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Gerrit Rietveld Academie

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Rini Hurkmans

Research

Within the LAPS research group, [Rini Hurkmans](#) is investigating the theories and philosophies of art that influence an initiative of hers, the work of art [Flag of Compassion](#).

Flag of Compassion is a conceptual work of art that functions within the field of art and within the social context. The work consists of a word (compassion), an instrument (a flag), a foundation (Unda Foundation) with a board and a distribution network including the website www.flagofcompassion.com.

The work of art *Flag of Compassion* explores how the idea of compassion operates in our society. The work does not generate answers, but leaves behind it a trail of expressions of how people think about compassion and thus about ethics. It shows how differently people in society today formulate conditions about a sense of community, for example, and how to deal with other people and our surroundings. It reveals how differently people think about norms and values. The website shows how this processual work of art is constantly in motion.

The Flag is a neutral instrument in itself. It can be used to express the general human feeling of compassion, irrespective of political, religious, social or cultural institutions, race and gender. The Unda Foundation that manages the work of art does not itself pronounce on what and when compassion is at stake, but it activates and encourages people to think about the notion of compassion and challenges them to do something with this Flag. The Foundation goes on to ask them to make their motivations known and visible in image and text and puts these on the website.

The research project that sets out from a work of art is a mixture with a strong dose of theory, it makes the link to the relation between art and society, and provides a further analytical foundation. The project is not confined to the theoretical terrain but constantly operates within and refers to the context/functioning of the existing work of art. This brings out the interaction between theory and practice. It reveals how the position of a work of art is partly determined by the questions it raises and its strategies of what is sayable and visible. The project is an analytical foundation and discussion of a work of art that deploys unconventional strategies. It is a work of art that constantly finds itself caught in the field of tension between its manifestation and its self-destructive tendency as a work of art. The work of art hopes to contribute to the current debate on new positions that art could adopt.

This research project is linked in a number of ways to teaching at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie. As part of the project, Hurkmans has put together a small research group consisting of a group of (ex-)students from the [Gerrit Rietveld Academie](#) and the [University of Amsterdam](#) from various backgrounds to study and discuss the work together. This has resulted in the Flag of Compassion Manifesto and the Flag of Compassion Atlas. As a tutor at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, she passes on the knowledge acquired to her students. Students from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie have themselves deployed the Flag of Compassion on several occasions.

The Flag of Compassion Atlas, a diagram or ground plan that shows how the work of art functions, reveals

which themes, questions and oppositions are concealed within the work. This atlas operates as a sort of backbone in this final stage of Hurkmans' research. She wants to hold conversations with thinkers, writers and artists from a variety of perspectives and to join with them in discussing and testing the various topics touched on by this work of art from the perspectives of philosophy, ethics, aesthetics and sociology.

Hurkmans is currently working with Jeroen Boomgaard (LAPS research fellow), Astrid Vorstermans (publisher [Valiz](#)) and Judith Westerveld (artist, Gerrit Rietveld Academie alumni) on a project plan that will bring together the results of the research. This project plan will consist of three parts: a paper book in English; an e-book for the Dutch texts on the web; and one or more events such as participatory action with a possibly educational slant, an exhibition and a symposium or panel discussion. Hurkmans is in contact with various museums and institutions in this connection.

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