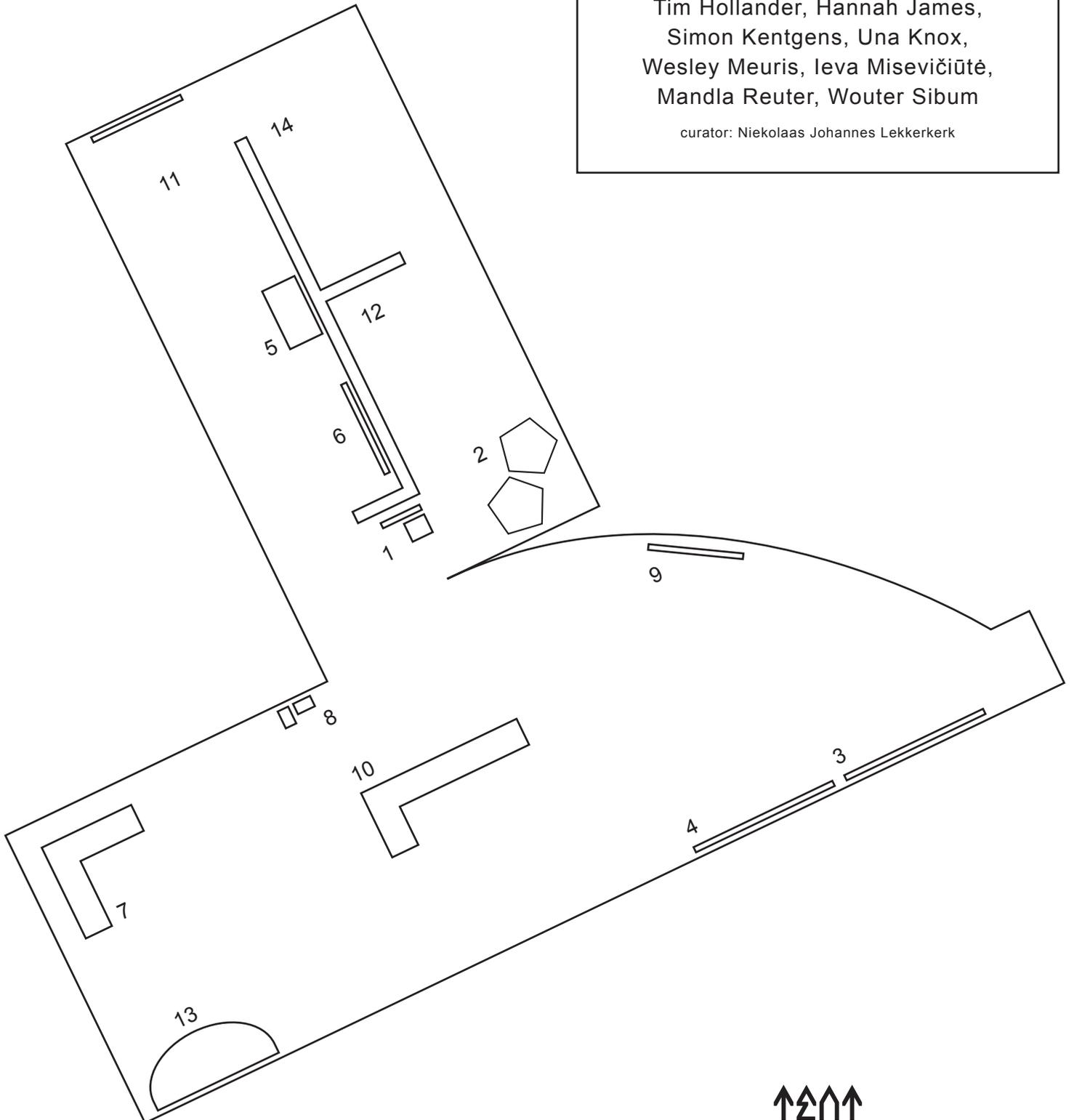


01.05 – 05.07.2015

THE MUSEUM OF UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

Haris Epaminonda, Yoenis Guépin,
Tim Hollander, Hannah James,
Simon Kentgens, Una Knox,
Wesley Meuris, Ieva Misevičiūtė,
Mandla Reuter, Wouter Sibum

curator: Niekolaas Johannes Lekkerkerk



www.tentrotterdam.nl

In the Berlin zoo, beside the pool containing the live walrus, there is an unusual display. In a glass case are all the things found in the stomach of Roland the walrus, who died on 21 August 1961. Or to be precise:

a pink cigarette lighter, four ice-lolly sticks (wooden), a metal brooch in the form of a poodle, a beer-bottle opener, a woman's bracelet (probably silver), a hair grip, a wooden pencil, a child's plastic water pistol, a plastic knife, sunglasses, a little chain, a spring (small), a rubber ring, a parachute (child's toy), a steel chain about 18 ins in length, four nails (large), a green plastic car, a metal comb, a plastic badge, a small doll, a beer can (Pilsner, half-pint), a box of matches, a baby's shoe, a compass, a small car key, four coins, a knife with a wooden handle, a baby's dummy, a bunch of keys (5), a pad-lock, a little plastic bag containing needles and thread.

The visitor stands in front of the unusual display, more enchanted than horrified, as before archeological exhibits. The visitor knows that their museum-display fate has been determined by chance (Roland's whimsical appetite) but still cannot resist the poetic thought that with time the objects have acquired some subtler, secret connections. Caught up in this thought, the visitor then tries to establish semantic coordinates, to reconstruct the historical context (it occurs to him, for instance, that Roland died one week after the Berlin Wall was erected), and so on and so forth.

The chapters and fragments which follow should be read in a similar way. If the reader feels that there are no meaningful or firm connections between them, let him be patient: the connections will establish themselves of their own accord....

— Excerpt from the prologue to *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*, a novel by Dubravka Ugrešić (1998).

Dear Visitor,

Firstly, a warm welcome to The Museum of Unconditional Surrender. In fact, it goes without saying that your presence is much appreciated, and is deemed even more necessary for this kind of exhibition endeavour. As you will see.

You may have already guessed that The Museum of Unconditional Surrender departs from the above curious account, although — and please bear with us — we will momentarily hold certain points of view in suspense. The exhibition you are about to witness proposes a slight reversal: a twist of plot. Indeed, the plot thickens, as we speak.

The exhibition will shift its focus from the artworks and how they perform, to those objects and structures that commonly enable and advance their presentation. In *The Museum of Unconditional Surrender*, the *mise en scène*, support structures, and displays take centre

Colophon

The Museum of Unconditional Surrender
1 May – 5 July, 2015 TENT, Rotterdam

Artists: Haris Epaminonda, Yoeri Guépin, Tim Hollander, Hannah James, Simon Kentgens, Una Knox, Wesley Meuris, Ieva Misevičiūtė, Mandla Reuter, Wouter Sibum

