

## World as Lover, World as Self

October 2020 - December 2021

*Chapter 2: A Field without Boundaries by Harm van den Dorpel*

5 February - 12 June 2021

Over the course of 14 months we have invited four artists to work with us to rework existing artwork and to help us experiment with the exhibition format. We also create a moment where the solo exhibition becomes a fleeting duo exhibition, where the exhibition chapters that fade in and out of each other. As a format, we see the chapters crossing over as similar to the crossfade in film or in music. The artworks will intermingle, creating entangled relationships and networks of associations.

Inspired by environmental activist and Buddhist scholar Joanna Macy, our exhibition *World As Lover, World As Self* turns to contemporary art to help us to “relinquish our separateness” and take account of the residue of the world that we think we know. Our program does this through the concept of defamiliarization as a means to “turn the familiar strange” to redefine the self and our subsequent community. Defamiliarization, or aesthetic distance, is a literary and artistic technique coined by Russian Formalists during the outbreak of the 1918 flu pandemic. According to the formalists, the technique uses language in a way that ordinary objects are made to be reconsidered, that what is in front of us might surpass our assumptive narratives. How can bodies, technologies and modes of being be taken outside of predefined cultural presumptions in order to de-categorise, to shapeshift, to morph, to glimmer, to shimmer. In this program, we estrange, not to create a ‘foreign’ or ‘other’ but to radically rethink community, to engage with the World as Lover, and as Self.

*Now it can dawn on us: we are our world knowing itself. We can relinquish our separateness. We can come home again—and participate in our world in a richer, more responsible and poignantly beautiful way than before, in our infancy. Because of the journey, we undertook to distance ourselves from our world; it is no longer undifferentiated from us. It can appear to us now both as self and as lover. Relating to our world with the full measure of our being, we partake of the qualities of both.*

– Joanna Macy, *World as Lover, World as Self*, 2007, Parallex Press

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Currently open by appointment

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In Chapter 2: A Field Without Boundaries, we present a back-catalogue of works made by Harm van den Dorpel over the past few years. Starting in February 2021, Shimmer will regularly ‘refresh’ the exhibition to reformat the value systems of artistic and curatorial exhibition-making by creating shifting sets and generations within A Field Without Boundaries.

In the first phase, we present work of his series *Death Imitates Language*, which emerged from a genetic algorithm written by the artist, then rendered onto acrylic glass through finely milled perforations that seduce the eye into seeing liquid forms. The artist took the title from the paper ‘Language and mathematics: a field without boundaries’ (2013) by Candia Morgan, who explores the ways in which language interacts with the infinite system of mathematics. She writes,

It is widely acknowledged within the field of mathematics education that language plays an important (or even an essential role) in the learning, teaching, and doing of mathematics. However general acceptance of the importance of language is not matched by agreement about what this role (or these roles) might be, or even about what the term language itself encompasses.

Harm’s early encounter with the limitless potential of computer programming and exhibiting on the Internet, made him aware of the limitations traditionally encountered in the production and display of art. Unlike paint and marble, programming languages are free to use, and their potential is only limited by the intelligence and perseverance of their programmers. Equally, the Internet offered a venue of infinite exhibition possibilities, without gatekeepers or real estate costs (or so it seemed).

Chapter 2: A Field Without Boundaries embraces an expansive conception of an ‘exhibition’. Not entirely a solo show – A Field Without Boundaries temporarily overlaps with Chapter 1: City Pollen by Magali Reus. The works on display were chosen in close dialogue between the artist and Shimmer’s curators, establishing new dialogues between existing works, but also placing them in the presence of new pieces. The new pieces gesture towards manifestations of indeterminacy.

A recurring formal characteristic found in many works on display, is based on the geometric form known as the ‘squircle’; an intermediate shape fusing a square and a circle. This ‘impure’ shape is often used by user interface designers to give software a more ‘organic’ and ‘user friendly’ appeal, but its in-between status lends it an awkward relationship to other, more defined geometric forms with which it interacts. The squircle also appears in a series of squircle-shaped stickers that can be applied to surfaces within the exhibition both to ‘distribute’ the work, querying its ‘location’ in space, as well as to resist the notion of a ‘final form’ of the exhibition itself.

Finally, presented are a series of nested brown paper bags from which the artist hand-cuts organic shapes. Referencing the chance-based practice of late dadaist artist Hans Arp, van den Dorpel creates logics within logics, and layerings of intentional serendipity.

### About the artist

Harm van den Dorpel (born 1981) is a Berlin-based artist whose practice includes the creation of sculpture, collage, computer animation, computer-generated graphics and interaction design. His work has been widely shown at exhibitions including the New Museum in New York, MoMA PS1 in New York, Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing, Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw, MMCA Seoul, ZKM Karlsruhe, and the Netherlands Media Art Institute in Amsterdam. In 2015, Van den Dorpel started “left gallery”: an online gallery that commissions, produces, and sells downloadable files.

