onlookers. Once inside she will become aware of another person's presence and he, in turn, will be discreetly invisible to her. That person is a man in a beautiful purple dressing gown who acts as a 'comforter'. He is well versed in the art of pleasuring the female visitor. He might massage her lightly, start a conversation with her or pamper her with an aphrodisiacal drink.

With the *Minibar* installation, Alicia Framis stages a performance in which visitors as well as comforters are performers. As was the case with *Dreamkeeper*, a work she devised in 1997, this installation allows for a very intimate experience. The difference is that in *Dreamkeeper* the artist was a performer herself, because she spent the night with strangers 'to order' and 'take charge' of their dreams, as it were.

*Minibar* and other *Remix Buildings* are not only performances but installations as well. They are small pieces of architecture with a highly evocative, visual appeal. So they can be perceived and assessed directly as art objects, without having to be performed every time. The viewer's imagination enables him or her simply to picture what would happen if he or she were actually to enter the installation and 'use' it as the artist intended. And the individual experience of the actual 'user' – and, accordingly, the performer – acquires a 'universal' dimension because of the explicitly moral, religious, hedonistic and historical dimensions that a work like *Minibar* clearly exhibits and enables the user to understand. Understand intuitively, because, if I am correct, the sense of pampering by the comforter triggers an almost intuitive experience. The simple act of 'doing' and 'undergoing' makes it clear what this art is all about.

#### DEMONSTRATION

Another performatively organized work is *anti\_dog*. However, it has a more political dimension than the foregoing installations. Here Framis uses other disciplines, particularly fashion design, in an attempt to address social problems in a manner even more specific than in other projects.

Alicia Framis's work often has a political side, but it would be incorrect to describe it as truly political art. It is too metaphorical in character for that, too visual and not without ambivalence. In *anti\_dog* the artist stimulates forms of political activism. The concomitant performances resemble political demonstrations, are even a kind of demonstration themselves.

The motive for *anti\_dog* was political too. When Framis was living in Berlin she heard about a neighbourhood where extreme right-wing residents were setting aggressive dogs on black women. *anti\_dog* is an indictment of such practices. It is a self-assured protest by dark-skinned women against anti-foreigner and anti-female practices. The artist, aided by fashion designers, presents a clothing line made from fabric that is resistant to fire, bullets and aggressive dogs.

In the performances making up the work, dark-skinned models confidently show the garments with assurance. *anti\_dog* was staged in various European cities, consistently presented in the form of politically motivated demonstrations. In terms of organizational structure and the temporal dimension it is a project as ambitious as *Loneliness in the City*, but in *anti\_dog* the political aspect is far more pronounced.

#### CONCLUSION

Alicia Framis uses a great many architectural elements to construct various spaces in a highly contemporary way. It becomes increasingly apparent that these are elements of one and the same building: her early works constantly anticipate her later enterprises. In addition, everything is interrelated, albeit different in appearance and organization. Starting with *Walking Monument*, a performance that Framis enacted in Amsterdam (for which she received the prestigious Prix de Rome in 1997), this oeuvre has evolved like a 'living monument' – it is now a collection of monuments that always have a certain public dimension.

Framis's work is committed. If you try to get to the bottom of it, you will usually have to participate in some way. And with that implicit participation you will soon, and almost automatically, demonstrate your solidarity with her work. Your action, your participation with the artist as a performer, means you become committed very intuitively, very much as a matter of course, with Alicia Framis's projects.

# ROOM TO FORGET 2012

## FORBIDDEN ROOMS

*Room to Forget* is a glass-encased room for the Maison de la Paix (House of Peace), intended to erase the memories of soldiers and victims of war. The powder inside is metyrapone, a drug that erases specific memories. The room is a cube measuring 3.20 metres, and the best location for it would be in the lobby.

The Maison de la Paix campus is home to the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies that focuses on past, present and future conflict zones. Conflicts have a human side that we cannot forget. The *Room to Forget* will erase the psychological consequences of conflicts.

‘These conflicts damage people’s lives because of the increasing fears, bad sleep, traumas, isolation and shame,’ Alicia Framis explains. ‘With this spatial installation I not only want to address the consequences of economics, war situations and conflicts, but also the psychological damage of these conflicts.’

The *Room to Forget* has a sequel that consists of a performance called *Erasing Memories*. This is an ongoing work that will involve me visiting places where massacres have taken place throughout history. At these spots I want to scatter the metyrapone and ask the inhabitants of the place in question to help me with this action. I see it as a collective performance and it will therefore become more of a living sculpture.

‘The *Room to Forget* exists by itself without this performance, but I think the performance brings the work to life and in a way the work will then exist beyond the building and around the world, connecting the Maison de la Paix building in Geneva with the whole world.’



**Room to Forget** — Glass and Metyrapone — 200 x 200 x 200 cm



# SCREAMING ROOM 2012

## FORBIDDEN ROOMS

The *Screaming Room* is an installation designed for people to enter and scream. Inside the cone-shaped room there is an isolated space where a microphone is installed and visitors can record a scream by pressing a red button. Specially designed software transforms the scream into a unique 3D object using a 3D printer installed next to the room.

The form of the objects depends on the type of scream: the pitch, the tone, the duration and so on.

There are times in life when things become blurry and confusion takes hold of us. We get angry and upset, which causes our circulating energy to get stuck and can degenerate into frustration or even rage. When the despair, hate, conflict, guilt or shame has enveloped us we must try to do something with the emotions. In those moments we just want to hit someone, hide in a closet or simply scream. When this happens our bodies are asking us to free that energy, to transform it, to make something worthy with the energy. A scream is energy that does not disappear; it is transformed by releasing the blockage.

Yet most of the time we have no shelter to liberate our emotions and a screaming room therefore makes a lot of sense.

The *Screaming Room* installation is designed as an experience but it also represents a circular transformation process. Part of the installation is a pile of leftover potato sacks that were used to cover the cone-shaped room. There is also a table that displays the 3D objects created by the 3D printer. The material the printer uses to manufacture the objects is Bio-Degradable Plastic (PLA) produced from potatoes.







**Screaming Room** — Interactive installation with 3D printer, printing biodegradable plastic cups — Photographer: Peter Cox

**Screaming Room** — Interactive installation with 3D printer, printing biodegradable plastic cups — Photographer: Peter Cox





**Screaming Room** — Interactive installation with 3D printer, printing biodegradable plastic cups  
Exhibition view at Rabo Kunstzone, Utrecht, The Netherlands — Photographer: Peter Cox



# EARTH PASSPORT 2010

## DOCUMENT



The *Moon Life* project speculates on the possibility that humans will live in space in the future. With this in mind, the project is a stimulus for artists, architects and designers to create futuristic, radical, political but humane concepts for an extreme lunar environment. The outcome

is presented in the Moon Life Concept Store, where the public can see, try and experience the products, prototypes, design plans and concepts. *Earth Passport* was designed by Alicia Framis for all earth citizens in order to travel to the moon.



# BLIND ARCHITECTURE 2009

## PERFORMANCE



Performance with eight girls. During this performance the girls made a secret exchange. Men received a pair of shoes of the brand Framis for men, designed by Alicia Framis, and in exchange they had to send in a floor plan of a forbidden secret place.

Some buildings or places are not accessible to everybody; only certain people are allowed to enter. For example, spaces where pornography is being filmed. We exchanged 17 pairs of shoes for 17 floor plans of secret places.

This project was created for Art Aids and is now part of the Han Nefkens collection.

Blind Architecture — Performance — Collection Han Nefkens



Blind Architecture — Performance — Collection Han Nefkens



Blind Architecture — Performance — Collection Han Nefkens

# ART AS A PACEMAKER

## OLE BOUMAN

Every society is founded on a shared sense of time. Not only a sense; the way in which time is actually shared is a prerequisite for bonding, intimacy, understanding, cohesion, integration and, therefore, society. Conversely, it is very difficult to create a society if everyone experiences time in their own way, uses their own personal calendar and subjective experience of the passing of time. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine a society if everyone is constantly shunning and avoiding everyone else, or carefully shortening communication by means of the new asynchronous media that are currently available. Yet that is what is happening all around us, even in our own lives. The increased individualization of experiences, timetables, consumption patterns, tailor-made training and so on makes it increasingly difficult to follow others closely and for a longer period. On the other hand it is easier to lead separate lives, to create a personal universe in one's own cocoon or communication capsule and keep chance encounters to a minimum. Self-determination of one's time is perhaps the highest form of personal autonomy, yet at the same time the lowest form of involvement. The more mental independence we have, the less is our empathy. Some will contest this description of contemporary Western social structure. They will point to the countless new possibilities for making contact with others or to the new social configurations springing up all around us. You also often hear the argument that in today's well-informed knowledge society we know more about others than ever before. All of this is true, but it does not invalidate the fact that we are simply saddled with one another less than in the age of journeys lasting for days, marriages being held together by God and the commandments, structured family care, military service or encounters with neighbours at the corner shop. Others will not so much contest as embrace the description with open arms, as a great achievement. In the eyes of those enthusiasts, individualism has at least led to less irritation from other people's odours, stupidity, churlishness, oddities, intergenerational conflicts and so on and so forth. Progress lies in the possibility of being alone. That, once more, is all too true, but does not invalidate the fact that as a result we do not get to know one another so well and are therefore less prepared to make allowances. Someone who is used to ignoring unpleasant persons in the private sphere will not be averse to doing the same in the social sphere.

In a spatial sense, humans can exhibit avoidance behaviour by designing an enclave or corridor society where, by a process of progressive privatization, the law of property applies and any intruders will be shot at. Similarly, in a temporal sense, a world is conceivable in which everyone compiles their own timetables, a made-to-measure diary with minimum risk of surprises or unwelcome interventions. And in such a world there is neither time nor space for community-forming. It is highly doubtful whether that type of development will turn out well, especially if polarizations of interests arise or an economic crisis develops. Then a lack of community might soon destroy the little that remains. So not only is real public space needed, but public time as well – a time in which we can meet others, a *chronomunitas*. In a temporal community time acquires greater significance thanks to shared experience. In particular it becomes fuller, more intense, acquires historical and future-oriented perspectives. A temporal community does not care about losing time, because it is always making time. So can this vision of a temporal community be given a real, new direction in the ongoing process of time fragmentation? Can time become public once more? Should a defender of public time be appointed, as is needed to defend the public domain? Can we conceive of social and cultural pacemakers to rid over-locked society of its time diseases? Might that fall to the government, of which we expect the most for public space? Should it also ensure that public time is saved? Or should art – the most non-governmental entity in our culture – play a role?

The example I should like to give is the subject of this book: the work of Alicia Framis. It is still a young body of work which seems to focus entirely on creating synchronicity and a shared narrative, thanks to the creation of a powerful social situation. It is a situation that you, together with other people present, will not quickly forget. In her work Framis sets the stage for a meeting, creates a framework in which you have no choice but to relate to the other person, provides the attributes which give the sharing of time an exhibitionistic character, in turn giving that sharing an official flavour, the experiencing of physical contact.

More than any inanimate object in purpose-built museum space, Framis's work is a succession of situations in which time has not been stopped; its very passing is palpable as a shared experience. Her work is a repertoire of synchronicity and thus of community. And the art factor is what is added to these situations and supplies the plausibility by which that community can present itself outside all the sobering facts of present-day privatization and individualization. Without drama there is not really anything to share in life. And should it not be art which adds that drama to our lives?

# SQUARE FOR DISAPPEARED PEOPLE 2007

## CONCEPT



Someone disappears from our neighbourhood every day. Sometimes they forget to come back to where they live, or they don't want to return home. Maybe they wanted to try something new or somebody decided that they weren't needed anymore. Or they could be exchanged for something else... Who knows? They have disappeared.

The *Square for Disappeared People* is a proposal in which the artist analyses the idea of the role of society in relation to missing persons. The work coexists with the notion of physical disappearance – whether it is someone's personal decision or they are forced, by death or any other event – and everyday activities that still form part of this society.

This art project was conceived for public space, ideally to be produced in a plaza of a big city, where 365 black chairs will be laid out. Each chair will be carved with a date corresponding to one day of the year (from January 1st to December 31st), as each one remembers the day on which an anonymous person disappeared somewhere in the world.

Square for Disappeared People — Drawing



# ONE NIGHT TENT 2002

## REVERSIBLE ARCHITECTURE



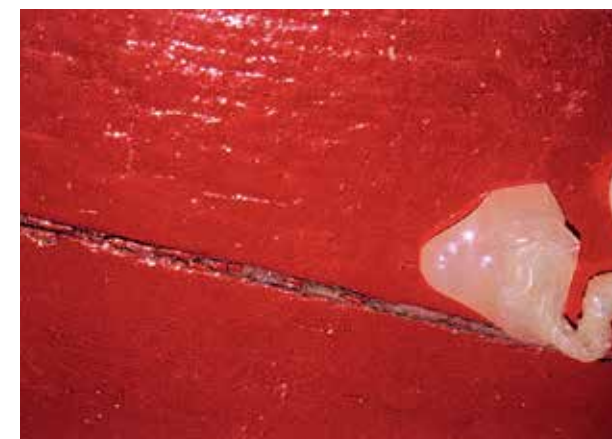
- 1 — Find the person who you want to have sex with.
- 2 — Put the man's shirt on the floor and close the buttons and zippers, turning it into a perfect square.
- 3 — Close the buttons and zippers of the woman's dress and create a dome.
- 4 — Attach the square floor to the dome with the zipper and buttons.
- 5 — Take the two sticks from the man's bag and insert them through the loops in the dome. Secure them on the metal pins at the corners of the square.
- 6 — Open the entrance zipper and enter the tent. Close the zipper and have sex. In tropical countries you can use the mosquito net.

We wish you a lot of fun with your one night tent. If unfortunately a problem does occur, please contact your distributor.



# FAILURE 2001

## PERFORMANCE



I prepared a house in Berlin for Mr Frohnmeier, and waited for him to come and live with me. At the agency they thought he was an existing man and put his name

on the door. After three months I decided to leave the house; it was waiting for us, empty, for a further eight months.

Failure — Model and 49 photographs — Collection Foundation NMAC





# FICTIONS OF EVERY KIND

## MANUEL SEGADE

*I feel that the balance between fiction and reality has changed significantly in the past decades. Increasingly their roles are reversed. We live in a world ruled by fictions of every kind – mass-merchandizing, advertising, politics conducted as a branch of advertising, the pre-empting of any original response to experience by the television screen. We live inside an enormous novel. It is now less and less necessary for the writer to invent the fictional content of his novel. The fiction is already there. The writer's task is to invent the reality.*

J.G. Ballard  
From the introduction to *Crash*

The act of creating a retrospective exhibition and thus converting one's past work into a depository of dead material, a fossilized residue of previous work like a series of objects presented to us for our contemplation and frozen by our admiration is one of the great ills of contemporary museology. In autumn 2010, Dia Beacon organized a retrospective of the conceptual artist Franz Erhard Walther under the title 'Work as Action'. His pieces, sculptures prepared for his performances, to be used by the public *en groupe*, were presented in such a way that the spectators were provided with no documentation about the origin of these works in the 1960s, but were instead offered elements of action complete with a precise set of rules for their use. This exhibition suggested the possibility of recycling the work, of handing it down to the generations that succeeded those who witnessed its initial production, to permit them to escape its museumified anachronism and to restore them to life with all the force of their impact in the field of the real.