Curator: Niekolaas Johannes Lekkerkerk

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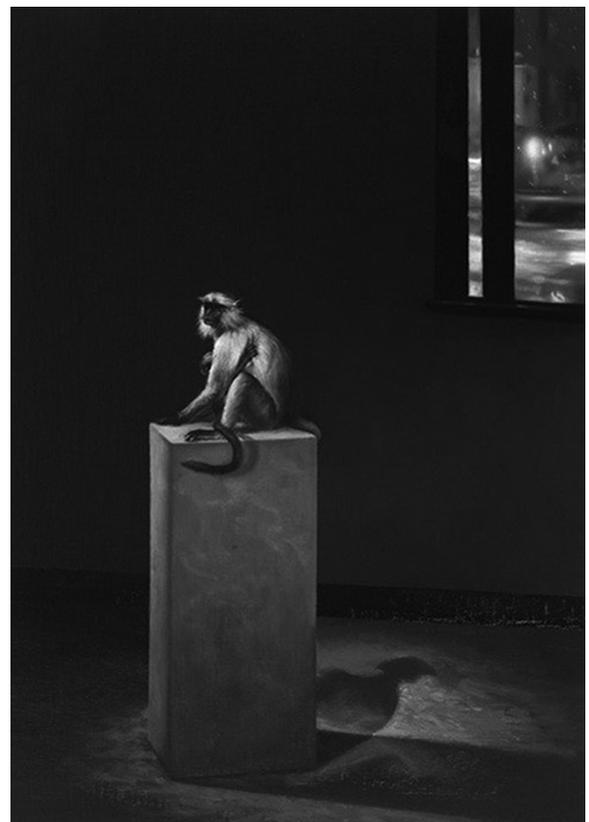
Texts: Niekolaas Johannes Lekkerkerk and the artists

Translations and proofreading: Jason Coburn and Marjolein Geraedts

Design: De Jongens Ronner

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Ieva Misevičiūtė

Born 1982 in Vilnius, Lithuania;
lives and works in New York. www.ieva.co

12. There Is No Stopping This Institution, 2014

Audio, speakers, plinth with button, clay
4' 16"

In a gallery, installed on a white plinth, you will come across a lump of institution. Anyone visiting the exhibition is invited to give shape to the institution and leave it on the plinth. The institution changes every day, but never leaves the room. An audio guide can be activated by pressing a button. Here are examples of what it says:

'Take this institution and work it into your hands several times until it gets softer. Yes, I know it's hard to take the institution into your hands, isn't it? And even if we do, the effect is only cosmetic. But get in there, as the change can only happen from within. [...] Now split this institution into two parts. The part in your left hand is Decisions and the part on the right is Productions. [...] This part is really important. If you haven't touched the institution today — most of us never do — now is the time. If there is one thing you do today, it should be this: take the institution into your hands and throw it against the wall of another institution. Any wall in this room will do. I am not continuing until you do this. [...] When you are done ask yourself a question any question will do... as long as some parts compete with the others. Well ... never mind — they all sound the same when you're deep in the guts of the institution. Lets mush all of these amazing notions together — all those questions are still in there even if you can't quite hear them. Cover up that hole you made and erase all your work. (Whisper) Critique is best when it's invisible...'

Mandla Reuter

Born 1975 in Nqutu, South Africa;
lives and works in Berlin.

13. Coppice, 2007 – ongoing

Plants
Dimensions variable

Coppice, 2007—2009—2015—coppice—plants—exhibition—building—obstruction—Phoenix—street—architecture—elevator—FKV—2007—Galerie Mezzanin—2009—palm trees—walls—MB—ornamental plants—useful plants—open and closed—city—boondocks—hotel—mall—botanical garden—world fair— island—useful architecture—ornamental architecture—beach—exhibition—forest—tree—detour—lost—Untitled, 2015—ice blocks—palettes—utility ice—dimensions variable—refrigeration—210 cm x 180 cm x 240 cm—Braunschweig—cold—warm—in—out—summer—winter—summer—North—South—equatorial—electricity—ice sculpture—igloo—air conditioning—moving—transportation—ice storage—ice factory—ice cream—harbour—moving and storage—Rotterdam—harbour—cold storage—not in show—ice cream—milk—fish—meat—flowers—fruits—Netherlands—substitute—sun light—blue hour—architectural lighting—sodium vapour lamp—dirt—Los Angeles—Iquitos—land—art—glass—slab—diorama—entrance—window—view—dirt—natural history—land

Wouter Sibum

Born in 1980 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands;
lives and works in Rotterdam. www.woutersibum.com

