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PUBLIC LIGHTING

Ellert Haitjema

By making a minor intervention in the street, well-suited to public space (and my work), I shall make passers-by aware of a change in status from member of the public to performer. Watching versus being in the spotlight, in the public domain. The research is based on a divide between vision and research. The intervention involves a bright area of light, preferably some 6 metres in diameter, to be introduced into an as yet undecided location. The area, made up of radiating LEDs, will be incorporated into the pavement. If you walk across the LED area, you will be lit up from underneath; theatrically stripped of your anonymity and enticed into acting. Alongside the analogue application of the light and the participant, the lighting programme will also possess its own logic so that the response to the performer's actions will be unpredictable and the research will be able to concentrate on the process of action and response. The installation will function at irregular intervals. This type of direction not only allows you to manipulate the physical space, but the conduct of the passers-by as well. It will be a place where the reactions will be difficult to gauge. But I would expect people to become more aware of their surroundings, the surroundings that people usually take for granted. My approach focuses on the relationship between passers-by. People are more inclined to make contact if something unexpected happens; even strangers will then start talking to each other. Magnifying this aspect and making it manifest will encourage people to come out of isolation. I am expecting a response to the specific characteristics of this spot; I expect that it will on the one hand satisfy my basic assumptions and that the reactions will be predetermined. On the other hand, I think it will provide enough opportunity for individual or collective connections. They will probably vary, as they are temporary and largely influenced by local situations and events. You cannot predict chance. Seen in this light, the modification is as safe (there is more light) as it is disturbing, and just as functional as it is confusing.

Ellert Haitjema is an Amsterdam-based visual artist. He studied at various institutions including the Gerrit Rietveld Academy where he has been a lecturer since 1995. As visual artist, in addition to making sculptures, photographs, installations and publications, he is also an adventurous researcher. In 2006 he coordinated 'A Leap in the Dark', an exhibition of photography with work by students at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy.