

Do & Hope

Pier Stockholm

7 February - 22 March, 2015
at Gleichapel, Paris



Snippets
an interview with **Pier Stockholm**
on the occasion of the exhibition

by *Nanda Janssen*

STUDIO

In the past few years my studio has entered my art practice. My work deals with my tools and materials as well as the way they are organised. Let's call it choreography. In the studio everything has a function and is there for a reason. In the studio I set the rules. Recently a friend called my studio my best piece.

In a white cube different rules and a different choreography apply. I've tried to blend my studio space with the Gleichapel space. For instance, I've even included my own fluorescent lights from the studio. I've always hated artists that use fluorescent lighting and now I'm one of them.

TOOLS

Since childhood I have loved tools. As an artist I need tools to produce my work. From the start I've used all sorts of office equipment like a pair of compasses, a perforator, rulers, pins, elastic bands, Dymo tags and spirit levels. Some works dictated the use of a new tool. The clamp came in when I started to draw long lines with the ruler. The clamp prevented the ruler from sliding. At some point the tools started to enter my work. I realised my work was more interesting before the finished stage: the moment when the tools' interaction was still at play. I've now reached the phase where the tools have become a key element. Not only do they help to construct the work, they have become my material as well.

The range of tools has widened. I'm not solely using office equipment anymore. I've started to use straps, plastic ties, electric cable, rope and

even my very own cutting table. These tools are not included for show, but they have always served a function. So slowly the office aesthetic is making way for another aesthetic. I buy the industrial items in ordinary construction stores. The most beautiful things can be found in the most ruthless environment.

RULES

About ten years ago, a friend and I agreed to do a show on a squash court and to play squash in a gallery. Although the plan hasn't been executed yet, it reflects my attraction to rules. The lines in a squash court communicate the rules and deliver a beautiful intricate pattern! Rules are like deadlines and too much freedom is a burden. My work often starts with a rule that I set myself or by drawing a geometric diagram, a colour chart or another existing system. Working on them, I allow unexpected things to happen. That's what it is all about.

For instance, while doing the circular chromatic colour scheme, featured in *Do & Hope*, I got the idea to cut out circles and to place them elsewhere in the drawing. By doing so, I jammed this particular system, the colour scheme. That's where the shift appears. Then again, the sizes of the cut outs are determined by the size of the stencil. They come in three sizes and hence my circles have three sizes. Tools and rules!

In French, 'règle' means both ruler and rule. In English these two words are related as well. I apply the double meaning in my work. I made grid drawings with the help of a ruler. Both ruler and the span of my arm defined the width of the line and thus of the drawing. It's like mapping my

body with the limitation of my tools.

COLOUR SCHEMES

In the three other colour schemes, two systems are merged: the international paper size standard for the A series and the Pantone colour system. I've made my own variation of this schema depicting the proportions of the various A paper sizes (like A4 and A5) and coloured it with various shades of a Pantone colour. Something else is at play too: handmade versus computer processed. I made them look like gouaches.

In reality they are computer processed and digitally printed. The two works in A4 size are printed on traditional photography paper, cotton, and the larger one is printed on aluminium.

My favourite paintings by Gerhard Richter are his colour charts. Producing them he applied various rules. In some, Richter used arbitrarily chosen commercial colour samples, in others he mixed primary colours following a strict mathematical rule. This mix of colours, geometry and rules is very appealing to me.

PRIMARY COLOURS

Often my tools or materials have a primary colour. Some people associate them with Mondrian. That is the weight of reference. It is not my reference though. Primary colours existed before Mondrian. I do relate primary colours to modernism but foremost to Oskar Schlemmer who worked at the Bauhaus. It's not his paintings that I'm interested in but his 'Triadisches Ballett'. Actors transfigured into geometric shapes in primary colours. The

low tech and measurement aspect are alluring too. Schlemmer's work is simple and timeless: it could have been made today.

Primary colours are simply the most striking colours.

HOPE

'Do & Hope' is the title of the exhibition. It's derived from a sixteenth century allegorical engraving that was depicted as a logo on an old book. I've adopted it for the logo of this exhibition. The engraving depicts a man working the land with a shovel. This image is accompanied by the motto 'Fac & Spera', Latin for 'Do & Hope'. In an earlier version of this drawing, the motto is backed up with a wooden coffin depicted behind a man. If you don't work, you die.

I relate this motto to the Anglo-Irish explorer Ernest Shackleton. He tried to cross Antarctica via the south pole. During their mission an accident happened and in my opinion this is where art happens: in the unexpected. The ship, called 'Endurance', was stuck in the ice. The pressure of the accumulating ice broke the ship. Shackleton and his crew had to camp for almost a year, waiting for summer to arrive. The moment the ice would melt and the ship would be freed. They had oceans of time. Although Shackleton often lost faith, he tried not to show it to his crew. When summer finally came, they built another boat from the damaged ship and sailed off. Shackleton became famous not by setting a new record, but by surviving. He became a hero for something that wasn't planned.

Art is very similar to Shackleton's story and that of other explorers. You start with

an idea and you don't know what will happen. Like the explorers who got stuck in the ice, you have to believe. Art is about endurance, about losing faith and rediscovering it.

REFERENCES

My references, a wrapped pile of papers is hovering in the air. On purpose I've put the image of the classic Greek column on top and like the idea of columns flying, while in reality they do everything but that. I compiled the book 'the weight of references' out of all the images I collected over the years. I presented the book last December at Miami's Untitled Art Fair. Here at Gleichapel, I use the original source material for the first time, as a sculpture.

The photo sequence at the end of the book visualises that a reference can be both a stimulus and a burden. At some point I trip over the chord by which the references are suspended and got hit by them.

I collected these images for my own pleasure. The book gives me the opportunity to show the 'backstage' of my work to others. The images relate to (modernist) architecture, history, design, patterns, measurements, diagrams, scale, rituals, classification, icons and ornaments.

The traces that I've left on the collected images are clearly visible in the book. They've got creases and folds. On some I drew. Traces of me and traces of time that slipped in accidentally. I like these personal stories and references and I try to slip them in my work. On the one hand I use universal systems (like measurements, scales, Pantone) on the other hand these personal thoughts and interactions. The Shackleton book and the Guardian newspaper presented in *Do & Hope* hint at these personal references.

Nanda Janssen is a Dutch curator and art critic. She's currently on a residency in Paris, supported by the Mondriaan Fund.

The logo for Gleichapel is a stylized, handwritten-style script. The letters are fluid and connected, with a prominent 'G' and 'A'. The overall aesthetic is elegant and artistic, matching the gallery's focus on modernist and architectural themes.

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