

An Opening Speech

Hello, welcome to the opening of this exhibition, titled *BAD – INSIDE OUT – FOR YOU*, on the occasion of South Explorer.

Stichting B.a.d has a number of guest-studios for national and international artists. I am one of those guest-artists. My name is Katinka van Gorkum. Hello. Since mid April I have been living in studio 302, up there. I came to live here in the midst of the lockdown and didn't get involved in this exhibition until quite late. I know the participating artists a bit, but not too much about their work. You could say I'm an outsider. Nevertheless, I wish to take the floor.

This is an opening speech for an exhibition you will never physically enter, that can only be seen from the outside. This is an opening speech in which I will say something about a fly, and about perspectives. An opening speech for an exhibition and its participants whom I know through their names on a floor plan, stuff in the hallways and conversations in the kitchen that are sometimes about art, often about cleaning or food or stuff that needs to be moved. The vacuum cleaner is broken. We have been out of salt for some weeks now.

I know the people in this building through the arrangement of a kitchen cupboard: organizing principles, ideas about size, color, form. Some days, a certain Delft blue plate belongs with the big plates. Other days, it classifies as a small plate or as a soup plate. In the Netherlands, one and a half meters seems a matter of opinion and relativity – seen from the perspective of my Hungarian girlfriend. Perhaps the same applies to form and color.

This is an opening speech by someone who is speaking, but who doesn't necessarily know what to say. Or what it means to take the word on behalf of one person. I want to say something because I feel it is important to try to see things from as many perspectives as possible.

Hannah Gadsby – an Australian comedian, writer and actress, made a show named *Nanette*, in which she takes Picasso as an example of the problematic mythology concerning the relation between the artist and his (female) muse, and brings forth what we don't want to see: that his worldview was not only that of a visionary in terms of art, but it was also misogynist, racist and homophobic. She does agree with him on one point: that art has the potential to change the world. Cubism showed that we don't have to see the world from a single-perspective, but that a multitude of perspectives – from above, from the side, from underneath, etcetera – can create a strong, if not stronger, image. Diversity, Gadsby continues, is strength. Difference is a teacher. Fear difference, and you learn nothing.

The first version of this speech was about a fly. It was about how I said to my girlfriend: 'If you look at a plant long enough, parasites will appear.' To which she replied: 'You know you are talking about quantum physics, right?' Which I didn't know, but I hoped that, by zooming in, by focusing on the things that are near, I would be able to say something about a bigger picture, without having to mention the pandemic, Black Lives Matter or climate-change – because to speak about those subjects feels overwhelming. And

simultaneously I wondered: which matters can I address? What are the limits of my perspective?

So the speech was about a fly that happened to fly into my studio by accident. And about what that fly would see. My studio became my head, and the fly entered an exhibition – this exhibition – and buzzed along the different works. The more than three thousand facets that make up the eye of a fly, became the windows of this building – a cubist painting, if you would look the fly deep into the eyes – and at the same time: the exhibition seen from three thousand perspectives. Not splintered, but complete in its complexity.

No three thousand visitors will visit this exhibition. There won't be three thousand perspectives, but at least more than thirty. Also, this is not *the* opening speech of this exhibition. It is one of many. I have to remind myself of that. That I cannot say everything there is to say. And I don't have to. My point of view is not neutral or all seeing. My perspective is the perspective of, to name a few subcategories, a white, bisexual, female artist. Subcategories can help me gain insight into which privileges I do or don't have. They can help me understand when to listen and when to speak up.

I wanted to say something to add my perspective to the perspectives already present here. Because diversity, a multitude of perspectives, is important. I want to be a part of this unfinished conversation. A conversation that keeps taking place, because an exhibition is not finished after it's opening. This exhibition in particular will never close. It will be open twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. There is no fixed viewing route and you can decide for yourselves where the entrance is.

Finally, some advice on how to get a fly out of your house. Although the internet is full of tips on how to kill a fly most efficiently, there are animal-friendly alternatives. The burning of essential oils seems to help. If that doesn't work, I suggest you crank up the radio to eliminate the buzzing sound, and open all the doors and windows. Welcome.