Alicia Framis offers us a similar exercise with her exhibition, which is a summary of two decades of work: she has put her works in three separate rooms, at the disposal of a public whose task is to get involved, take responsibility and participate. In so doing she displays how right from the start her work has displayed a mentality that actively rebels against preconceptions about life, against worlds that are not designed in an *ad hoc* manner and against futurism as an 'ism'. It therefore advocates the options of a liveable present beyond that which is formatted by industry without imagination. The work of Alicia Framis is a catalogue of a personal revolution, one that is more public than political, and of an art that is by definition useful. And for this reason it answers to an emotional programme that links art with everyday life, beyond classical notions of purity, with the aim of transforming its conditions in the context of a contemporary avant-garde movement.

### DESIGNING HABITATS

Alicia Framis is a typical instance of a nomadic artist. She has lived in Barcelona, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin and Shanghai, reacting to the context of these cities and producing works that not only relate to living conditions there, but also to the forms of production available to her in each case. Her work adapts to these contexts, so it is no surprise that one of its parameters is the manufacture of potential habitats.

In 1995 she made the work *Arte Habitable* in Amsterdam. Prefiguring the obvious complexity of subsequent proposals, she offered a space to other artists to experiment and exhibit their work, with various results, as a reaction to the difficulty young artists encounter in finding studio space and getting a chance to show their work. In the same year she produced *Interior Architecture*, a work in progress in which the wax maquette of an architectural space was used as a site for depositing memories of everyday activities or plans for future functions, presented in the form of interviews with figures from the world of art or architecture. In both works the location was nothing more than a space to be claimed mentally – a site to fill with experiments or possible signs of life.

*Emergency Architecture* was a 12-metre slide laid down on the central stairway of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1996. It was a slide for adults and the term 'emergency' referred to its speeding-up of the process of exiting, or emerging, from the museum. It was a genuine artificial aid, which also contained a critique of an institution from the viewpoint of use value – a value that should be seen as essential in a public institution intended as such. Framis offered to donate it to the permanent collection, but the museum turned down her kind offer. Ten years later Carsten Höller carried out a similar action in the Turbine Hall at Tate Modern, but by then such proposals were already regarded as normal gestures in the repertory of such institutions.

With her slide, Alicia Framis tied the architectural gesture to the potential of performance. In her lunar habitat for an astronaut, which comprised a sphere two and a half metres in diameter, there were echoes of one of her favourite artists, Absalon, who invented tiny minimal dwellings, like inhabitable sculptures, which the spectator had access to and which were designed in proportion to the measurements of his own body. In this way she was able to channel utopian energy towards the possible. Framis's interest in living spaces and in manipulating the uses of institutional spaces accounts for her interest in performance as a methodological device that enabled her to go a step further in presenting her ideas.

### SHARING

The Otolith Group, an artist couple who base their work on the principles of sci-fi, ask in one of their works, 'Isn't every artificial landscape the diagram of a certain psychological state?' Alicia Framis's works that involve performance allude to this emotional form of filling everyday spaces that also occurs in Absalon's work.

For *Cinema Solo* (1996), Framis lived for a month in Villeneuve, a suburb of Grenoble, with a male mannequin as a way of overcoming her fear in a hostile environment. The emphasis in this work was on her female condition and on the way that the artificiality of her practice could be used to improve her own mode of living on the basis of self-representation. The photographic image *Blood Brothers*, produced in the same year, is an attempt to mix one's blood with that of another person, by making a cut in one's hand – this at the time when the AIDS epidemic was at its height. Her action was an appeal to draw attention to acts of radical intimacy and their contextual contamination; it was a way of diverting attention from the universality of the risk of being infected. Framis is an heir to the performance practices of the 1960s and '70s, although an action like this can be located more easily in the hegemonic political practices of the 2000s than in the context of its original realization.

In other performances Framis puts her personal stamp on the space itself. In 1997 she produced *Before your Name*, in which she used a group of naked adolescent girls to imitate a classical sculpture by Gustav Vigeland. The real girls displayed the authentic naturalness of the work and the genuine desire implicit in the classical myth of Pygmalion. In that year she also produced *Walking Monument*, a *castell* or human tower, a popular Catalan custom, on Dam Square in Amsterdam. The monument was transformed into an ephemeral idea, almost a legendary, unrecorded social memorial, an authentic statement about the need for monuments in the public, social space.

1 — From the video *Otolith 2*. The script was published in The Otolith Group, *A Long Time Between Suns*, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010, p. 31.



Perhaps the most important of her performances brings together these aspects of intimacy, the politics of the body and her concern with the public aspect of her work. In *Dreamkeeper* she provided a service, of 'keeping' the dreams of anyone who volunteered, watching over the client as he or she slept through the night. The work could only be carried out on the basis of the trust of the applicant. The relationship established was of an obligatory intimacy in which the audience was transformed into an effective user of the work of art.

#### COLLABORATION

The term 'relational aesthetics' was coined by the curator Nicolas Bourriaud in 1995 to refer to a series of artistic practices that pivot round the social relations which they stimulated. The art works were material condensations of communal moments. The methodology employed by Alicia Framis is based on relational principles of collaboration, which result in relational obligations with regard to their own audience.

Spaces like the premonitory *Contemplation Room*, a transparent cube that served as a smoking room at the Migros Museum in Zurich in 1998, are exceptional spaces, similar to the slide at the Stedelijk Museum. They are places where a prearranged group of assistants can become users in response to the practice or otherwise of their everyday habits within the space of the exhibition. Alicia Framis went to extremes to explore the artistic possibilities of providing other uses than the normal ones, with urban operations as their departure point. Proposals such as a cemetery in a metro station, a motorway that would also be a memorial to the dead, a cupboard as a living space for three refugees, a cinema containing a hospital... these were projects that were never realized and which led eventually to their opposite. Instead of transforming the uses of something already existing, she proposed a marquee in *Loneliness in the City*, like a container in which every site or reception centre was to be converted contextually into a space with a content relevant to their community. Starting with her first installation in Mönchengladbach in 1999, which consisted of a venue for holding debates about paradise and everyday life, this development climaxed in Barcelona's Raval quarter in 2000, which she organized as an arena for discussing cultural miscegenation. Once again Framis created spaces for encounters where invisible social sectors could emerge and be given a voice. Hence the title, loneliness in the city, with its value as an antidote.

Other relational spaces have to do with another of her maxims. Similar to every space constructed in a specific context and similar to every manufactured product in our society, art too cannot avoid responding to a specific public or community. *Kidea* was a space Framis created for children. It was a place where they could park their parents in a closed glass space where they were allowed to smoke, and where the children's space was hidden from the gaze of their family in a structure that could serve for tricks, games and encounters of every kind. The final stage in this work was *La boule des enfants*, an existential dwelling for children in one of the spheres of the Brussels Atomium, which she made in 2005. The notion of futurist progress underlying the Belgian monument was colonized on the basis of its spherical structure for the use of a micro-society as open-minded as that of children, who are always eager to try out different forms of living.

#### LIVING

Throughout the 2000s Alicia Framis continued to concentrate on forms of living, carrying out a large number of artistic projects in response to sectors overlooked by commerce and industry. *One Night Tent*, of 2002, consisted of a man's suit and a woman's dress which, when joined together, could be converted into a tent for sexual intercourse in the public arena. The *Billboardhouses* were developed between 2000 and 2009 as homes that would cost nothing to build, because their walls are covered with billboards to finance their construction. At the same time their interiors could be altered with a scene-shifting system operable with a single flick of the wrist, enabling activities of dwelling beyond those of conventional living.

During her stay in Shanghai, Framis proposed architectural prototypes suitable for living conditions in China – squares and buildings in the tradition of the utopian architecture of the renowned visionaries Étienne-Louis Boullée and Claude Nicolas Ledoux, where functions and forms are fused to convey a playful pop feeling or else a militant idealism reinforced by the whiteness of her models, which works as an ironic comment on the impossibility of individuality in a society where so much is regulated by the regime.

Once again pushing the limits of her public profile, Framis decided to live in New York for a month as an astronaut, in the work *Lost Astronaut*. Wearing a 1970s space suit from the former Soviet Union she carried out these actions using scripts written previously for characters she invited from the New York scene. In this future time, suspended by the interdisciplinary character of her work, Alicia Framis criticized the previous image of what would happen in the future, these preconceptions of the life to come which were based on 1950s science fiction concepts.

In the same year she embarked on the work *Moon Academy*. In partnership with the European Space Agency, she invited a series of MA students from the Netherlands to collaborate in inventing objects, pieces of architecture, art and fashion for future moon dwellers. It wasn't a case of a utopian manifesto, but of an immediate reality. The vehicle she exhibited was a modular 'concept store' that travelled through various places collecting contextual elements, designed in the regions she travelled through in order to enlarge the life possibilities of visitors to the moon.

In 2010, continuing her trend of combining fantasy and the real possibility that the world will acquire greater epistemological possibilities due to contemporary art, she made the sketches of *Departures*. In them the departure boards of an airport are drawn in pencil with, as flight destinations, the utopian cities and imaginary places of the world of literature and film that form a part of the collective imagination. It was a possible flight from the crisis in the European way of life in the direction of its own sources and a demonstration of how the imagination, even though precarious and erasable, can still, by a similar about-turn, have an impact on the consciousness of the citizens.

## PUBLIC

In 2001, Alicia Framis had carried out her *Wish Wall (Cities)* in various cities in the Netherlands – a wall in which she posted messages with wishes written in invisible ink. Then in 2004 she made *Monument of Donors* as a meeting place for donors of organs and their families in Barcelona, and in 2007 she produced the *Square for Disappeared People* in Shanghai, with as many empty chairs as there are days in the year, while for Huesca she decided to make a mailbox in which to send letters to the sky. In collaboration with the Agrupación Astronómica de Huesca, the society that is planning to build the planetary observatory at Walqa Technology Park, and its architect Ignacio Lacarte, Framis is opening another potential chapter for the interaction of the public with outer space – the possibility that, in the site laid out for viewing the ‘other’ that awaits us outside our atmosphere, there would be a tool for direct communication with that which is rather more close at hand.

In 2012 she proposed a project with the title *The Room to Forget*, which has not yet been realized. It would consist of a room in the form of a white cube full of the drug metyrapone, a chemical product that enables one to forget things, blocking overwhelming memories, while leaving more neutral ones to function normally. Its value is in curing victims of armed conflict or ex-combatants. While it has a plausible value for someone who has suffered severe trauma, the doubt remains whether anyone would want to forget. Don’t personal and collective dramas play some part in what one needs in order to live, so as to continue to remember that which should never be repeated?

*The Room to Forget* would be the opposite kind of space to the rhetoric of the type of monument that Western cities have exhibited in recent decades. Peter Eisenman’s Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, with its huge number of parallelepipeds which, like hyperbolic tombs, occupies an enormous public space transcending the human scale, proposes a rhetoric parallel to that of metyrapone. This monument is so overwhelming an element in the layout of the city that it ends up serving the function of the trauma; the monument remembers *on behalf of* its citizens, eliminating the effort required for the work of mourning and thus itself serving the function of forgetting. What Alicia Framis is suggesting with her room is that the moral site should be restored to the citizens, so that they have to decide whether they want to be confronted by the memory or prefer to eliminate part of their experience from their lives by an artificial route, with an incalculable effect on the structure of their psyches.

## POSSIBILITY

Throughout the period of modernism art has been a depository of collective fictions, a space of possibility for representing another possible space where any form of life might be realizable. The exhibition of Alicia Framis is laid out around three retrospective spaces, using pieces from her past production; at the same time, with her vocation as a relational artist and its realization in rooms with an active audience, they are a totally new presentation.

The first room, ‘Fitting Room for Demonstrations’, offers the entire cloakroom and accessories that the artist used for the political performances she produced at different places around the world at various times, either to support a cause or to highlight a social issue. Regardless of sex, the public will be able to don these suits of social combat, either as an exercise in transvestism or to assume an identity imbued with activism.

Understood in this way, almost as thematic pavilions, the narrative of the exhibition proceeds to the ‘Studio of Social Architecture’. Alicia Framis is an artist who, when it comes to confronting her practice, functions as a studio for problem-solving; like an architect, she resorts without hesitation to other disciplines and experts, to the degree required for solving a situation or for a design issue that is ambitious beyond her means. This workshop dimension is evident in this room, which is laid out like an architect’s studio, with maquettes, prototypes and plans for potential projects, designed in the course of Framis’s career to solve the social problems she came across in the various places she lived at different points in her life. In this instance, the users will be able to copy the plans and projects and take away the copies, to include these designs aimed at turning the imaginary into a new social architecture in their daily lives. This studio opens up a fissure in the real, given that anyone has the full right to make a reality of the utopian architecture of her proposals.

Finally, the ‘Wishing Walls’ section includes those works in which Framis’s subject matter is dreams and desires. The *Dreamkeeper* is given a new, intimate context with *Wishing Walls*, a work involving the public, and *Cartas al Cielo*, to be taken away and used later on by the audience. By means of new technologies, allowing for interaction and direct copies and the immediate taking possession of and consequent interiorization of every work, the public will have the right to incorporate Framis’s various fictions in their own lives, not just to create an archive or similar collection, restructuring the exhibition at will in what they decide to compile, but as life options. The exhibition serves as a retrospective device with deferred effects, in which every kind of fiction has possible consequences in the subjective realm, influencing the lives of those who are willing to become involved.



# LONELINESS IN THE CITY 1999 — 2000

**TRAVELLING PROJECT:  
CBK DORDRECHT;  
MUSEUM ABTEIBERG, MÖNCHENGLADBACH;  
MACBA, BARCELONA;  
KIASMA, HELSINKI;  
MIGROS MUSEUM, ZURICH.  
DONATED TO THE COLLECTION OF NMAC MONTENMEDIO, CÁDIZ**



*Loneliness in the City* is a long-term research project about loneliness in modern urban life. For a number of years this theme played an important role in the work of Alicia Framis and has been elaborated on in several different forms.

For *Loneliness in the City* Framis collaborated with the artist Dré Wapenaar to design a mobile platform as the a-topical place where artists, architects and the public could develop and exchange ideas. The oval-shaped pavilion or tent of approximately 12x9 metres contains five sleeping cabins for the participants; the rest of the tent is public space. The pavilion is a research laboratory where ideas are investigated and immediately tested in reality. At the same time it is a community space to meet and relax. An intensive programme of workshops, performances, special video programmes, music and interactive events was organized for each city, to tie in with local issues and participants.