14. Archipel van Subjectieve Perspectieven, 2015

Exhibition benches
Dimensions variable

Archipel van Subjectieve Perspectieven (Archipelago of Subjective Perspectives) is an installation made with the exhibition The Museum of Unconditional Surrender in mind, comprising benches from various Rotterdam exhibition spaces. These objects are places that offer exhibition visitors the opportunity to view and consider and artwork for longer durations, or allow a moment of peace and contemplation. These objects are used in the design of exhibitions and should facilitate its experience. In this setting, these exhibition items come together as a family of objects, and as a representation of the different positions and perspectives when engaging with an artwork.

stage; temporarily abandoning their secondary rolls in favour of a leading one. What or who is playing the active role now? We can no longer speak of a B-squad, or a stand-in... Everything is centre stage.

In this perceptual arms race, The Museum of Unconditional Surrender makes room for renegotiating the position of the 'exhibition object', a boundless set of entities common and akin to the exhibition space. A natural habitat of sorts. Projectors, plants, interns, exit signs, plinths, pedestals, wires, strings, temporal walls, invigilators, monitors, and vitrines with attached dust particles: the exhibition space is an ecology full of playful objects and entities. Let's unsettle the plot and have an encounter with the object that is mostly withheld from sight and withdrawn from thought, but that has an abundance of qualities and characteristics, a material agenda, its own state of being, and enhanced functions to enable us to perceive it and other, external phenomena.

Thus, The Museum of Unconditional Surrender essentially becomes an embodied experiment — that's where you come in, dear visitor — aiming to make ambiguous and strange the exhibition's spatial, physical and written language, the institution to which it has become attached, and more importantly, the objects and entities that it temporarily holds. The visitor essentially becoming an object in its own right; no leading subject who tells what is in front, no heroism of the One. What it is to be an object?

Why ambiguous and strange? Well, as a means to come to terms with the game at play: the idea of a persistent disconnection between object and subject, human and thing, visitor and artwork. To slice through the implied hierarchies, taxonomies, and attitudes in approaching other and external objects, and to stop classifying and seeking to determine what something 'is about'. Instead, let's aim to provide an equal footing for those objects and entities we encounter and perceive in an exhibition, so that they are partners in our daily living and working practices. Obscuring the divisions between I and it, what and who.

The Museum of Unconditional Surrender is a temporal and convivial assembly of differing and cohabiting objects and entities, striving towards a more sensitive and responsive exhibition dynamic.

Yours truly,

Niekolaas Johannes Lekkerkerk
On behalf of The Museum of Unconditional Surrender

Haris Epaminonda

Born 1980 in Nicosia, Cyprus;
lives and works in Berlin. www.harisepaminonda.com

1. Untitled #01 t/f, 2014

Wooden plinth (133 x 29 x 24 cm), metal structure (65 x 41 cm), old Japanese ceramic vase (21 x 9 cm)

This work is made out of three independent elements, a steal black frame made of twelve horizontal lines with a gap at the bottom, an old Japanese glazed ceramic vase and a white wooden plinth.

Wesley Meuris

Born 1977 in Lier, Belgium;
lives and works in Antwerp. www.wesleymeuris.be

2. Basins, 2014

Wood, mosaic, motor, water, chloride
135 x 125 x 50 cm

For a number of years, Wesley Meuris has conducted in-depth research into the means of transmitting knowledge in museums. He has developed several typologies of exhibition furniture that reiterate the 'setting devices' of large museums and mass events as inherited from the world exhibitions of the 19th century. Directly echoing Michael Asher's conceptual adage of, 'context as content', Meuris specifies that, 'to exhibit art is to create a clinging situation that is never pure. My aim is not to show the content but the context and the structure that exhibit it'. The result is a series of showcases and caissons, exhibited as they are and emptied of their content, with the intention of comparing, juxtaposing, isolating, and confronting other art objects.

