

Residency for the People
Diary

January 8, 2021

It's a beautiful day. The sun is low on the horizon, shining directly in my eyes. Even with the visor down, I can't possibly read the signs above the road as the blinding light from behind turns the shields into dark shadows that promise nothing but doom if I make an ill-informed decision. It's only the second time I'm driving to Eindhoven and all I remember is I have to switch lanes at some point if I don't want to end up in Venlo. With a fair amount of luck, I manage to take the right exit to the city centre and I show up at Kerkstraat 1 a mere 25 minutes late. Lucas doesn't seem to mind too much, he's busy sawing tabletops with Waew. It's funny, I feel I know her even though we've never met. But why? Suddenly I remember: the interviews. Waew was one of the women at the workshop creative mask-making last September. I listened to the recording of her voice as I transcribed her story. Her mother back in Thailand was worried sick that Waew might catch the virus, so they had video calls nearly every day. Her masks were made of plastic and had a strong graphic impact. Now she's assisting Lucas with the interior of the bar.

To escape the dust and the noise, Lucas takes me to the office at the first floor. Nothing fancy, all a bit improvised. There are some beautiful industrial lamps lying about. "I came across them somewhere, they were dirt cheap – I knew they would come in handy." Somehow, this seems to be typically Lucas. He sees qualities in objects and puts them to use. Come to think of it, he probably looks at people in much the same way. I remember his reaction when I told him I wasn't going to stay with MU: "I think I understand why, and I'm sure you'll find your place." And now we're sitting here talking about the Residency for the People, to see if I might not get more closely involved. Documenting the process perhaps, communicating it in some way or another. "The thing is," Lucas says: "I was supposed to be doing this with Onomatopoe. The residency would be part of their programme. I would mainly organise the residencies while Onomatopoe would look for the necessary funding and provide the platform, the institutional context, etc. We were going to run the bar together. Then it fell through. I don't want to get into details, but..." "That's so typical of the art world, isn't it? You're never sure of anything until it is actually done." "Well, anyway – at first I wanted to find another organisation or institution to adopt the project, but then I thought it might be better to be completely independent. I've got the bar, the idea for the residency is good, we've already made a good start with the Quarantine Sessions and I'm sure we can find places to show the results... So now I'm looking for some people who like to help set it up."

The last time I said 'yes' when someone asked me to get more closely involved, I ended up feeling pretty miserable. So why do I not hesitate much longer? "You know Lucas, I could spend the rest of my life in my study, reading and writing, and probably be perfectly happy, but I don't want to be so reclusive. I'm not necessarily looking to be in the spotlights, but I

don't think I should always keep a safe distance either." The fighting is a far away, I'm watching the rebels load and fire their multiple rocket launcher towards the government position on a few tiny hills in the plain. They have so little ammunition that they can fire only one shell at a time. The government artillery is firing back. Initially, their aim is way off, but it's gradually getting more accurate. The last grenade exploded only some hundred metres to the west. "So yes, I would like to get involved. I could write texts about the projects, help with applications..." "But what would you get out of it?" "It's a cool project, interesting, edgy, with lots of variety. I'd be meeting all kinds of interesting people – residents and the experts we bring in to assist them. And there would be a lot of space for me to define my own role, figure out where I fit in. I believe it could be really nice." "We would need to find a way to pay you, of course." "Yeah... I couldn't do it just for the fun of it. No for long anyway."

We discuss the residencies Lucas has been planning so far. One would be with François Chambard, a French designer living in New York who finished a Master at the Design Academy last year. He wants to reshape his own design practice to work with neurodiverse people who are exceptionally gifted in some area or other, if I get it right. Lucas mentions a Stijn someone (can't find his last name, no matter how hard I squeeze the search engine) who creates these crude but beautiful fuse boxes and connector boxes. The second residency would be a project with the Story Only trio at the Music Theatre. (I later find out it's Storioni.) And then there's another residency, in collaboration with Atelier NL, to invite an entire street to design and produce their own personal coffee cups, to be used here in the bar. Obviously, they can take a set home as well. As for funding: we're going to look into the possibilities to apply for SnelGeld at Cultuur Eindhoven. SnelGeld... it sounds like a swindle or a money transfer service that allows immigrants to send their hard-earned cash back home. EasyMoney... And those relatives back home have no idea how hard life is in Europe. It reminds me of Masria, a single mom of two boys who was not just supporting herself and the kids on a healthcare job during the day and cleaning jobs in the evening, but also her mother and some siblings she left behind in Mogadishu. She kept nothing for herself; her home was clean but sparsely furnished. Then, one day, she got a very distressing call that her brother had been kidnapped and the family had to pay a ransom of ten thousand dollars for his release. Masria sent whatever she could, only to learn later that her brother had staged the whole thing. Her relatives were convinced that she was living comfortably in the Netherlands and just wouldn't share her wealth with them. QuickMoney, FastMoney... we need to figure out how that works. And we will probably have to set up a foundation.

January 11, 2021

Mail to Lucas about possible subsidies. Text for GGD about keeping 1,5 meters distance, call to M about the best way to go about setting up a foundation. She did it for her own projects, so she should have some idea... Sadly, we mainly talk about her breakup with G. It doesn't surprise me much, but I feel very sorry for them anyway. The foundation can wait.

January 27, 2021

Texts for SnelGed application for Residency for the People, followed by skype meeting with Lucas. We seem to be heading in the right direction.