From Mönchengladbach to Dordrecht, to Barcelona, Helsinki and Zurich, insight into the general causes and corners of loneliness gradually grew and alternative strategies for interaction between people in the city were devised.

The programme in Dordrecht concentrated on creating a-topical places – places that do not have a preconceived or predefined function or purpose. The workshops ended up focusing on conquering or claiming space. A public place can become private or intimate by giving it new functions or meanings; conversely, a formerly private space can become a public one.



Loneliness in the City — Barcelona, Spain — Installation views — Collection Foundation NMAC





Loneliness in the City — Barcelona, Spain — Installation views — Collection Foundation NMAC



# CONTEMPLATION ROOM 1998

## MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE



He is gone. I clean the house, throw away the remnants of his stay: the shaving cream, the shoelace ends, the ashtray. I buy a necklace, perfume, a haircut and bulbs. It's the domestic ritual to banish my thoughts of him. Everyone has such rituals, I suppose. What's more, any house contains the possibility of ritually erasing the traces of its inhabitants. The cleaning is a means of re-conquering space. The house doesn't store the memory in itself; it isn't tied to our past. Instead, we can use it to release ourselves from our former life.

Rules for sanitation are meant to keep us from degenerating. The greater the fear of dying, growing old or losing in any another way, the bigger our need to take control. Present laws against smoking are a vigorous effort to express our ability to shape our world; they reflect the longing for a ritualistic attempt to make our environment fresh. By banishing smokers from the public space we identify the danger in such a way that we can eliminate it.

The fashion of purifying air is reflected in architecture. New halls and lobbies appear between the office blocks and the streets. The smoking areas are dark, all marble with big ashtrays and no seats. These places are not fit to enjoy a cigarette and think, rest or talk; they are transit areas, designed to encourage workers to take shorter breaks. Buildings where nobody smokes take on an artificial smell, like in waiting rooms. Here the smokers mimic adolescents: longing for privacy they hang out in toilets, on the pavement, the fire escape staircase. These are the places of refuge. After moving out of the way, a smoker has no other way to rebel. As at school, smoking is an act of self-assertion as well as submission. Architects and designers take the place of the schoolteacher, who takes for granted that some pupils will be outcasts.

The exact position of your lips on a cigarette has been tested out in the tobacco industry. The duration of one cigarette has also been calculated. Law restricts where you can smoke and the moments you can light up.

(Smoke gets in your eyes)

You inhale, hold your breath and exhale. Smoking brings you into another state, emotionally and physically. The desire of that state is stronger than the fear of a shorter life, stronger than the fear of getting ill, or being the loser that being out there on the pavement suggests.

Contemplation Room — Glass, ash trays, 4 chairs — Installation view at Migros Museum, Zürich, Switzerland — Collection Migros Museum

# ARTE HABITABLE 1997

## LIVING TOGETHER

The *Arte Habitable* project was an experiment. Four young artists, Alicia Framis, Lin de Mol, Michael Nitschke and Patricia Spoelder, spent two and a half months living and working in an Amsterdam house. Their purpose was to explore the possibility of creating and displaying art in an everyday environment, in other words to examine the feasibility of inhabiting an (art) project. The house, at Deurloostraat 35, gradually became a kind of art platform, but without relinquishing all the experiences and connotations associated with domestic life. As the process of creation progressed, the place where they both lived and produced their art was simultaneously transformed into a different kind of habitat, geared to their own desires. This allowed the foursome to specifically explore questions concerning boundaries and boundary situations: the boundary between inhabiting a space and art, between art and life, life and work, work and thought, thought and imagination, imagination and production, and so forth. After two and a half months the house was opened to the 'outside world'.

It was Alicia Framis who outlined the contours of the *Arte Habitable* joint project, interaction between the various artists being a prime objective. However, after a while it became clear that the three artists who had accepted Alicia Framis's invitation needed to make some kind of personal statement within this joint project. On the principle that 'the various parts strengthen the whole', they produced a large number of individual works, alongside and in combination with explicit examples of interaction.



Arte Habitable — Videostills



# EMERGENCY ARCHITECTURE 1996

## MUSEUM ARCHITECTURE



A 12-metre aluminium slide in the main stairs of the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam created the opportunity to leave the museum as quickly as possible.

This action was Framis's reaction to the invitation to take part in 'Peiling 5 / Soundings 5', an exhibition that presented a survey of the best artists of the year.

For Framis the most important art happens outside on the streets; the museum is a safe, controlled place. Because life continues outside the museum, Framis offered all the visitors the opportunity to leave the museum as quickly as possible to reach life and art outside.

Emergency Architecture — 18 metres long stainless steel slide — Installation views at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands





Emergency Architecture — 18 metres long stainless steel slide — Installation views at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Emergency Architecture — 18 metres long stainless steel slide — Installation views at Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, The Netherlands



# FASHION AND DEMONSTRATIONS

# FASHION AND DEMONSTRATIONS

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# WALKING MONUMENT 1997

## PERFORMANCE

Dam Square, Amsterdam, 8 September 1997, 1:15 p.m. An ordinary scene: mostly tourists occupy the square. Business as usual. Except... there are no people sitting on the steps of the National Monument, as it has been temporarily removed for restoration. A huge scaffolding takes its place. Everything seems normal until 112 people join hands to create a circle. Then another 25 men climb on their shoulders. They form the foundations of a human tower. After several 'storeys', finally, at the apex, a little girl tops it with her hand up in the air. The tower, swaying alarmingly, reaches a final height of 11 metres and consists of 160 people. These 'castle-builders' from Spain, the *Castellers*, were honouring a tradition that dates back to 16th-century Tarragona.

The intention was to give Amsterdam a 'walking monument' as a replacement for the National Monument; the most controversial monument in Amsterdam. It became a particular bone of contention during the 1960s, when it was invaded by hordes of 'Dam sleepers': hippies regarded by the citizenry as 'unwashed, disease-spreading' vagrants. Nowadays it has acquired something of a sacred status. It plays a central role in Remembrance Day ceremonies. Architect J.J.P. Oud and sculptor J. Raedecker, who designed it as a memorial to those who died during the Second World War, wanted it to be accessible to the public, part of everyday urban life. They stressed it should not only deal with death, but primarily with life. Framis intended the *Walking Monument* in the spirit of Oud and Raedecker: as a living, breathing – and breathtaking – monument, a metaphor for life, a place of memory. The material of the monument is of the same substance as the viewers, who can directly communicate with the monument.

Dam Square, Amsterdam, 2 May 2003. Business as usual. Tourists on their way to Madame Tussaud's or just hanging out and feeding the pigeons. The National Monument has been painstakingly restored and is back in its proper place now. The steps at the base are being used as a meeting point and resting spot once again. Nothing special will happen at 1:15 p.m. The *Castellers* are in Spain and Alicia Framis is working on other projects. But does the *Walking Monument* still exist?

Yes, it does, and on two separate levels. It exists in the heads of all those people who happened to be there. Few tourists will ever have talked about the National Monument when they return home after their trip to Amsterdam, but some will have mentioned the *Walking Monument*. Probably neither as a monument nor as a work of art, but as an event to enjoy with enough impact to remember. Furthermore, it does exist in the discussion on the ephemeral position, as temporary art projects can be taken out of the traditional art context.



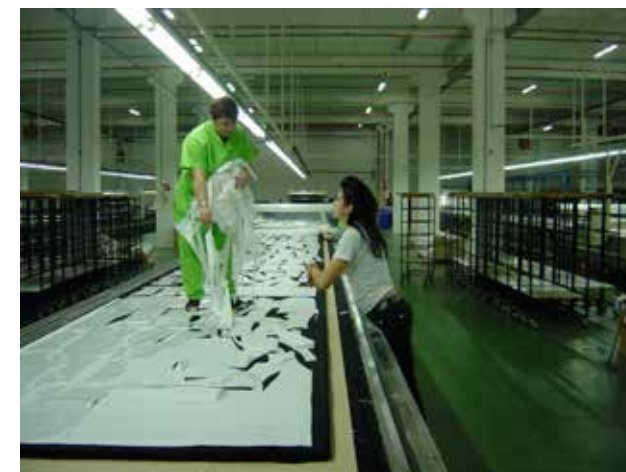


# SECRET STRIKE 2003 — 2006

## PERFORMANCE

In *Secret Strike* the camera moves around the immobile figures and slowly approaches them in open-ended sequences of shots, which favour the transition from one space to another. The content of all the films received the same hierarchical treatment, similar photography and similar treatment of detail. Moves are slow and silent, as if the normality of the scene could be altered. Even when the human activities have been paralysed, time has not stopped. And there is plenty of evidence for this, which Framis deliberately intensified in the film footage: a flickering light, a telephone ringing, an automatic door opening, the steam from a machine and so on.

This *Secret Strike* was filmed at the headquarters of the INDITEX clothing conglomerate, which owns fashion retailers such as Zara, Massimo Dutti, Bershka and Pull & Bear. We get to see a clear-cut model of a production system, a company where creative and intellectual work prevails, where ideas and personal networks are one of its main values. The physicality of the space inside this company building expresses the coexistence of different stereotypes and mentalities. We shot every department, the production space, the meeting places in between for the designers, directors and executives, and the retail stores. Produced by CGAC (Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea), Santiago de Compostela, Spain.



Secret Strike (Inditex) — Videostills









Secret Strike (Inditex) — Videostills

Secret Strike (Inditex) — Videostills





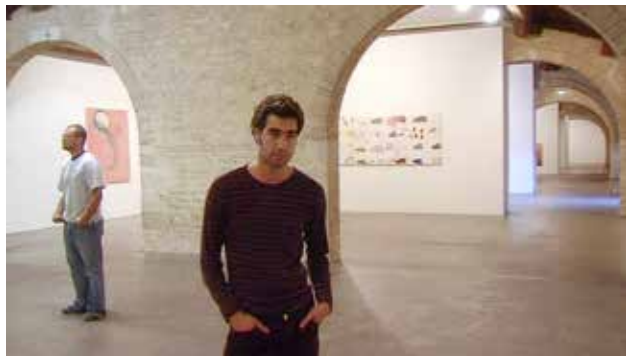




Secret Strike (Inditex) — Videostills

Secret Strike (Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam) — Videostills





Secret Strike (FRAC, Bordeaux, France) — Videostills

Secret Strike (Rabobank, Utrecht, The Netherlands) — Videostills





Secret Strike (Tate Modern, London) — Videostills

Secret Strike (Lleida, Spain) — Videostills



# PARA-MENTAL DIMENSION

## MANUEL OLVEIRA

First published in the exhibition catalogue *Alicia Framis. Secret Strike*, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, 2006.

The simple truth is that real problems don't have solutions. We are ineluctably bound to carry them through life. They are life itself, and in a way, we die because of them. But while it is true that the bigger a problem the more difficult it is to solve, so it is true that the bigger it is, the more fascinating and even indispensable it becomes to life, for problems endow life with a value, without which life would be much harder to appreciate. As with real problems, this contradiction has no solution – and neither does it seek one – for it is in the very fact of its existence that lies its essence, its *raison d'être*, like some kind of para-mental space in which conflicting or unsolvable experiences of reality are played out.

Reason demands a logocentric approach and solution to problems. Yet this kind of *tacit knowledge* accounts for little when it comes to recognising, sharing, and assimilating aspects, facets and/or contexts that do not fall inside this rational dimension that tends to govern our day-to-day living. Reality is composed of a number of dimensions, the more complex of which being those that offer no reassuringly clear categories to help us steer our way through specific experiences. One of the capacities of art is to show up this complexity, and indeed one of the characteristics of the art of Alicia Framis (Barcelona, 1967) is to recreate a kind of para-mental space from which to approach those dimensions that escape our grasp.

Alicia Framis has developed an aesthetic and political programme through a series of works and projects based on a bringing-up-to-date and adaptation of some of the cultural practices put forward in the 1970s. Actions, performances, and a variety of anti-hegemonic proposals dating from those years have opened up a very active pocket in contemporary art, having drunk from these sources an entire generation of artists who are responsible for defining the art scene today. In the case of Spain, Dora García, Eulàlia Valldosera, Begoña Muñoz and Lara Almarcegui are examples of artists who, like Alicia Framis, have anchored their practices in the more openly anti-conformist trends of the cultural action and thought of those irreplaceable and decisive years that have marked the short but intense course of contemporary art since then.

Indeed, all of the above-listed formed themselves as artists in Europe, notably in the Netherlands, a country which has become an incontestable reference as a focus for the research and production of contemporary culture. In these *spaces of gestation*, which have spawned manifestations that are now beginning to be visible but which have been in the making since the 1990s, a combination of references to public space, a highly particular sense of cultural co-responsibility, and a generous reception of artists from diverse backgrounds, has caused a flowering of subject matters associated with the body, action, interaction, relational formats, the merging of art into areas of social protest, and a pushing back of the limits of our Western cultural system and its categories.

This bringing-up-to-date of the performance, as instigated by the cited generation of artists, consists in an exploration of the limits of space and construction (Lara Almarcegui), the potentials in mass culture formats such as music (Begoña Muñoz), the reversibility of the conventional roles of public and institution (Dora García), and an enquiry into materiality (Eulàlia Valldosera) and communicability (Alicia Framis).

Indeed, through her work Framis examines the gaps in interpersonal communication and the fictions on which society bases communication with the assistance of certain technologies. Affective fictions, the illusion of communication, the ghost of loneliness, the pursuit of a human dimension to 21st-century city living... Framis's work addresses these themes in diverse media (performances – with or without graphic record – photography, video, installations, models and sculpture) in a way that expands our conventional notions of each medium.

This expansion is at the heart of Framis's endeavour to retrieve and update some of the 1980s' more anti-conformist and regenerative aesthetic practices, those that were left standing at the door of the art establishment of the day, but which nevertheless managed to pave the way for the invigorating revision which is yielding its fruits today. And one of these fruits is Alicia Framis, who is active internationally (Brussels, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Madrid and Venice) with ambitious projects such as the *anti\_dog* series; *Muebles para dos*, presented at the Galería Helga de Alvear in early 2003; *Remix Buildings*, a group of architectural models; and the series in currently production, *Secret Strike. Archivo de momentos*.

Almost all her projects draw from contemporary fictions about the construction of our public image, the conflicts behind co-habitation, the technologicalisation of communication and company, the fears and anxieties provoked by violence. In short, they deal with the ways we live and relate to one another, an aspect which is behind the artist's ongoing interest in architecture and the ways space is used as the backdrop of a relationship, either empowering it or debilitating it in some way.

In *anti\_dog*, the Barcelona-born artist used irony to denounce the violence suffered by a range of marginalised groups, particularly women, and addressed issues concerning integrity of the mind and body and the right to physical safety. In *Muebles para dos*, she used paradox to analyse interpersonal relationships in a powerless and isolated society, highlighting some of our most painful inadequacies in regard to communication, personal interaction, and commitment. In *Remix Buildings* she proposed architectural models designed for specific yet contradictory uses (as with *Apart Together. Japan House*, 2002, in the CGAC collection, in which the artist attempted to reconcile a couple's commitment to one another with the need for individual independence); and in her *Rain Molecules* for the Atomium in Brussels, she returned to the theme of how a space is used as a result of the users' personal subjectivity – in this case that of children, already explored in her installation for *Kidea*, at the EACC in Castellón, as part of the project *Micropolíticas* (2001).