3. A Mosque With a Contemporary View, 2012

Print on Dibond
155 x 115 cm

4. An Outstanding Sculpture Garden, 2012

Print on Dibond
155 x 115 cm

In connection with the Foundation for Exhibiting Art & Knowledge (edited by Meuris in 2012), Meuris has reproduced the ground plans of architectural spaces, each of which represent a different exhibition typology: museum of ancient cultures, mosque, garden of sculptures, hospital greenhouse, contemporary art fair, and auditorium. This series of technical

drawings, once printed in a large format against a black background and in the same graphic style, show these public buildings' common denominator, whether cultural, civil, or religious. Designed to regulate our perception and behaviour, these 'exhibition' spaces exalt the visitor through the symmetrical volumes and strategic proportions inherited from architectural functionalism and rationalism. A shopping arcade, a theatre, or large exhibition hall: the series never ceases to expand by updating the common tactics for mass entertainment and transmission of knowledge.

Yoeri Guépin

Born 1983 in Zeist, The Netherlands;
lives and works in Rotterdam. www.yoeriguépin.com

5. Notes and Queries, 2014

Book object, 1970 pages, full colour

This collecting project takes the form of a book, and forms the basis of future projects. It consists of two activities: the gesture of collecting and the act of photographing. The subsequent book consists of all the existing editions of the Victorian anthropological field guide Notes And Queries. Each individual book is photographed page by page from various archives. These photographs are then compiled in a large, bound volume situated between an object of knowledge and a study resource. The book compares the development and edits of the various editions, as the 'methods' of viewing the other became redundant, redeveloped, and anachronistic. These travelling guides were developed to supply travellers with questions and instructions on how to collect scientific data in the 'new world'. This data could then be studied and interpreted by anthropologists who in those times did not travel themselves — what could be considered armchair anthropology. The field guide was rewritten and republished six times between 1874 and 1951 and covers the rapid development in the field of anthropology as it attempted to archive disappearing cultures around the world. These guides are key to the transformation of anthropology as a curiosity-driven activity, toward its current status as a scientific discipline that classifies cultures into taxonomic systems. Central to the project is the question of how subjective perception and observation is translated to scientific facts, and how these facts are represented in a complex taxonomic system as new editions emerge out of the collected data.

6. External Storage, 2014 – ongoing

Digital C-prints on Hahnemühle
45 x 45 cm.

External Storage is part of a collecting project investigating methods of authentication, documentation, and distribution inherent to the ways various artefacts are purchased through online auction websites. Objects such as tribal masks, earth specimens, fossils, and tools from the Neolithic era are left in their transport packaging unopened. These artefacts are

hidden and obscured by the packaging in which they were transported: undergoing a further process of cataloguing in accordance with the information mentioned on their packaging. The collection of unopened boxes create a space for speculation regarding the actual presence of the artifacts, in which the focus is shifted from the artifact itself towards the packaging as object represented in an image.

Tim Hollander

Born 1987 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands;
lives and works in Amsterdam. www.timhollander.com

7. 50 Things One Might Encounter During an Exhibition, 2014

Wooden structure, plinth, slide projector
Dimensions variable

8. Visiting The Museum of Unconditional Surrender – A Practical Guide, 2015

A4, unlimited print run, Perspex case

The work of Tim Hollander includes: (1) wood, (2) paint, (3) text, (4) adhesive, (5) screws, (6) vitrines, (7) drawings, (8) digital prints on paper, (9) lists of fictional works, (10) lists of existing works, (11) Glass, (12) screen prints, (13) books, all shapes and sizes, (14) references, (15) Plexiglas, (16) mixed media, (17) signs (made of the material from which reserved-signs in bars also are always made), (18) reasonably detailed ideas, (19) ideas that can better be executed later, (20) various materials, (21) primer (22) conflicting institutional critique, (23) conceptual installations, (24) posters, (25) pencil on paper, (26) collages, (27) pretentious titles (28) useless floor plans, (29) scale models, (30) marble, (31) slide projections with only text and little else, (32) performances, and (33) paintings.

