

Hereisthere: three words in one, like the three artists behind this project: Anton Aeki, Anouk De Clercq, Heidi Voet.

Hereisthere: two environments in one, like the cities behind it – Brussels, Beijing and the others that are to follow.

Hereisthere: a single place on the internet. Where you are, is where it happens.

To place oneself into the other is the pinnacle of imagination. It presupposes an other to begin with. But fusion, erasure is needed at the end. That's what 'hereisthere' is about.

It goes like this: three artists from Brussels, with a degree of experience when it comes to 'other' people and places, start a project together in Beijing. A number of previous acquaintances with the Chinese reality are taken as a starting-point: scraps of visits, stories, images, sounds. Traces of another language, another culture, other politics and one billion people, at thousands of kilometres from here, make out the challenge. On the spot, the other, the distance and the perspective of the tourist turn into an equal, into contact and a committed way of seeing. Becoming, transforming, the process turns into being, cherishing, the *fait accompli*. The place of departure merges with the place of arrival. The three artists merge with each other and their surroundings. Three words merge into the single name of this project.

Or wait. Let's start again. Maybe there's another form of imagination which is even stronger: to place oneself into oneself. The question of Alice – "How do I know what I think, till I see what I say?" – and its continuation by Edmund Carpenter – "And how do I know who I am, until I see myself as others see me?" – takes you to the core of this project. Hereisthere, that's you. The visitor, that's you. The spectator, that's you. The one who is being watched, that's you. You are the artist and this is the place where you find yourself.

Hereisthere is no longer about some vague other and definitely not about a vague (here &) 'elsewhere'. It is about a very specific person in a very specific place at a very specific moment in a very specific time. A clear 'here.there' with a single verb in between. This is the place you can never forget. The place that you are. The place where you feel comfortable – or uncomfortable. The place under construction and in destruction – attractively new and desperately in ruins. Hereisthere, that's the projects and the debris you carry around with you everywhere. In the official languages of Brussels – a city where all the inhabitants together mingle dozens of languages every day – it sounds like this: "*hier est ici*" – "*gisteren is hier*". Yesterday (*hier* in French) is here (*hier* in Dutch/Flemish): the unrelenting fusion you carry around with you all over, no matter where you are.

The new is everywhere on this website, just like the debris from which the present arises. The twentieth century has gone, irrevocably. Rem Koolhaas' impersonal vague and always clean *generic space* or Marc Augé's *non-lieu* – fascinating concepts of continuous dislocation, being under way *between* two places, compelling communication – no longer apply. If the generic space, the non-place of the *lounge* represents the nineties of the twentieth century, the very specific place of the building yard represents the zero years of the twenty first century. It

can hardly be a coincidence that the place which carries the name of the first decade of this century, is also one of the most specific ones: Ground Zero – the debris, the yard, the project. We've all been there.

The early twenty-first century is no longer an era of mediation, of constantly being under way, of perpetual in-between. This is the era of continuous connection and of the place which is always characteristic – the places we *are* ourselves and not the places we have to *become*. This is the you.me era of the individual, the here.there moment of the capsule. The common denominator is the tiniest personal entity – the distant touristic perspective of the twentieth century is the individual committed perspective in the twenty-first.

Hereisthere is the name of this project, not 'here *and* there'. The interspace has been erased. The conjunction, from which something new arises, makes way for the equation. A fusion. A new beginning. Here is now – no *and*, no conjunction, no opposite, no becoming, no potentiality, not even an urgency, but pure actuality. Hereisthere is not merely a very specific place – as specific as Brussels and Beijing, as Kortrijk or Ikea, as the coffeeshop or the centre for the arts – it is also a highly specific moment.

Hereisthere.org is the address, the site, the interchange where everything always comes together, just for a while; a place on the internet. As vague as the internet was in the nineties – looking for content and for this vague, generic non-place of cyberspace – that is how specific it has become today: as specific as any of its users; as specific as the person who *you* are; as specific as the place where *you* are. This is the place where everything comes together: all those bits and pieces we pick up here and there – no, not here *and* there, but *herethere* – and which keep coming towards us. Shreds of familiar and alien languages, of here and of there, people, objects, stones, buildings, ruins, languages, photographs, texts, looks, sounds which help you communicate; which help you to make clear who you are, where you are. Tiny sensations determining the way you look at the world and the way the world looks at you.

Hereisthere is the internet: the medium which came about towards the end of the twentieth century, shaping the twenty-first. The medium without a future or a past, merely actuality. The database which constantly erases and updates itself, which looks different at every visit. The every-day tabula rasa which makes things are the way they are at the push of a button. Always new, challenging and surprising. A gigantic memory which is erased just as easily as it is constructed. The place which looks the same all over. What was here today, will be there tomorrow.

It is no coincidence that hereisthere takes of in Brussels – the heart of the old world where these artists live – and starts in Beijing – the heart of the new world, where the artists resided. These are more than symbolical places of the ultimate clear felling, of the final tabula rasa, of the ruin to complete it all. Whereas Brussels erases itself, to make way for a unified Europe, Beijing erases itself to make way for the new economic miracle; trying to join the rest of the world. The irony of fate: through the 'Modern China Art Foundation' the artists came into contact with the organizers of 'Borderline', a festival for video, new media and performance art. Thanks to an organization which carries *modernity* and a festival which carries the *border* in its name, the artists get in touch with the past under

modern times and the borderlines between them. There lies the core of this project: to move beyond modernity, past the borderline.

Places and times, situations and people merging into something highly concrete? Inevitably this reminds us of 'Mille Plateaux', the book by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. At the start of their treatise from 1980 Deleuze and Guattari explained how they wrote together: "Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. Here we have made use of everything that came within range, what was closest as well as farthest away. We have assigned clever pseudonyms to prevent recognition. Why have we kept our own names? Out of habit, purely out of habit. To make ourselves unrecognizable in turn."

In more than one way here there is the continuation of the project by Deleuze and Guattari. Just like the philosophers these artists make use of anything they encounter, nearby or from afar. They call on ancient and new customs and hide their identity as well. Names, however, are no longer needed. And there is no such thing as a multiplication of personalities in this case. What is left is a fusion in which each becomes one – a custom like any other in this digital age. This digital age in which deleuzo-guattarian concepts as the *rhizome* or *becoming* once played such a major part. There are no rhizomes in here there, but dots; there is no becoming, but being. No virtuality, but actuality. No fruitful interspace, no middle, but space itself, always in the middle.

If it's here, it's there. It is as concrete as that. As concrete as music, a place or an object can be. Therefore here there is also a series of CDs and a series of installations with concrete sounds and concrete objects which sound exactly the same here as there, and look precisely the same here and there. Or just the opposite. For your words, are her sounds. His mass product, is your design. A table there, is a piece of a wall here. What remains is a single fascinating place for your exploration: here there.

Pieter Van Bogaert
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