This brief outline of Alicia Framis's career shows up one aspect of her creative process, which is to treat a subject serially. Typically, the basis of a work by Framis is a question or observation which she sets out in successive formulations. A series is meant to develop a thought, and it is in its development that lies the artist's treatment of the subject in hand. In the case of *Secret Strike - Inditex*, commissioned by the Auditorio de Galicia (dependent on the City Council of Santiago) as a piece of public art, her observation is confined to a specific context. Originally planned to take place in the cathedral, its location changed several times (at one point including the offices of the local newspaper, *El Correo Gallego*) before finally coming to fruition in the Inditex factory on the outskirts of Corunna.

A commission is a challenge, a new work that has to be put together consistently and coherently within the limits imposed by the nature of the piece – in this case a series. With *Secret Strike*, the departure point were reference points, themes, interests, and attitudes, that could be developed with each new part of the series in coherence with the choice of architecture and the form of audiovisual language used in the video.

To say that architecture and corporate entities (banks, museums, businesses) are the stages on which capitalism's processes of production and appreciation are played out is to imply that artworks arising in such places do so in the shadow of these buildings' socio-economic interests, thus countermining those of the ordinary public and the symbolic elements of social organization.

This explains the artist's search for organizational typologies that represent this reality, or trait of our society, as well as certain buildings which, by virtue of their connections with these companies, serve as perfect examples of the socio-economic reality in which we live. Hence the choice of Inditex in Sabón, Corunna's industrial estate. The factory, with its spacious and diverse workspaces, was immediately appealing to Framis, offering her exactly the kind of visual route she had in mind for the video. Equally appealing was the complexity of the relationships among its staff, with its wide range of workers, from top executives to designers, ironers, packers, lorry drivers, office workers and the receptionists on each floor, since all would contribute layers of richness to the resulting video.

Inditex is an indisputable giant of the fashion industry, and this is reflected in its premises, from the size and diversity of the buildings to the monumental style of its architecture. Its proportions, strictly linear, are deliberately exaggerated, and its ornamentation kept to a minimum. Clarity, measure and austerity combine with one another. Right-angle structures and diaphanous spaces are another important feature in these austere buildings that seem to aspire to express the corporation's might and its hegemonic position.

From the line of lorries waiting to be filled with goods and dispersed, the imposing storage spaces where vast amounts of a single item of clothing file past to be checked, ironed and packed, to the well-lit and roomy designer offices and model showrooms; everything helps to spell out the working conditions of a brand image built up on the values of efficiency and austerity, and the almost seductive power it wields on the workers – men and women alike – of this Galician fashion house, owner of such names as Zara, Kiddy's Class, Pull and Bear, Massimo Dutti, Bershka, Stradivarius, Oysho and Zara Home. These and other corporate buildings and offices, characteristic of Western democratic liberalism, ensure the submission and depersonalization of the individual by belittling him through the sheer monumentality of their architectures.

Thus forming the backbone of this new work by Alicia Framis is a visual journey around the areas devoted to work and relaxation, the access points and fixtures, the postures and attitudes of the different types of workers of Inditex. And it is in this visual journey – or tracking shot – that lie the elements of tension sought by Framis's seductive and hypnotic movement of the camera. The piece functions as a detonator of the viewer's conscience, raising questions about the nature of the building, its construction, and the people who work in it.

The design of the Inditex complex is the result of clearly defined ideas on production, both material and non-material. I would even venture to say that the nature of this company's production goes beyond the non-material, in that it also exemplifies and advertises. No architecture is arbitrary or innocent – least of all the Inditex complex, for it legitimizes, establishes and reproduces its own, peculiar vision and version of the world.

Architecture recreates an imaginative game in which our hopes and fears enter in debate and our ideas of what architecture is, or think it should be, are materialised. Beyond its eminently practical functions, architecture has therefore always betrayed ideological and representative aspects. A built space is capable not only of determining how it is used and producing or fomenting specific habits and behaviours, but it can also teach us something about reality.

By freezing a given moment in time, Alicia Framis presents to us a reality in a way that is attractive and not exempt of irony. We visit the premises, exploring, recording, *unravelling* them, and as we do so we become critical of professional architectural practice as we see the buildings' alleged function being turned inside out. Such actions carry a strongly political force in that they *tame* the aspects of the installations and their occupants. This process of deconstruction is brought into the light by the use of the tracking camera, that *freezes* people as it encounters them along the way. Despite the inaction – or perhaps because of it – the stillness of the place is disturbed.

This deconstruction highlights the buildings' more conventional guise as socializational structures, and the regulation of the spaces and stillness of its characters – which is real and not digitally generated – suggest that the nature of the space is ever-changing, transitory. Framis leaves it up to the viewer to interpret the fascinatingly portrayed scene, but deploys a subtle *mirroring effect* to make our viewing just a little uncomfortable, knowing that we, too, at times, are also actors in a similar scene. By inverting the processes of power-instituted subjectivization and imagining alternative ways of designing and occupying built spaces, we arrive at a new level of awareness which, as I say, causes us to feel slightly uncomfortable even despite the attractiveness of the sequence of images before us.

Architecture interests Alicia Framis insofar as it is the container designed to regulate relationships in a context as codified and precise as the workplace. She attempts to show how people relate to their day-to-day surroundings and routines: for example, how we greet the security guard at the door, relax over a coffee, engage in conversation or exchange opinions, etc. Thus through a critical and detached portrayal or *x-ray* of our everyday routines, she reflects a sort of *standard model* of a body in a space.

Apart from their own physical material, bodies are composed of a vast number of social norms that are subtly inscribed in a complex web of discourses covering aspects related to health, productiveness, comfort, and economy, and which, in the case of the Inditex building, are defined by the arrangement of volume, light, and space.

*Secret Strike - Inditex* is also clearly a study of the movements and behaviours of the work environment, not from an aesthetic point of view but rather in terms of efficiency and economy of means. The artist explores the movements the workers execute daily with regard to the layout of a place and to their fellow workers in a wider context of productivity.



The video that has resulted from three days of intense filming and weeks of post-production is also a reflection of our exhibitive culture in which life and all that constitutes it is permanently put on display. Just as we have a scopical drive, our cultural system in the West is geared at exhibiting what we are, and have, that means anything in the capitalist system. We exhibit ourselves through our clothes, our body language, and through signs and icons of varied natures and origins.

By obstructing the instruments of alienation, in *Secret Strike - Inditex*, Framis tries to draw our attention to this and question our own shows of visibility. Many of our habitual gestures and actions do not originate from within us, but are dictated by social norms and market forces, and by freezing them, Framis drives home the point with greater effectiveness. By holding up a mirror to them, she perverts the internal logic of these rituals, for in the *real actors* we see ourselves, or imagine ourselves in similar situations in our own working day.

The construction of individual and/or collective reality does not occur inside a social vacuum but in response to structural impositions of an already social or economic/productive nature. The construction of reality is not the product of an individual act but of a collective plan, even though no organised action has been taken. Framis's insistence on gestures and the freezing of them allows us to become familiar with the types of attitudes and gestures that make up a model of behaviour or even a model of personality.

A person's, or group of persons', tastes are what drive the choices they make (of decorations, clothes, properties, objects in general) and the habits and gestures they adopt in order to realise them. A person's taste is reflected in his choice of sports, foods, books, houses, pastimes; in his gestures and postures at work; her way of socialising, etc. While in Alicia Framis's video some of the *settings* and poses were clearly arranged by the artist, others were perhaps deliberately left to the real actors' to choose. But if someone were to choose a certain gesture or posture in the belief that this would mask her true mannerisms, which might be an embarrassment to her, she would not succeed in masking them, for the *masks* we choose often give away more than our *faces*.

Systems of perception, as systems of classification and codification that they are, are shaped by social conditioning and are therefore objective. Yet they serve a subjectivity drawn from many sources, containing diverse discursive and ideological references and *forces* (namely the spatial models) that mould our daily lives. All the practices and actions that take place in these spaces are objectively harmonised with one another through an unconscious, or conscious, process aimed at achieving this result.

The language of everyday gestures, as *Secret Strike - Inditex* shows, is precise and elaborate. Kinesis and proxemics, as disciplines concerned with the study of the body's gestures and movements in terms of communication, show that the codification of gestures is cultural, and that some of these gestures are governed by both intrapersonal and interpersonal management of situations and contexts. Arms crossed in front of the body denote a defensive attitude; restless hands and feet, the desire to escape, etc.

Gestures offer information about a person's personality, state of mind, level of stress, aggressiveness; even about certain aspects of his or her situation. A person's style and movements are reflect their cultural and professional baggage, age, sex, state of energy, mind, etc. In order for these gestures to mean anything they become part of a whole and all of these characteristics must be taken into account when interpreting a person's situation in any depth. Gestures are standardised models of behaviour, they belong to the realm of rituals, ceremonies, psychodramas, theatre, and it is in this context that they acquire meaning, by association or analogy, transforming themselves into emotional signs, territorial marks and messages regarding a situation, in the hope of receiving a reaction or feedback from whomever they are with.

In *Secret Strike - Inditex*, Alicia Framis tracks the camera past real workers and visitors to Inditex's premises. They have been asked to freeze and hold their postures and gestures to epitomize them as everyday actions. The artist did not hesitate to ask some to hold certain poses to achieve epigonic examples of the typologies found in the work place. The characters that appear in the video – real workers and managers playing themselves – have a cold, fixed gesturality and a tension that places the piece half way between documental reality and staged fiction.

Every gesture and posture in *Secret Strike - Inditex* takes place in an environment created by the architecture of Vázquez Liñeiro and his Estudio TAU, based in Corunna, in consonance with the idea sought by Inditex. The way Alicia Framis reproduces of a *frozen* moment of this environment shows how space and its uses are potent indicators of the meanings carried in the gestures, poses, postures and messages of *body discourse*. The use of space at Inditex is conditioned not only by work-related factors, with a design intended to reflect a particular manner of understanding and representing work, but also by cultural, social and economic aspects, and the atmosphere and character of the Galician textile group.

The workers' proximity in space, physical contact and interaction are set against the spaciousness and natural daylight entering through huge windows. But the tension in the workers' outward appearance – their uniforms, demeanours, postures and bearings, the distances and relationships – all form part of the constructs that regulate social intercourse and which are all the more evident when presented in the architectural space that houses and even creates them. Alicia Framis carefully arranges all these elements to present the emotional aspect of the individual; to express her conception of the body, albeit in a very cold light.

The exhibition that has arisen in the CGAC as a result of *Secret Strike - Inditex* is composed of several of the series' videos. Our intention is to show some five works by the Catalan artist that share in common a same conceptual and aesthetic exercise: an unbroken tracking shot that runs through a space, *freezing* the actions of the people it encounters. With this exhibition, the CGAC contributes significantly to the series of existing works that the artist has developed over the last two years for other institutions, such as the Tate Modern in London, the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, and the Rabobank in Utrecht. The central idea of all the works is to *stop* activity in certain places considered key for cultural and economical reasons, as a kind of metaphor of the power of the individual, were he or she to decide to simply stop doing the day's chores for one moment. And an individual action such as this were accompanied by those of other people, as in the video, the effect would be felt on a number of levels.

Framis did not intend this series to fall within the category of social and political art, with its content of protest and activism, but explore a metaphor of individual will-power inside social and economic structures. This (will-)power is all the more evident the bigger and more representative the structure inside which the symbolic action of initiating a secret strike is taking place, which is why we appealed to Inditex, Galicia's most powerful company, whose spacious premises and varied areas of production guaranteed a visually interesting *visit*.

But if the subject of individual power in the face of corporate macro-structures is important here on a metaphorical level, no less important is the recurring theme in Framis's work of relational situations. Through her work she explores the different ways that we relate to one another in the West, particularly when sharing experiences inside a given space over a period of time that can render co-habitation easier or more difficult. At the same time, she highlights ideological issues in the design of a space and in the relationship that the body is meant to, or able to, establish with it.

The sculpture and objects of 1970s Minimal Art changed the way the body related to the work and surrounding space. Minimal works were created in close relation to space, but even more remarkable in this regard was the emergence of one of the most determinant conceptions and practices in art: the site-specific work, which brought about a unique relationship between the work and its environment and the socio-historic context in which it stood. Everything counted, not as part of an object, but as part of a wider and more complex situation, in which the relationship with the space was perceived as more literal.

A core feature of Minimal sculpture is the response of the viewer's body with regard to the materiality, specificity and literalness of the object. While Framis is not in the least bit interested in minimal art, her art does share the idea of the specific relationship between artwork and space/viewer, the viewer's changing perception of it, and the all-embracingness of the artwork.

*Secret Strike - Inditex* therefore intends to be, following this line of discourse, an exemplification of a real and complex experience. Which throws up the question about all aesthetic and artistic experience being an experience of the real world. The reality of art is no different to the reality of everyday life. The protagonists of Framis's video's experience of space and response to it is no different to ours, when, as viewers, we move through it, guided by the tracking shots and sequences of the video.

Of course the sequence of the buildings' spaces can be altered by audiovisual language and its requirements, but this does not mean that spatial continuity and order is lacking in the video. Quite the contrary is true: in the video one thing, one action, comes after another and gives rise to yet another. To experience in its completeness it is not necessary to follow the organic structure, for the tension, dialectics, light, volumes, openings, people, postures and attitudes, their presences and absences, make up a sequence, a syntax and an order that run parallel to the real ones, allowing us to experience the space and workers' relationship to it without the intermediation of logic.

True, the video shows a rather theatrical experience of space, but this theatricality is not caused by the *actors* or their attitudes to the space, but by the way we as viewers experience the video, seduced as we are not only by its impeccable formal construction, but by the scopophilic drive that impels us to seek out the invisible, the secret, the inextricable. In *Secret Strike - Inditex*, the characters are as important as the space in the narrative of creating an illusion we might slide into in order to experience reality, or the more conflicting and unsolvable issues of reality.

The people in the video are not the sole *actors* in the dramatized environment for the floors, walls, shapes and light acquire relevance through their context and come to form as much a part of the scene as the people. Space in *Secret Strike - Inditex* is a kind of para-mental dimension in which we recreate the course of time, leaving unsolvable problems to languor at almost geo-evolutionary pace, for problems pale into significance when compared to the dimension of the para-mental space.



# 8 DE JUNIO, LAS MODELOS LIBRAN 2006

## PERFORMANCE

*8 de junio, las modelos libran* is a work that was created in response to Enrique Loewe's invitation to participate in the 'Take me with you' exhibition, which was part of the celebration of Loewe's 160th anniversary. Twenty well-known artists were asked to analyse the relationship between people and their handbags.