Hannah James

Born 1985 in Nottingham, United Kingdom;
lives and works in Rotterdam.

9. The Wrestler and the Crab, 2015

Audio 15'09", headphones and stool
Digital film 24'32", monitor and mat

A crab is an animal that has an armour, a bodily architecture. He uses this camouflage to look like a rock, a stone or a sandy seabed. This mimetic creature attempts to assimilate himself to his surroundings, to become one, to become lost. Language is also a tool we use to become familiar with our surroundings. We alter our accents, flatten our vowels and accentuate our consonants as a means of fitting in. Wrestling is a sport played between two bodies, where one body attempts to get their opponent's shoulder to make contact with the ground. These three corporeal entities: voice, wrestling and a crab, all unite in their attempts to negotiate place and assimilation, in the ongoing battle between bodies and boundaries.

Simon Kentgens

Born 1978 in Waalwijk, The Netherlands;
lives and works in Rotterdam. www.simonkentgens.com

10. Revolution, 2015

Wood, glass fibre wallpaper, motor, motion sensor
Approximately 550 x 300 x 300 cm

A rotation is a circular movement of an object around a centre or point. A three-dimensional object always rotates around an imaginary line called a rotation axis. If the axis passes through the body's centre of mass, the body is said to rotate upon itself, or spin. A rotation about an external point, e.g. the Earth around the Sun, is called a revolution or orbital revolution, typically when it is produced by gravity. Mathematically, a rotation is a rigid body movement that, unlike a translation, keeps a point fixed. This definition applies to rotations within both two and three dimensions (in a plane and in space, respectively). All rigid body movements are rotations, translations, or combinations of the two.

Una Knox

Born 1980 in Vancouver, Canada;
lives and works in London. www.unaknox.com

11. When What Becomes Who, 2009

Audio, digital film, monitor
11' 28"

Examining social interactions through notions of mental and physical labour, I am interested in an unconscious identification with built spaces as a reflection of something metaphysical and unspoken.

- A: I don't like using those kinds of words but it does capture what I am trying to say.
B: And by a spiritual being. You mean ... what? I don't quite...
A: Oooh. What's a spiritual being? Not a bad question.
B: Not a bad question?
A: I don't think ...Yeah, what is, what is a spiritual being.
B: Yeah. As opposed to a terrestrial being?
A: Well, when you think about it — We are invisible. You and I are invisible.
B: Invisible to What?
A: I'm invisible — my 'I', my ego is invisible to you — or at least to your senses. It's not actually invisible.
B: So, sooo?
A: We are invisible beings.
B: So in order to say something is invisible, right. Are we presupposing that it is an object that has a presence?
A: Yeah. An object that has a presence? Object. Maybe a characteristic. You might say the primal duality is per-cept and con-cept.
B: Right, so you're stuck on some...
A: Percept is given. Concept comes through us.
B: Stuck on some dualism.
A: I would be if I didn't then say — 'Well wait a minute, what in me is saying percept and concept?'
B: We have to take this crate I guess.
A: I would say — It's thinking — thinking is allowing me to say 'percept' and 'concept'. I mean one of the neat little phrases of Steiner says that ... Oh sorry, I should concentrate here, indeed I should, sorry, this is artwork!
B: Oh, We can take it like that.
A: Yeah. It has to be liberated first. I mean then thought can embrace language again.
B: What I don't know. What does it mean to say one liberates thinking from language?
A: Well like anything else, one liberates the meaning from its word. Instead of thinking of... How does a word come into being? To me that is a great, great mystery.
B: How does a What?
A: How does a word come into Being?
B: Well, I guess the thing is you have to look at it within a network of words.
A: Hmm ... You can phrase the meaning with words. You can clothe the meaning with words. But the meaning is already there. The meaning is invisible but it's there. It always has been.
B: We'll probably need this one, right?
A: Yeah, I think so.