

Residency for the People Diary

June 28, 2020

The past three weeks, I've had no time to write in my diary. It was busy at MU, and then I had jobs for SuccessDay, Romee van Oers, Joris Kuipers, Nouch, Atelier NL, wedding photographer WeGraphy, and Lucas Maassen. Lucas seems to be on to something, by the way. He has set up a residency programme for non-artists, the Residency for the People, together with Onomatopée. They did some pilot projects to see if people could use the windfall of the corona crisis to realise their dreams if they were given the opportunities residencies normally only offer to artists. Called the Quarantine Sessions, I really like the plans the participants worked on. Two kids designed their own skateboard, an older farmer couple are trying to find a successor by setting up a Farmer-in-Residence, and a designer made a book just for herself – without knowing its content. I'm translating the stories for a newspaper Onomatopée is publishing; they make me smile.

September 4, 2020

I'm seeing Lucas about a text for Residency for the People. Our conversation takes an interesting turn when he describes a meeting he participated in, between the DDW organisation and a group of designers. The topic was an invitation-only DDW. "Shouldn't we take the opportunity to address the corona crisis?" Lucas asked. "DDW's marketing is all about rising to the occasion: 'if not now, then when; if not us, then who?'" So, what are we going to do?" "What are you talking about?" one of his colleagues responded. "That's completely irrelevant." His only concern was that his millionaire clients from America and Asia wouldn't show up. "I'm finding it harder and harder to motivate myself," Lucas says. "It is all about the money. The gallery sells a piece to some rich collector, I'm producing it for the umpteenth time, it pays my bills. It's one of the things I liked about my last project, Wall Street. I was working with people, most of them not artists or designers, who just had a plan they wanted to realise. It was so good to see that motivation, to feel they actually wanted to do something. That's what I am hoping to find in the Residency for the People as well."

September 6, 2020

Texts for the Residency for the People, based on interviews Lucas recorded during a workshop creative mask-making with a group of expat women, performed on the lawn in front of Eindhoven central station. I transcribe their stories and draft a first paragraph before I go to bed.

September 7, 2020

I finish the interview texts. The impression that my writing has improved, has become more concise and fluent, at least partly as a result of all the short project descriptions I've been doing for Nouch.

September 22, 2020

To Eindhoven for a meeting with Lucas and Quentin, the French intern at Onomatopee who is designing the Rietveld by the People publication. It's a side-project of the Residency for the People: Rietveld by the People: DIY modernism. Lucas bought a bunch of Rietveld chair copies on eBay to show them at Onomatopee and display images of the whole project in the Rietveld Bus Stop next to city hall. The publication will be based on the book How to Construct Rietveld Furniture with Rietveld's original working plans. I'll be editing interviews with the people who sold their Rietveld copies, and write an introduction to the book. We discuss the best layout, it's a nice collaboration. Usine's melon juice lemonade is lovely.

September 26, 2020

Lucas is happy with the texts. On his regular scale from nice to really nice, this is super nice.

From the introduction:

How tempting it is – in these times of reinvigorated nationalism, of emphasis on self-interest and personal identity – to point back at the principles of The Style and call for more solidarity. 'Let's look for what we have in common, for what is universally human!' But that wouldn't do justice to the complex person Rietveld must have been. The antiquated website of the Foundation copyrights G.Th. Rietveld carries the following quote, from his oration at the reception of an honorary doctorate from the Technical University Delft, in 1964:

't is not religion, that guides and has guided me.

't is not idealism, that compels me.

't is pure egoism, the realisation of my own existence.

November 6, 2020

I shout with joy, jump up and down, call my parents, call the children, call my friends or send them messages: I PASSED MY EXAMINATION! We have cake but first I have to make an appointment at the municipality office to apply for my driver's license. They can see me this afternoon. Meanwhile I call B, who would like me to write a short text to accompany his final intervention at Museum Het Valkhof. "Do you want anything in return?" he asks. Ooooh sigh. Some emails, a text for Atelier NL, last corrections for Rietveld by the People.