Framis decided to stage a performance, a fashion show to demonstrate the elegance of Loewe's handbags presented by a dozen naked male models.

On this occasion the artist's intention was to protect women from the exploitation of their images in the fashion world; she contracted only men. Female models could take the day off and be free, at last, for one day.

It is no secret that part of Alicia's work is strikingly feminist: she defends women through her work whenever she feels it is necessary, and in the world of fashion women are exploited much more than men.

It is very important to note that this performance was censored and cancelled just minutes after the international press presentation. Loewe's advisors decided that this kind of art proposal was inappropriate for the company and for the jet-set audience.





8 de junio, los modelos libran — Photograph — 210 x 297 mm



8 de junio, los modelos libran — Photograph — 210 x 297 mm



# MAMAMEN 2004

## CLOTHING

'I'm working through fashion, which makes it possible to incorporate more and more domesticity in the world of men,' Alicia Framis explains. 'The role of men is increasingly expanding into women's tasks and desires. Not all of them, of course, but there are men who, because of their situation, are single fathers or want to adopt children by themselves, or they are in a homosexual couple, where the role of the mother is in transgression.'

'The suit is always connected to businessmen, men with power, men that belong to a company, men that work for men. At the same time men were deciding, more in the Netherlands than in Spain, to take over roles of women in their private lives. So why not invent the suit that can handle the real life of these men?'

'The reality in Europe is that a lot of fathers and mothers are divorced, that there is a big group of children at school with separated parents. This means that the father has to assume the role of the mother now and then, fulfilling the emptiness, and otherwise, it means the same for the mother.'

'The cliché that the role of men is to make money for the family is now completely passé. Most men have to be active in home and are sometimes alone, or sometimes two men have children, and so on.'

'I thought it was important to invent a suit that matches the new life of men – their needs, their desires. I wanted to make three suits that would make it possible to integrate a baby into the suit, for the men to carry a baby; not like the kind of baby bags we know, but so integrated that the man can wear it to his work. This presented the possibility of creating a new image for men, an image that society actually needs, clothes that truly reflect the daily life of these men.'



Mamamen — Photograph



Mamamen — Suits — Collection Rabo Art collection

Mamamen — Installation view  
Mamamen — Videostills



# ANTI\_DOG 2002 — 2003

## PERFORMANCE

The *anti\_dog* brand was introduced to make women, especially women of colour, feel protected in dangerous neighbourhoods, against skinheads with their dogs and other aggressors.

This project started with Framis's experiences while she was living in Berlin. She was told about a certain city quarter called Marzahn, where as a woman with dark skin she would not be able to walk alone, because racist skinheads with big aggressive dogs ruled the streets there. She felt an urge to go, but with some form of protection against the dogs.

'Immigrant women talk about these matters, but secretly, because we feel ashamed to be an undesirable immigrant,' Alicia Framis explains. 'On the other hand we are immensely grateful to have the opportunity to develop ourselves in the other country. Where we live is not our soil by nature, but here we feel more connected to our dreams than in the country we one day left. I feel ashamed to denounce physical and psychological attacks from people that I embrace as inhabitants of my land of dreams and possibilities, but at the same time it is a reality that is there in the shades of our politeness.

'Nowadays "safety" and "protection" are high on the agenda of politicians and citizens, but the means they use to achieve this are scary. Omnipresent video cameras should protect us against other people, but instead they deprive us of our intimacy. The loss of intimacy reinforces the idea of insecurity and a lack of safety. Video cameras are a closed circuit: fear—watch—no intimacy—fear—watch—no intimacy—fear—watch—no intimacy. Protection doesn't come from a monitor; the monitor is just a witness of our fear. Safety comes from the feeling that you are the owner of your own body and mind.'

### BEAUTY BEATS VIOLENCE

With the introduction of the *anti\_dog* fashion label, Alicia Framis was addressing topics like safety, vulnerability, racism and violence, which were high on the global political and cultural agenda, in a highly refreshing way.

After extensive research she and her team found the fabric suitable for creating her garments. The Dutch invention Twaron was a revolution in the world of protection and reinforcement. Five times stronger and significantly lighter than steel, it is often used for bullet- and stab-resistant vests. The glossy, gold-like colour of the fibre gave it the allure that Framis wanted for her dresses.

The garments created with Twaron were worn by women of mixed race at demonstrations in several European cities that have a reputation for aggression against women (of colour). For each city the collection was enlarged with special designs for the specific situation, in close collaboration with the host organization. For example, in Helsingborg, Sweden, a group of women was fighting for better lighting at dangerous dark spots in the city, such as creepy alleys. Framis worked together with these women and with local designers to invent dresses that emit light and make the women visible.

In Paris, a collection largely inspired by famous designers such as Courrèges, Christian Dior and Coco Chanel was shown, with an ironic wink, on a catwalk during Paris Fashion Week. With the huge skirts designed for Birmingham the women occupied an entire public square. Because the sentences written on the skirts (such as 'This is not your Country') are copyrighted, they can never be used in public again without risking a fine.

After Paris, Amsterdam, Madrid, Helsingborg, Barcelona and Birmingham, the collection consisted of 23 garments with their accessories. In Venice they were all shown together for the first time in the *anti\_dog* fitting room.

This 'dome' could be closed and became a fully protected shelter constructed with five of the *anti\_dog* dresses.

This work draws our attention to three important issues. First it points out the uselessness of the road we have taken to actually protect ourselves. For the sake of protection there is a huge network of cameras installed in public as well as private space, which creates either the uncomfortable feeling of Big Brother or the awareness that there will never be enough people to actually watch all that footage, let alone be in time to act upon it if necessary. In conjunction with this proliferation of cameras we tend to lock ourselves within high fences, creating our own prisons. To counteract this tendency, Framis's fashion suggests optimum individual freedom as well as literal and figurative visibility.

Secondly, the work makes us aware of the way we usually protest against violence and racism. It seems as if the aesthetics of demonstrations has remained unchanged since the very first time a group of people marched in the streets to proclaim their disagreement. Framis makes the protest seductive and powerful at the same time.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Framis placed the combined themes of racism and violence against women on the agenda, at a time when it seemed that feminism was retreating into the shadows in the Western world.

The *anti\_dog* demonstration magazine *En Garde* was an insert in *N°C Magazine*, which was guest-edited by Hussein Chalayan and published by Artimo.

Text by Lilet Breddels, adapted from *We Are The World*, the catalogue for the Dutch Pavilion at the 2003 Venice Biennale.

The *anti\_dog* collection is made from Teijin Twaron, a dog bite-proof, fire-proof and bullet-proof fabric.



**Anti\_dog** — Performance in Madrid from Helga de Alvear gallery to Reina Sofía museum



RECLAIM THE LIGHT!

Helsingborg 2003. 3 minutes.

*Reclaim the Light!* is a collection of anti\_dog dresses with light incorporated. Five of these dresses were made by Swedish designers, three by Alicia Framis. The dresses were part of a demonstration in the city of Helsingborg to call for more light in the city. 'Women always walk an extra mile because we are afraid of the darkness,' Framis explains. 'We want urban designers to give more thought to the position of a woman walking on the street by night. I arrived at the conclusion that the city is made by men for men.'

BEAUTY DOESN'T HAVE GENDER

Barcelona 2003. 3 minutes.

When I left Barcelona 10 years ago the transsexuals were the favourite people to be attacked by skinheads. Still now, even when transsexuals are a strong gender, they are afraid of them. At the same time I wanted to show them as the most beautiful people. They can be erotic and sensual for me and for men.

ANTI \_ DOG AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Madrid 2003. 3 minutes.

In Spain, 27 women were killed in their homes between January 1st and May 1st. This situation made me decide to stage a demonstration against domestic violence in Madrid.

ANTI \_ DOG IN AJAX FOOTBALL STADIUM

Amsterdam 2002. 3 minutes.

I tried to find the most conflictual images that I could imagine in Amsterdam. My collection tries to protect from aggression while at the same time being the most sensual and beautiful garment for all kinds of women. The dresses were made by craftspeople from the world of *haute couture*, turning the dresses into precious objects that simultaneously serve a function: to protect from aggression and insults.

COPYRIGHTING UNWANTED SENTENCES

Birmingham, 2003. 3 minutes.

In Birmingham I brought together students from the fashion academy and women who have a difficult life. I asked the students to interview them and ask what sentences they no longer wanted to hear. These copyrighted sentences were applied to five dresses. With skirts some five metres in diameter, these dresses helped us to stage a demonstration against verbal aggression towards people. The immense gowns occupied Victoria Square in Birmingham for 20 minutes. The models were the same women who provided the sentences, which is why they look so proud.



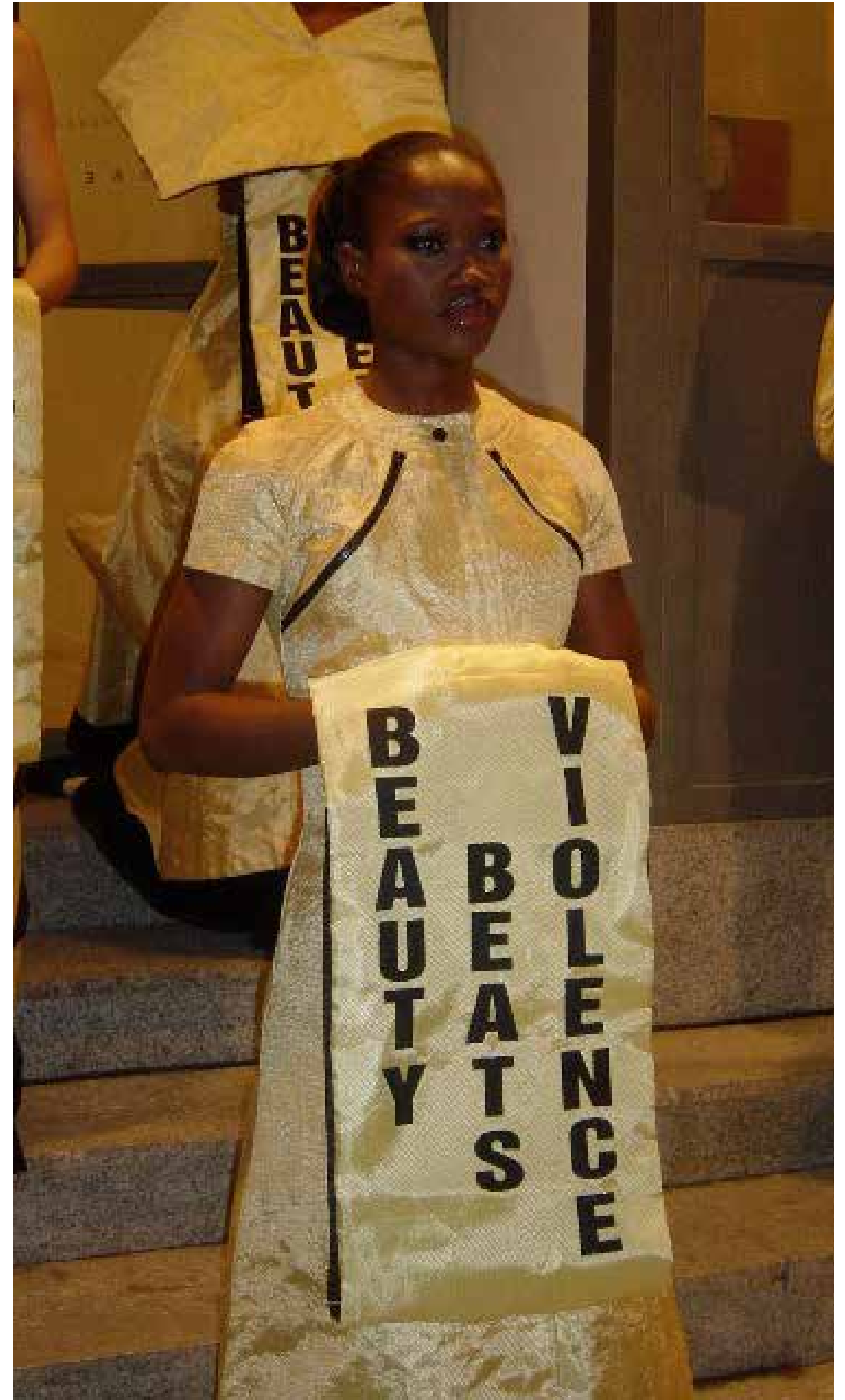




Anti\_dog — Performance at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France — Collection Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, The Netherlands



Anti\_dog — Performance in Madrid from Helga de Alvear gallery to Reina Sofía museum







Anti\_dog (Amsterdam) — Photographs — Photographer: Peter Cox  
Anti\_dog (Amsterdam) — Videostill — Collection Rabo Art Collection





Anti\_dog — Performance in Helsingborg, Sweden — First collection with light



Anti\_dog — Performance in Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Barcelona, Spain — First collection with light





Anti\_dog — Performance in Birmingham, United Kingdom





Anti\_dog — Performance in Barcelona, Spain, against skinheads

Anti\_dog — Performance in Barcelona, Spain, against skinheads





Anti\_dog — Installation view Dutch Pavilion at Venice Biennial — Venice, Italy



Anti\_dog — Installation view Dutch Pavilion at Venice Biennial — Venice, Italy



# 100 WAYS TO WEAR A FLAG 2007 — 2008

## CLOTHING

For *100 Ways to Wear a Flag*, Alicia Framis invited sixteen designers to produce a garment inspired by the Chinese flag. This highlighted the explosion of the garment export industry in modern China, while also questioning how the associations of nationhood could both empower and burden the wearer.

This work refers to her earlier *anti\_dog* series, a collection of designs made with a special fabric, Twaron, that is fire-, bullet- and dog-proof. The *anti\_dog* collection protects women from aggressive behaviour and – perhaps more importantly – gives them the courage and strength to walk around fearless and powerful. With this *China Five Star* collection, Framis re-empowers women by presenting them in a national symbol.







**100 Ways to Wear a Flag** — Designers: David Delfin, El Delgado Buil, Hugo Gallego, Ingrid de la Rosa, Roberto Piqueras, Locking Shocking, José Ramón Rocabert, Antonio Alvarado, La Casita de Wendy, Llamazares y de Delgado, Antiatoms, Zazo & Brull, Oscar León, He Yan, Juanmabylcuco, Gori de Palma



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100 Ways to Wear a Flag — Exhibition view at Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland



# PROTEST BY SEDUCTION

## LILET BREDELS

Mastering the art of seduction as a tool to encourage people to buy things they don't need is powerfully depicted in the popular television series *Mad Men*. There it is primarily men who are in charge of the creative process and their 'targets' are mainly women. These men are selling an image, a dream, and care little about what the product itself is. 'What you call love was invented by guys like me to sell nylons,' says Don Draper, the main character. The series is set in the 1960s and although it looks outdated it incorporates many ingredients, such as sexism, consumerism, loneliness, alienation, rudeness and xenophobia, that persist today. These are all phenomena, I would argue, against which the work of Alicia Framis is a crusade. The interesting thing, however, is that she uses precisely the tools of the 'mad men' to protest against those issues. Instead of encouraging us to consume, she makes us think about topics we would probably rather avoid.