### Artwork list

Vuwtvvyft Zcuviey Dayssuck, 2016,  
100 x 100 x 2cm

A field without boundaries, 2021, sticker

Trebles, 2019 UltraChrome HD print on Hahnemühle paper 100 x 100 cm

Cussos Unfence Thermographers, 2018  
UltraChrome HD print on Hahnemühle paper  
100 x 100 cm

Juancar Zolim Juancar, 100 x 100 x 4cm

Strategies, video, 2011

Exhibition Report 1  
Date: 6 February 2021  
Weather: blue skies, sunny as hell  
Written by Shimmer

1 work installed on the south wall, bigger than the wall itself  
Can see-through, but obscured  
Surface smooth  
Highly reflective  
I can't get out of the image  
Unless I look from an angle  
Caught up and in and along and with  
Walk back and forth find the best position to experience the work  
Changes depend on the time of day,  
Changes depend on the weather  
Always a pleasure  
It's complete and perfect  
It moves like water, but not really, but in the way that water moves in painting  
From the side, the screws sandwich the foam-like material in place  
The material is foaming, squishy, a protective layer, suddy,  
The material used to protect, as new, in mint condition  
Minty-green, blue-hues, silvery  
Perforated, dare I say porous, but I daren't, as it's not  
Punctuated, small fine holes, revealing more, and more, and more  
And yet then also fading away, covering, concealing, protecting  
Is this obscured or is this revealed in time, unfolding, recalibrating  
Refreshing, a slow build,  
By machine  
Factory produced  
Two works made of brown paper, bags within bags within a bag  
Make me think of decoupage that I made as a child with my mother  
Layer upon layer  
But instead, each piece is hand-cut, taken away but adds something  
Smooth cuts, rounded edges,  
Two eyes light up  
Handle with care, with steady hands  
By hand  
Shadow and revealed  
Bags carry, conceal, rough,  
1 work on the computer  
screen saver  
Images change but a tiny bit slower than expected  
Frosted, blurring, like sandblasted glass, but not, you know  
The blackened screen reveals my image of

splatters and smudge  
Refreshed with a new image, relief, change  
A small circle in the centre,  
The constant,  
Hot-cornered for a quick flick of the wrist to bring forth the image  
Sometimes do it by accident,  
Sometimes on purpose  
Sometimes for myself,  
Sometimes to show someone else  
The laptop and monitor have different images, is that supposed to happen?  
1 work many times over  
Highly reflective  
I can't get out of the image  
Unless I look from an angle  
Caught up and in and along and with  
Could use to reapply lipstick  
I saw someone do that once, and the curator was shocked  
I usually check to see if my glasses are crooked, will Harm mind?  
A squircle  
Sounds tasty  
Summery  
Not square  
Not circle  
Both  
Imperfect, but in a good way, like how musicians talk about finding that imperfect sound that makes the song  
Offbeat, but totally necessary to make it work  
Its really sticky

## Exhibition Report 2

Date: Friday 5 March 2021

Weather: bright blue sky, some clouds

Written by Manique Hendriks

“There’s really nothing at Waalhaven except maybe for some local businesses. Are you sure you need to go there?” is the first thing the Uber driver asks me as he picks me up from Rotterdam Central Station. As we approach the port we are welcomed by large cranes in the sky, colorful containers stacked like tetris blocks and a flock of screeching seagulls.

From Shimmers exhibition space the view stretches over the last non-digital port of Rotterdam. The bright blue sky with clouds adrift accompanies various works by Harm van den Dorpel that are on view and match the freshly painted floor of the space. The ever changing environment of the port, with large ships constantly docking and undocking, perfectly fits the continuous changing nature in the works of Harm.

I am greeted by a big print from the Death Imitates Language (2016) series, placed between two windows overlooking the harbour. Light glistens on the multilayered UV print existing of laser polished transparent plexiglass with matte packaging foil sandwiched in between. Daylight pierces through the tiny holes in the plexiglass. The print is the outcome of an algorithmic system working with micro feedback initiated by the artist. A moment forever frozen in time. The fluid shapes of the print are born digital and brought into the physical space by translating them into a material form. I’m glad to join them IRL.

The unfixed state of the internet as well as Harm van den Dorpel’s works is reflected in the way the works are exhibited; not all of them are hung on the wall, one framed print from the Mutant Garden software (2019 - ongoing) is leaning against the wooden packing crate. Rays of sunlight reflect onto the glass creating abstract forms and patterns on the blue painted floor. The atmosphere is calming. The experience feels unique; I’m sure next time I am back everything will be different. And that fills my heart with excitement.

Shimmers  
in  
the

MANIQUE HENDRICKS (1992) studied art history at the University of Amsterdam, graduating in 2015 with a thesis on post-internet art and the notion of authorship in the digital age. In 2017 she obtained her Master’s degree in Heritage Studies after pursuing the two-year Museum conservator track while working at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam as a curatorial trainee. Manique currently works as a freelance curator, writer and researcher with a focus on contemporary (media) art, visual and digital culture. Her practice touches upon various themes as identity, club culture, camp and representation. Manique is affiliated with Amsterdam based media art platform LIMA, where she works as a junior conservator, art platform 37PK and nomadic art platform Sugar Pop institute.

### ABOUT THE EXHIBITION REPORT

Exhibition reports are written in response to what is presented in the different refreshes of Chapter 2: A Field Without Boundaries by Harm van den Dorpel. The exhibition is part of World as Lover, World as Self a year-long exhibition program curated by Shimmer, 2020-21.

The exhibition reports take its cue from Prue Gibson “[...] an attempt to create an entity that equals the impetus; that is, the writing meets the artwork, which meets the viewer, which meets the gallery space, which meets the air conditioning, which meets a raised eyebrow, which meets a phone ringing, which meets the art writing” (After The Passions: Object-Oriented Ontology, Art and Art-writing, 2014)