Protests and demonstrations usually employ either a harsh and grim visual language or, conversely, a funny, DIY idiom that makes the protest almost harmless. In both cases you might be inclined to agree with the cause of the demonstration, but you don't want to affiliate yourself with the means that are used to express it. Framis takes protest to another level by seducing us to look, listen and join her protest. By using the tools of advertising she lures us into her demonstration and before we know it we become part of it. But unlike the 'mad men' she does care about 'the product' she is selling us. The message might be nicely wrapped in the medium, but it comes across clearly. When I was a student there was a very popular song with the same quality. It was written and sung by Tom Robinson in 1976 as a protest against the anti-gay sentiment in Britain. The song was such a hit that the entire disco crowd of the 1980s, some 90 percent of them straight, sang along: 'Sing if you're glad to be gay, sing if you're happy this way.'

Framis created a whole new demonstration toolkit for us to use and expand upon: she uses fashion in *Anti\_dog*, *Mamamen* and *100 Ways to Wear a Flag*, employs the still image in *Secret Strike*, even imitates the visual language of propaganda posters in *NOT FOR SALE*. 'The absolute artwork converges with the absolute commodity,' Theodor Adorno writes in his *Aesthetic Theory*. He argues that the only way art can influence society is by embedding itself within it. This doesn't mean that Framis is just creating another likeable object to comfort or entertain us. Nor is her work just an important message wrapped in a nice package. The latter could at best lead to awareness of the issues she wants to address, but her cause is bigger. Framis's work always has an edge to it, something that dismantles and unsettles. The boys in *NOT FOR SALE* are extremely cute and nicely posed in idyllic surroundings. The photographs are something you definitely want to look at, or have in your home. Yet the small necklace with the text 'NOT FOR SALE' – or in some of the photographs nothing more than the sunburnt stencil of the necklace – keeps bothering you. 'The socially critical zones of artworks are those where it hurts; where in their expression, historically determined, the untruth of the social situation comes to light,' says Adorno. Framis creates alternatives to those situations. Her demonstrations are not only to demonstrate – to show – but to protest and bring about change, and not necessarily by acting alone but by creating tools that empower us to do so. The boy has his necklace, the women have their protective *anti\_dog* collection, and we have our triggered imagination as a tool of seduction.

# NOT FOR SALE 2007 — 2008

## PERFORMANCE

*Not for Sale* is a work in progress about children who are for sale around the world.

The project started in Bangkok, Thailand, where Framis made the first portraits of children, who are naked except for a necklace that says 'NOT FOR SALE'.

At first glance the images appear sweet and endearing; the boys are smiling and seem to be happy and healthy. It is only on looking more closely that you notice what Framis is pointing out: the present-day reality of the fragile and dangerous position of many children. From the moment we are born we have a price, but for many children there is a real risk of actually being sold.

Since living in China, Framis has been interested in the idea of portraits as propaganda, like those of Mao Zedong or King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, who has his portraits all over the city, printed in the same measurements that Alicia Framis used for her photos.

In *Not for Sale* she used the methods of propaganda portraits, but changed the subject from leaders to something more domestic. Propaganda posters always have this optimistic, cheerful appearance with certain details or attributes conveying the message, showing the subject from below or with the flag or a crowd in the background, showing the power of a leader.

Framis shows the beautiful smiling kids in their idyllic surroundings, with only their small attribute of the necklace revealing their possible fate.







Not for Sale — Photograph — 225 x 184 cm



Not for Sale — Photograph — 225 x 184 cm





**WISHINGS**

# WISHING

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# WISHING WALL (CITIES) 1998 — 2001

**ANNET GELINK GALLERY, AMSTERDAM: 75 WISHES**  
**SERRE DI RAPOLANO, ITALY: 452 WISHES**  
**FRI ART, FRIBOURG, SWITZERLAND: 161 WISHES**  
**SONSBEEK PARK, ARNHEM, THE NETHERLANDS: 250 WISHES**  
**GHENT, BELGIUM: 625 WISHES**

The *Wish Wall* series started with *Murmur* in 1998, when Mario Peroni invited Alicia Framis to make a piece for the Serre di Rapolano, for a show called 'Indoors'. The idea was to make an art space as a house or a living space. There were 13 artists working in the building. 'I decided to make holes in the wall, because this building was from the Mussolini era: the townspeople were slightly ashamed about this building, but at the same time they needed an art venue,' Framis explains. 'The act of making holes in the wall was a performance for me, without public. But one night I decided that this performance needed to become a positive act and something that could help to change the history of the building or the perception of it. I told Mario about my desire to make a wall of wishes, where the townspeople could write down their wishes and feel good after our exhibition, as this building would preserve their wishes.'

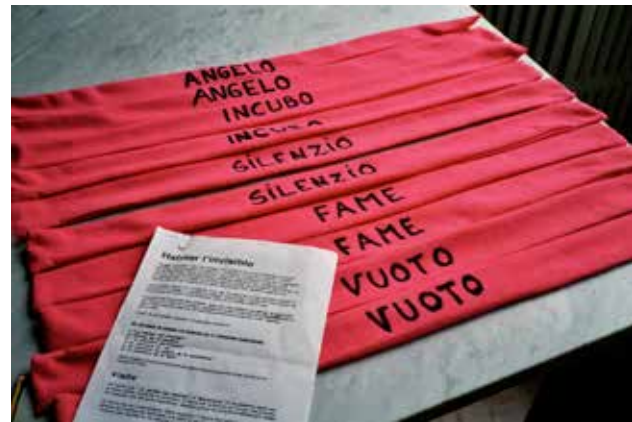
I like the idea that work by other contemporary artists is now being shown on the *Murmur* wall, but it still contains the wishes of the people from this small town.'

Jan Hoet and Nicolas Bourriaud then showed the work elsewhere, once again as an interactive piece. It was shown at Sonsbeek, in Ghent and at Fri Art in Fribourg. The piece's dimensions changed, but the action and the meaning did not. It is the place where everybody can leave a personal wish, and the *Mur* (wall) then becomes the *Murmur* (whisper).

The piece is an interactive work that encourages people to react and participate: this is what makes the wall the *Murmur*. A simple wall becomes part of their lives, of their personal histories. Without the public and their interaction the piece has no meaning.









# BEFORE YOUR NAME

## ALICIA FRAMIS

Adapted from Alicia Framis, *Wax & Jardins: Loneliness in the City*, Breda: Artimo Foundation, 1999, pp. 62-63

The emotions inspired in us by Gustav Vigeland's sculptures are based on something that we can identify with. Controversial in his day, Vigeland used symbols of intimacy: closeness, the expression of the eyes, caresses, demonstrativeness towards others. This image of intimacy transforms us into eternal beings. These sculptures are like seeing Julia Roberts kissing Richard Gere in the film *Pretty Woman*.

Everything is a representation of intimacy between two beings. These characters are models of a relationship that can lead to a better life. She is a hooker who, by virtue of an intimate relationship with a man, becomes a respectable woman. And, thanks to Julia's character, the man loses his fear of heights, which is a psychosomatic symptom of the fear of death, of freedom. Through his relationship with her he becomes a superman with a tie.

Spectators watching this film find their egos are enriched by the possibility of forgetting the present and going with the dream of a being superior to themselves. They dream of having the same luck, of going from poverty to respectability, and they also desire a relationship in which they can forget their cowardice. American films are not very far away from Vigeland's models. Vigeland's couples represent a dominant and a dominated figure, perpetuated in the moment of an intimate relationship that makes them eternal, very close to the idea of God – a perfect relationship similar to Teresa d'Avila's relationship to God, the union with God that made her a myth. Here is another model for a supernatural relationship. By contrast, the model for a relationship offered by Jean Cocteau in *La Belle et la Bête* is one in which the beast becomes a man because he is capable of love. The dream is simply to manage to love someone, without the burden of productivity, of improvement, of having to produce exclusive beings as propagated by American enterprise and the Catholic Church.

Lars von Trier's *Breaking the Waves* offers us another model of a relationship. We see a woman who is totally broken by her identification with a female model. Moreover, it shows how she shatters the model she has for herself by going from a married girl to a prostitute. The film does not offer the dream of a superior life, or the possibility of following a model, but the possibility of becoming detached from all these things. The process of demystification begins when the protagonist breaks with the model her parents envisaged for her. She is no longer the woman the townspeople expected her to be, and this ends up with her becoming detached from her body as an image of power. She loses her life, but in fact this is only a symbol, a question addressed to us about the image we have of our own body, about our ego's mechanism of idealization. We can identify with her, but the reward will not be leading a respectable life or becoming a hidden superman, nor an image of what might be. The only reward is that we can ask questions about the models we have for amorous relations. She identifies with the lover as a way to live to such an extent that she loses her identity, but more than that she breaks with relationships based on egocentric interests. The model she projects for us is: 'The world, that is what you are.'

She shows us the possibility of what we might allow ourselves to be. The possibility of letting everything go, of no longer being attached to anything, of becoming detached even from our models on the screen. Cinema is a metaphor for our relationships with others. We leave the cinema with a desire to live an ideal life, a life of supernatural relationships, of relationships of mutual interest, mirror-like relationships.

At the same time, cinema could be our own demystification. Rothko was also concerned with demystification. Facing the canvas he tried to break with the tradition of painting that uses the human figure to present a mystified version of ourselves. 'I would rather humanize a triangle than dehumanize a person,' he said, but Rothko committed suicide at 60 in front of his canvases. They couldn't say 'Papa', because any desire to create life from dead matter is like giving the kiss of life to a dead person. I hope that in another life Rothko will be female.

In the history of art, models have always been reduced to a body modelled by man's imagination: they are mute. Runway models become objects, walking mannequins without a voice, like an actor playing a character who is never himself. They are mute. They are cardboard cut-out characters. They sell their bodies to become someone else. They become models for the audience to imitate, and behind a model there is always a dangerous ideology. Behind each gesture, each wink, each caress there is a manoeuvre (a manoeuvre being a deceptive action taken by a military unit). In the interview with the girls in Helsinki, I try to show them in a state in which they do not refer to or represent something else. I did not ask for their first name during the interview, because the name already determines the sex. When we are born our parents condition our sex through our first name. But the existence of the girls comes before their name. Descartes said of existence: 'I think, therefore I am.' Any attempt by thought to give us life is an illusion. 'I exist and therefore I think' seems more plausible to me. One day thought discovers that it depends on the body, that if the body grows older it will die. That thought is dependent on each breath. So thought tries to separate itself from its mortal body. It invents models of eternity, based on model lives. Thought runs after the desire for transcendence, seeks to forget the signs of ageing suffered by the body.

The models provided by the screen, by advertising, by myth, are the negation of the end. All thought that tries to give life to dead matter, like sculpture, is an attempt to stop time, to escape decay. At the end of the dream, even the American dream, what awaits us is death. There's no point in being the richest person in the cemetery. There are no frogs and no princesses there, no flying men, no silent women. In death there is only the end.

# BEFORE YOUR NAME 1997

PERFORMANCE WITH EIGHT WOMEN TO RECREATE THE SCULPTURE  
BY GUSTAV VIGELAND, WHICH INVOLVED THEM STANDING NAKED IN FRONT  
OF THE VIGELAND MUSEUM IN OSLO, NORWAY, FOR 20 MINUTES.



Gustav Vigeland (11 April 1869–12 March 1943) was a controversial Norwegian sculptor. His work, which typically features nude human figures in sometimes intimate but always emotionally charged poses, generated controversies as massive as the sculptures themselves. Framis wanted to

give life to his sculptures and at the same time make an anti-monument, where the sculptures disappear after 20 minutes, and remain only in our memories. For Framis art is an experience that resides in our memory.

Before Your Name — Performance



# CARTAS AL CIELO 2012

## SCULPTURE

To look up at the sky is a reflex action, a moment filled with hope, desire or desperation. The sky is the place that holds our secrets, our loved ones and the afterlife. In order to formalize that whole world, Alicia made a postbox from which the Earth's citizens can send letters to the afterlife. The *Cartas al Cielo* postbox has the shape of eternity: a sphere, with no corners, without limits. The sphere is the shape of the universe, of our world, of the other world. The envelopes contain letters for people who have disappeared,

people with no address. All these letters need a special postbox. In Spanish, *cielo* (sky) means the place above us, the promised place, the place for missing people, the Promised Land. These multiple meanings allow the work to be read in several ways and perform different functions. This postal service to the afterlife is a poetic work that follows the line of works such as *Dreamkeeper* (1997) and *Wishing Wall* (1998), projects that focus on our desires, dreams and the immaterial world that we humans are made of.



*Cartas al cielo* — Stainless steel — 160 cm — Installation view at Amstelpark, Amsterdam, The Netherlands — Collection Rabo Art collection





**Cartas al cielo** — Stainless steel — 160 cm — Installation view at Amstelpark, Amsterdam, The Netherlands — Collection Rabo Art collection





**Cartas al cielo** — Stainless steel — 160 cm — Installation view at Amstelpark, Amsterdam, The Netherlands — Collection Rabo Art collection



**Cartas al cielo** — Stainless steel — 160 cm — Installation view at Amstelpark, Amsterdam, The Netherlands — Collection Rabo Art collection



# DESIRES, EMOTIONS AND DREAMS

## BEATE ERMACORA

Anyone who might wish to set emotions and the workings of the unconscious off to one side and locate them solely in the private sphere would appear to be very flatly contradicted by the globalized world of today. We have long known that questions of faith and calls for social and political justice have a great deal to do with emotion, but that the seemingly rational financial world is to a large extent also subject to the emotional states of investors is vastly disquieting. In light of this, the projects of Alicia Framis – in which she addresses people's wishes, yearnings, fears or dreams – could be seen as making very serious statements on the collective character of our societies. As is so often the case in her works, she approaches issues concerned with the 'public' sphere and with what it means to private states of mind in a poetic and subtle manner, immersing herself in territories that in the first instance have nothing to do with art. Her interdisciplinary performances and interactive installations have provided a great many people with a forum for expressing their opinions, acting as a kind of mouthpiece for them – even though in artworks like *Dreamkeeper* (1997), *Wish Wall* (1998–2001) and *Cartas al Cielo* (2011) we learn nothing of the thoughts or secrets of the people in question. This is not due to the fact that the artist is anxious to maintain discretion and does not wish to elicit intimate information from anyone in order to then make it public; it is because she wishes to show social needs and phenomena that are general in nature.

*Dreamkeeper* was developed as a kind of performance to order, presented by Alicia Framis in a number of cities for a period of 40 days. As it says on the posters and flyers, her performance is for 'all sleepers in the city'. Sometimes, they add 'be guarded at night'. A telephone number appears, preceded by the word 'call' in large letters; this causes one to think of a hostess service of some kind. Sometimes there is a picture of the artist herself, looking like a fairy in her long, high-necked white dress (specially designed by Karen Park Goude), wearing a cap and holding a sleeping mat. To accept her offer – to be watched by a stranger in one's own home whilst one sleeps and dreams – must surely have taken courage, trust and curiosity. Unlike a clinical laboratory for the study of sleep and of dreams, where the subject is filmed and wired up in the interests of science, Alicia Framis creates a highly intimate situation. She evokes a parent/child relationship, in which a child is lovingly picked up and held when it wakes from a nightmare. However, it is also redolent of a vigil for the dead. Only the artist and her subjects know exactly what happened during these nights. What we know is that Framis always created a small artwork from something that she found within the home and that she photographed the sleeping figure – not using a flash, but with unbelievably long exposure times of anything up to seven hours. These photographs, to which she gave the title *Petite Mort Quotidienne*, are reminiscent of experiments from the early years of photography when people tried to photograph the invisible. Framis's photographs are like spirit photographs: we see wavering, cloudy forms that were presumably created by the movement of the sleepers and are therefore, to some extent, proof of dreaming taking place. The unconscious nature of the dream, its energy and the unresolved emotional conflicts of the day simultaneously give the photographs form, space and time. *Dreamkeeper* is also a work that, within the oeuvre of Alicia Framis, could be related to the project *Loneliness in the City* (1999–2000), as it represents an imaginative proposal for solving the isolation felt in single-person households.

Just as the dream is part of the life of the psyche, so too are our wishes. *Wish Wall* has been re-created in several different exhibition contexts since 1998. Framis found the first of her walls in an Italian building from the Mussolini era. She wanted to give it a positive meaning, so she urged the public to place their wishes in countless prefabricated holes as written notes. The wall was re-plastered after the exhibition, with the wishes left inside so that the wall somehow became part of the people who had deposited their concerns there. Framis sometimes uses inserted double walls, so that the notes can be collected after the exhibition, to serve a new purpose in her archive. However, because these wishes are written in invisible ink, nobody knows their content except for the sender.

In this interactive and participative artwork, Alicia Framis makes reference to cultural traditions (in a number of different ways) and suggests that to wish and to request – to turn to a higher, transcendental agency – is a fundamental human need. In terms of form as well as content, her artwork alludes to Jerusalem's famous Wailing Wall, which is among the most important Judaic religious sites. At the Wailing Wall, the faithful place prayers and wishes written on small pieces of paper in the cracks in the masonry. Similar gestures and rituals are part of religious observance in other faiths. One only has to think of Buddhist prayer flags, of the wish papers tied to branches at Japanese Shinto shrines and of the Catholic tradition of votive offerings. The children of Western nations discover that intense and concentrated wishing can work during the days leading up to Christmas, when they write letters to the Christ-child or Santa Claus and, a little time later, find the gift they wished for beneath the Christmas tree. The countless books on the subject that have appeared in recent years make it clear that wishing and wish fulfilment are not only for children, nor always connected with religious belief. In these books we find instructions on how to wish successfully as the path to a successful and contented life – supported by the latest discoveries of quantum physics. One frequently recurring aspect is the idea that one should not speak about one's wishes, otherwise the energy behind the wish will dissipate and it will not come true. Alicia Framis's invisible ink appears to echo this notion.

If one compares Framis's *Wish Wall* with Jochen Gerz's similarly situated artistic social project, *The Berkeley Oracle (Questions Unanswered)* (1997–1999), then one is struck by the fact that Framis does not expect a result which allows conclusions to be drawn about social and political trends. Gerz takes a different approach: his 'oracle' – suggestive of the Oracle of Delphi, the classical locus of augury, of statements of destiny and of revelations of the future – functions as a seismographic barometer for society. Some interesting conclusions could be drawn from the questions that users from all over the world took part in this internet-based project. In the years around 1968 people still believed in Utopia and that society could be changed by asking challenging questions, but the questions asked by people at the end of the 20th century suggest that a withdrawal into a private and existential sphere has taken place. The 'oracle' was not seen as a public platform for the expression of socio-critical political opinions – it was simply seen as a new kind of anonymous chatroom where personal states of mind, fears and hopes could be vented. It therefore seems reasonable for us to assume that the requests and wishes deposited in Alicia Framis's *Wish Wall* are also primarily centred on the lives of those who deposited them. Perhaps there is nothing wrong with this – after all, it surely holds true for any social system that all will be well with the social organism as a whole if all is well with the individuals living in it. It is in this same spirit that many of Alicia Framis's projects examine individual truths in the light of collective realities.



In her extensive *Moon Life Project*, embarked upon in 2009, Alicia Framis addresses the possibility of life in space and on other planets. In 2011 she designed *Cartas al Cielo*, a large, gleaming metallic sphere with a slot that allows letters to be inserted into it. This spherical post-box is addressed to 'the heavens', and in many languages this word signifies both the physical galaxies and the spiritual cosmos. It is this double meaning – which might lead us to conclude that it is possible for astronauts, on their flights out into the universe, to pay a brief visit to the departed, and to find out what life after death looks like – that gives the artwork its playful dimension. This artwork fuses technological and futuristic visions of the days to come with traditional notions associated with religious faith. If one focuses on the psychological aspects of the artwork, then it once again shows the artist as a kind of social worker, offering people the possibility of making contact (mentally, if not spiritually) with the deceased or the disappeared – whether to ask for forgiveness, to thank them, or to call for help and support. However, perhaps messages to intergalactic beings – who are not yet known to us, but whose presence we sense or suspect – will also be posted in this post-box.

Whatever the case may be, in her stimulating artwork Alicia Framis consistently allows plenty of leeway for seemingly irrational, emotional issues and demonstrates that people's actions – and therefore their day-to-day lives in society – are not primarily determined by a spirit of rationality but, most critically, by feelings. The way that the physical sciences are constantly growing closer to the humanities shows that this is not pure speculation on the part of the artist.

# DREAMKEEPER 1997

## PERFORMANCE



'Suffering from lonely nights? Phone the Dreamkeeper. She's in town for 40 days. Wandering through the streets with her sleeping mat wearing her star dress and Moon Shoes,' art critic Ineke Schwartz wrote about *Dreamkeeper*. 'If you make an appointment she'll come to you. For 12 hours she'll stay by your side. As long as you sleep, she'll watch. In the morning she'll pick up her mat and leave again. Don't ask what will happen in the period in between. It all depends upon your dream.'

While the person was sleeping the artist made a piece of art with something found in the house. There was no more contact afterwards.

Beginning in Amsterdam, the project was continued in other cities. The experience was shared solely between the artist and her client. Nevertheless, the viewer could create his own fantasy of it when looking at the series of photos that Framis took of the sleeper when she herself was awake, with exposure times of up to seven hours. This series is called *Petite mort quotidienne* – the small daily death called sleep.



**Petite Morte Quotidienne** — Photograph — 100 x 125 cm — Collection MMKA, Arnhem, The Netherlands  
**Petite Morte Quotidienne** — Photograph — 100 x 125 cm — Collection Yannicke and Wilfried Cooreman



# BOLAÑO EN BLANES. LOS ESCRITORES DE ANTES

## ENRIQUE VILA-MATAS

Extract from Enrique Vila-Matas, 'Bolaño en Blanes. Los escritores de antes' (Bolaño at Blanes. Writers of former times), in the catalogue for the 'Bolaño Archive. 1977-2003' exhibition, which was staged at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB) in March to June 2013.

An hour later we left our flat on the alleyway to the side of the La Central bookshop, where in the basement of an art centre that nobody visited Alicia Framis was showing an enormous board with the title *Una casa para siempre* (A house for ever), a homage to one of my books. Back then she was still very young and unknown and, as she was living in Amsterdam, she was not involved in the furore we were going to create around Roberto Bolaño's work. Earlier on she had lived on the Travesía del Mal, and she was the only artist I knew on that frightening avenue. The board was covered with horizontal white and black stripes, and on the black ones she had written a huge number of words.

We spent a long time in this basement, because Roberto said he was astonished by what he was viewing. He could certainly see more than us. I remember him repeating 'It's really great!' several times, and he succeeded in getting me to see this *casa para siempre* with different eyes and to imagine so many brilliant things in it that even today I would have plenty of reasons if I wanted to endorse what he said. On the other hand, Alicia Framis's career evolved over the years and today I have become a great admirer of her work. But everything began with Bolaño, who had an incredible instinct for spotting talent.

# DEPARTURE BOARD 2012

## INTERVENTION

Context plays a vital part in Alicia Framis's work. The environment influences the work of art, in the same way the work of art influences its environment. There is a reason why its masters and sources of inspiration are conceptual artists such as Daniel Buren and Dan Graham. The high

space of the Rabo Art Zone inspired Alicia to create a large departure board measuring 4x12 metres. This exhibition transports the visitor to fictitious or imaginary cities from the worlds of philosophy, literature, architecture and science fiction.

DEPARTURES	STATUS
TETRAHEDRAL CITY	ON TIME
AIRHAVEN	ON TIME
GOTHAM CITY	ON TIME
BASIN CITY	ON TIME
SHANGRI-LA	ON TIME
LIBRIA	ON TIME
DINAS AFFARON	ON TIME
METROPOLIS	ON TIME
MU	ON TIME
MOSCO METRO 2	ON TIME
CITY OF DOMES	ON TIME
RURITANIA	ON TIME
FLATLAND	ON TIME
CLOUD CITY	ON TIME
LAND OF OZ	ON TIME

Departure Board — Vinyl — 1200 x 300 cm



## DEPARTURES

TRITON CITY  
FUTURE LONDON  
VALHALLA  
ATLANTIS  
AGARTHA  
BROADACRE  
DESPINA  
NARNIA  
TRANSIT CITY  
MOUNT OLYMPUS  
ZION  
CORUSCANT  
AL CIELO  
SKY ISLANDS  
THE RADIANT CITY

## STATUS

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## DEPARTURES

UTOPIA  
LEMURIA  
VANAHEIM  
NEVERLAND  
THEMISCYRA  
STRATUS CITY  
SKYPIEA  
SKYHOLM  
TARTARUS  
NEW BABYLON  
GALACT  
WONDERLAND  
THE ILLINOIS  
CAMELOT  
PLANET X

## STATUS

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# INTERVIEW TO RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA

## ALICIA FRAMIS

ALICIA FRAMIS — After I participated in the Netherlands' entry for the 2003 Venice Biennale I decided to take a break and make more time for my personal life, to spend time with my family in my own country. Has there been a point in your career when you wanted to freeze your life, as an artist?

RIRKRIT TIRAVANIJA — I feel like that all the time, especially since we moved to Thailand. One of the reasons I wanted to move to Thailand was to slow things down. As much as I would like to slow down, I still feel obliged to make work. So moving to Thailand does give me more time, but on the other hand it's quite hectic, too. I'm far away so I need to do everything at the same time. I have thought about stopping working, but it's more like ... He stopped working, but never stopped working. So I think that's what it's like with this film that will be shown here. To make a film you need time to make it. And I'm not a film-maker so it's nice to work on something for three years but still be busy with other things or take time away from it.

AF — At one point certain art critics called you an 'Airport Artist'. Do you feel like an airport artist?

RT — No, I never felt like an airport artist, though I felt I was reacting to exhibitions rather than making exhibitions. But that was also the way the work was, a reaction to things, a comment on itself or the place it was working with. So it needed to be a reaction, because I also think there are always institutions you need to criticize. But in a way that's not normal any more, so you have to find a different way to go against things.

AF — Yesterday when I saw the Biennale I really felt like I belonged to relational aesthetics. Do you feel relational aesthetics is dead?

RT — No, I don't think it's dead at all, but I don't think it was so well understood in a way. I feel it's not being practised or used in a sincere way. I never thought relational aesthetics was an image or a form; it's relational. It's us talking together, it's like a material I don't need to have, a subject; it just needs a space. I think people tend to aestheticize it, and I'm not talking about aestheticizing a relationship; I'm just talking about the relations. People tend to do this because that is what they understand. So it's not a case of relational aesthetics are dead, it's just used in a completely wrong way because it is misunderstood.

AF — A big issue in the Netherlands right now is that a lot of cuts are being made in the artistic sector. An article in *Metropolis M* talks about the cuts being made because of us and our relational aesthetics. Art became normal and dependable, we work in service of the people in a way – or so they think. The government took artists who work this way and turned it into their own politics. The main point of Dutch government policy of the 1990s was dedicated to art being socially useful, but by giving up its autonomy back then it created this current crisis. The critic who wrote this claims that art has to be autonomous. Do you agree?

RT — Well, autonomous art can be socially useful. I think that the people who want to cut art want to cut art anyway, because they have no relationship to it at all. And if they don't have that relationship it's about certain kinds of values, which I think is the low end of art. I think that is the market, which is the auction, which is the price you put on something that nobody can make any more because they're dead. It's a kind of consumerism that is an excuse for humanity.

AF — For example, the government say they will give money to art institutions, but all they end up doing is subsidizing the big museums like the Rijksmuseum or Van Gogh Museum. So in the Netherlands it became a running joke among artists and we asked each other 'Did you see the new show by Van Gogh?' As if he is still a working artist.

RT — Yes, those are old values that are seen as a preservative of a certain kind of identity. And the thing is that when Van Gogh was making his art he wasn't trying to preserve any kind of identity of being Dutch. The Dutch want to try and preserve an identity, but by that preservation they are killing it. It's like committing suicide by trying to keep the image of who you think you are. You are evolving, the world is evolving, it's the 21st century and we can connect with anyone in the world by pushing a button. That is also an interesting situation concerning the EU: on the one hand it's trying to integrate, but it's also repulsed by integration. It has a lot to do with the culture of identity, because once you start a culture of identity no one else can be a part of it.

AF — And what about art that has to be autonomous to critics?

RT — Art is always autonomous, even if you are sweeping a floor for other people to walk on. Art doesn't depend on anybody's ideas of what it is. What is autonomy? Are they trying to say that modernism is autonomy?

AF — Yes, if I understood it properly the critics are saying that Art has to be for art, from art or about art.

RT — All art is about art, whether it's art that is in the slum of a Calcutta ghetto or art that is in New York. That's what they don't understand: there is no autonomy. Art is always about art before it addresses social structures, but art can't be made without social structure. Maybe if a person is born and kept in a room without light and then makes work, then something can be autonomic? Like the formation of any sense, Van Gogh didn't sit in a room and make paintings. He went all over the place and then sat inside a room. Actually I must say that the socialism of art in the Netherlands in recent times was for me somehow hypocritical. It wasn't making art more sociable or more useful; it was just as autonomous and aesthetically alien to society, yet it was part of the national identity that they appreciated art and culture.

AF — Yes, and even now when we apply for money for a production or something they always ask how many people will see the work of art. That way it's always forced to be for everyone. I met you in 1996 at Manifesta 1 in Rotterdam with Douglas Gordon and we had a great time. The energy was there. When I am at my office I need people around me, I have interns and coordinators there for the input and energy. Do you have that too? Do you need people around you?

RT — I suppose I do. I mean I have people around me even when I try to get away. I have a lot of people who come to me wanting to know or learn or talk or think. I teach, so then I have 40 people around me.

AF — When you make new work for a museum do you come up with your idea alone or do you brainstorm with the studio?

RT — I come up with it alone. I like thinking alone. But there are things I like to do and think with other people, and exchange ideas. But more with people I happen to be with. And then there are things I like to contemplate by myself.



AF — Like the show at Gavin Brown's enterprise in New York in March 2013?

RT — The show at Gavin Brown was all in my head. I prefer to stage a show when I have an idea or a feeling, rather than being obliged to have a show. If it takes me five years to have an interesting idea then in five years' time I will have an interesting show. In that way I want to do fewer exhibitions with more input. Not like a reaction any more, but it needs a little more 'Brown' behind it.

AF — I feel the same: if you do it that way the joy is gone, so it just feels like filling spaces.

RT — Yes, you have to ask yourself 'Where is the joy?'

AF — I am from Barcelona, but I feel my work is Dutch and my favourite country is Japan. Does this apply to you too? Do you feel you prefer to be Thai or Argentinean, or that your work is Thai or American, and so on?

RT — I really never thought about that. Even though in the very beginning, when I made my first work at school, that was my main question: How am I going to be a Thai artist? But at the same time I asked myself that question I knew I was looking at other things, I was looking at American art, Canadian art, German art. I identified with being Thai because that was closest to me and the culture I grew up in. But also sometimes I felt alienated from it, I went to international school, I travelled, I was born somewhere else. Identity was kind of confusing, just like you asking the wrong questions [*laughing*]. And the right answers are basically something you don't have to ask; they just appear from the inside.

I like to eat Japanese food, so I learnt how to make Japanese food. I also love Thai food, so I learnt how to make Thai food. And at a certain point I mixed them all together and created another interesting dish. But it might always be a little bit spicier than anything else. I'd say that everything forms you, but some parts are more important and they don't always have to be there at the same time. Some things come up more; other things go back down.

In Thailand people don't see me as a Thai artist, but in the end I am a Thai artist. And some things they understand and other things they don't, you know. I don't think people identify my work as being Thai or otherwise; some people think I am Argentinean.

AF — Yes because you were born in Argentina, so that is always there and is always brought up.

RT — So I think it's important to have your own identity and your own culture, but on the other hand people will see things in their own way and ask their own questions. They don't ask the questions of a Thai artist.

AF — And what is your connection with curators? Do you try to please them all the time?

RT — Haha! No never! No, in a way I would, I work with my kind of people. So I would say in a way they already understand what I'm thinking so I don't have to please anyone. I know I want to work against certain things and they know that and whether they can make that happen or not. But it's never that I have to work with a curator to please him; it's more like a learning situation. We don't all make the right things. I tend to study them and know what they think. And then I often challenge them.

AF — Do you think that the position of a curator is a rightful one? Because for me my coordinator is always explaining to me what a curator is. I mean sometimes I think they are too powerful right now and that can be a pity for some artists.

RT — Well I also curate, because I feel like commenting on these things and taking some of these things into our own hands. Like it shouldn't be, I must say I feel like curators are not as strong as they used to be in the 1980s: Rudi Fuchs, Jan Hoet, Kasper König – they were making art happen. Today you couldn't say that about Hans Ulrich Obrist, though of course people pay attention to him. Even if you think about the last four Documentas, it's not as if curators weren't important, but look what happened after the Documenta: they practically haven't done any shows. I feel in a way curators have changed, because the way of working and thinking with artists has become much more relational.

AF — Yes, and somebody told me, but I don't know if it's true, that Maurizio Cattelan quit art. Is that true or a tragedy?

RT — That's like Marcel Duchamp quitting art, you know? He said that art nowadays is only about curriculum vitae, and he left it to a new generation to react and do something. Everything he does works, even when he isn't working it works. He really reacts to a lot of things. But quitting? What does it really mean to be quiet? It's more important to see what he doesn't do, rather than quitting. But maybe the other sense of it is that he has built up things to a certain point where he can not go on any further. It's a dead end. That the joke isn't funny any more. He's going to have a retrospective at the Guggenheim. His work is out there and people will use it. His work will show up in different exhibitions. He doesn't have to do anything for it.

AF — Usually my inspiration comes when, for example, I'm in the sauna, when I'm relaxed. Does your inspiration come in the studio or outside the studio? When do you find inspiration?

RT — Well I don't have a studio. For me inspiration comes when I'm outside or have been away from art and not thinking about art. Well I say not thinking about art, but I think about art all the time. What does it mean? What is it doing? Where is it going? But when I'm not thinking about art ... Television, newspaper. I read the newspaper all the time. I read everything. And ideas come to me. Like I made rice out of silver. I was reading about the fluctuation of the price of rice in Thailand and what's going on with the farmers and middlemen. So I made a work about rice. And about its weight and value, and it's also about Chinese people and the stomach. I was at the art fair, and then it's also about the market.

AF — The interns and students I work with don't seem to be interested in social situations and issues. Is that something you notice with younger generations of artists?

RT — Yes, their context is all inside a machine, inside their computer. It's like their experiences are all made through a screen. It's all pixels, not even clear, sharp images. I think you become very out of touch with the importance of reality in a way. But as artists they want to think they are doing something important and real. But a lot of it is about the information that they receive. But that information is never filtered, it's never questioned. There is no critique about what the information actually is. For example, you could do an exhibition about the armpit of Louis XIV and it could be a very interesting. But there is no critical faculty involved and it doesn't mean anything because it's not critical and there is no bigger picture. But

they know people will buy into it, because of the information about the armpit of Louis XIV, because nobody ever thought of that but it's there. And now you can find information on everything whether it's true or not.

I take information, I look at the TV, the news, read the newspaper, sometimes YouTube, but I take that information and I walk around and I think about it and take it everywhere with me. And then I trip on a stone in the middle of the street and then I realize there is actually something else. But people aren't tripping; they're just surfing instead of tripping.

AF — I did workshops with students and I sometimes think we failed, the relational aesthetics failed. I feel that art students are preoccupied by something else.

RT — Well you know, I don't think that it is failure; I think that if you can change one or two persons with what you do that is a lot. And I think artists are always trying to be (get away) somewhere else from the past. Like I said to myself, 'What am I going to do after "the urinal"?' And I found some solution to it. And now they're going to have to ask what am I going to do after the 'yellow curry' and that's what they have to do, so what they're doing after the yellow curry is like the armpit of King Louis. But that is not necessarily an interesting situation, not that it's all bad.

Yet it's not art about art and that's what's missing. And that's why it's not interesting, because they don't understand the art from the past. You can't change history without knowing history. But that, of course, is also one of the reasons why I teach in different forms, ways and shapes. I go to the university and teach, but also sit at home and have people over for dinner and talks. And I think people do get something out of it and they should do something with it, and they do. But it's not always visible, because the people who do interesting stuff are not always on the market or the centre of attention.

AF — And when you started as an artist did you have any set goals? To become famous, for example? And what are your goals now as an artist?

RT — Well my goal has always been to stop.

AF — [*Laughing*] Why? Because you need money to live? Or because of what will happen if you don't make any exhibitions?

RT — No, but to stop again, and do like something else.

AF — Like what? Do you think you would like to make more films?

RT — No, I would like to play more golf. [*Both laugh*] Actually I would like to work on the land, to grow things.

AF — You know the art world doesn't like much change, like when you make the same type of art they want you to keep making the same art. Like now you are in the film festival. Do you think the art world will take it well that you have changed your art form? Don't you care?

RT — Well I don't care, I don't think change is a problem. But if you don't have yourself in it, then that is the problem. Some people change because they think they need to. I don't see it as change, it's more part of a process and different things I am interested in. I studied film at art school and I made films, but I just never showed them.

AF — So then do you think that one part of your identity is filming? Or did you discover that in fact it is all of you?

RT — No, I think film is like a tool, tools to say things with. So I use tools. I'm much more interested in sitting here and having lunch than in sitting in a dark room looking at a film. So I'm more likely to make lunch than to make a film, but there are moments when you can have both.

AF — I often have trouble with galleries that want new objects. Then they call me and ask me to make new art work to sell. Are you ever confronted by this type of situation?

RT — I just laugh. Well, when you work with people who know what you do well enough not to ask you to do what you wouldn't want to do. I work with a lot of galleries and they do ask, but if I don't have any new work then I don't have it.

AF — I saw a work of yours that I liked: it was a sort of box for a bird, at the Berlin gallery. When you look at this work do you still have a good feeling about making it? Sometimes, when I see photos of performances I did a couple of years later, I don't always like them.

RT — No, I tend to like it more. [*Both laugh*] I'm kind of like 'Wow, I did that? Not bad.' Not to be funny, but partly I understand it more. Looking back on work, I seem to understand better why I made it.

AF — And, for example, the silver works or chrome works. Why did you choose to make them in chrome?

RT — Yes, chrome. It comes from a statement made by Gavin's son, when I was babysitting him many years ago. He said that in the future everything will be chrome. He said that based on a cartoon, and in the cartoon the character went to the future and everything was chrome. And everything that wasn't chrome was spray-painted chrome by the police. So for me it was about future, the image of the future, and what happens when everything becomes the same, has the same surface. And another interesting thing about chrome is that it reflects everything, it's like a mirror. It reflects everything around it, to a point that it all disappears. Its own material disappears because it absorbs everything around it.

I also made like a big Schindler-like studio, a big house in the style of the Secession era. The idea was that it was a house but also a sculpture, and it disappears in the space. It's like the Secession is a white cube. If you put something like that in a white cube, it just becomes white. You can see it but you can't see it.

AF — I am obsessed by John Hejduk, an architect who never built anything. He is my master and I love him, as a teacher and/or role model. Is it possible you have the same obsession with Marcel Broodthaers?

RT — There is Duchamp, there is erm ... I'm trying to think of the name of the architect. He never built anything either, he is English. He proposed the palace, the fun palace - Cedric Price. But would you have any question for Broodthaers? Anything you would want to ask him?

AF — I would ask him if everything that was written about his work was true, because I don't think it is. I think he was much more poetic, a surrealist. I think there is much more to him than all the theories they wrote about him.



In our last conversation many years ago we talked about what the future will hold for art. And we thought there would be more surrealism coming into art. But now I think it's more melancholia.

RT — Yes, but that's because they don't know what the future is, so they aren't making the right art. They're not there yet.

AF — A friend of mine is the director of the Red Cross in the Middle East and he told me that they don't have an ideology for the future as the Red Cross.

RT — The Red Cross doesn't know what to do? Is that because they doubt what they are doing? It's more like a dead cause that they're there, but maybe it's not enough.

AF — I didn't go into the conversation.

RT — But the Red Cross is the same as with the UN. They are a very big organization and they spend a lot of money on themselves. So there you have a crisis, because you should actually be spending money on other people. It's probably costing more to run the organization than it is to take care of other people. And that's true for any aid or funding organization: they spend more money on organizing and managing themselves. Out of every dollar they should use 90 cents to give to the people, but instead it's just one cent.

AF — Also I remember he told me that all other ideologies failed, so what ideology should follow?

RT — Yes, it's good to read Philip K. Dick, somehow he already saw a lot in the 1950s. He knew what would happen in, say, the '80s. It's quite funny the way he looks at things.

AF — And for you?

RT — You mean for me, what will be in the future? Do you mean what will be in the future to keep mankind better? Or ... I think there are two ways, or maybe it's the same way. I think the problem with being in the future, which is now and we haven't gone anywhere, is that it's depressing. At this point in the history of mankind, having built, thought and learnt all these things, we are still killing each other. You realize it's not going to get much better, because human consciousness isn't going to change at the same time, at the same moment. People have to evolve. We should be without fear, without prejudice, without greed. We should be without all these things that are wrong.

AF — And talking about the future, our generation have parents that told us to get an education and you will have a future. I feel that this doesn't exist any more. That if you have children it's no longer so convincing that there will be a future in studying or getting an education. But maybe this crisis will be over in two years.

RT — Maybe it would be good to watch the film *Lung Neaw Visits His Neighbours* and see how he Lung Neaw [Uncle Neaw, the main character of the film] does things and then you can be in the future more easily.

AF — I didn't see the film, I only saw photos, video stills. Do you think it is something apocalyptic?

{Both laugh}.

RT — No I think it's more prophetic, it's more of a prophecy. Somebody said that to me. I don't think it's apocalyptic.

AF — You have been involved in art for so many years. Do you think somebody becomes famous for their quality or do you think it is all very relative?

RT — It's all relative in terms of recognition. Everybody has their qualities, whether you agree with them or not. One artist can speak very well and not do so well, another can't speak so well but can do very well, and then someone's work might not be so good but people can still think it's great.

AF — I take my students to see other studios and how artists work and run their studios and operate as professionals. We went to Joep van Lieshout's studio. He was very frustrated because 30 percent of what he does is designing, and he can do that in bed. And the other 70 percent is arranging art and organizing. Do you feel the same?

RT — No, I don't, because I don't have a studio.

# CINEMA SOLO 1996

## PERFORMANCE



'Thirty-six photos from my life with Pierre, a male mannequin I rented for one month. I lived alone in Villeneuve, a suburb of the French city of Grenoble for a month as an artist in residence, and I was afraid of the surroundings,' Alicia Framis explains. 'Police didn't enter

our neighbourhood. I saw things I couldn't explain and junkies used my door as a toilet. I decided to live with a mannequin. We stayed at home most of the time and I made photos of myself to capture memories of a unique moment in my life.'

Cinema Solo — 36 photographs — Collection Musée Château de Rochechouart, France













Cinema Solo — 36 photographs — Collection Musée Château de Rochechouart, France



# COLOPHON

## ALICIA FRAMIS – FRAMIS IN PROGRESS

SOLO EXHIBITION

Museum voor Moderne Kunst

Arnhem, Arnhem, The Netherlands

8 June 2013 – 29 September 2013

Galerie im Taxispalais, Innsbrück,  
Austria

14 December 2013 – 23 February 2014

MUSAC, Museo de Arte  
Contemporáneo de Castilla y León,  
León, Spain

15 March 2014 – 6 July 2014

Centre for Contemporary Art,  
Brugge, Belgium

20 April 2014 – 23 June 2014

## AUTHORS

Ole Bouman

Lilet Breddels

Bart Cassiman

Beate Ermacora

Alicia Framis

Manuel Oliveira

Manuel Segade

Rirkrit Tiravanija

Enrique Vila-Matas

Mirjam Westen

Rein Wolfs

## EDITING

Andrew May

## TRANSLATION

Donald Gardner (texts by Manuel Segade,  
Enrique Vila-Matas)

Stephanie Jennings (text by Manuel Oliveira)

Alison Kirkland (text by Beate Ermacora)

Andrew May (text by Mirjam Westen)

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