



The Cedar Tavern
In Tent's Hidden Bar during Art Rotterdam

6 – 9 February 2014

With Willem Besselink, Susanna Browne, and Jeffrey Dunsbergen

Curated by Niekolaas Johannes Lekkerkerk (The Office for Curating, Rotterdam)

I came to New York to study art, and to meet artists. And where do you find artists? In bars, especially in the 1950s. Drinks were cheap in those days. White Rose bar whiskey was twenty-five cents a shot; if you had \$3 you could get twelve shots – that would do it. Among the artists' bars was the old Cedar Tavern on University Place and Eighth Street, not to be confused with the Cedar Bar, which was also on University Place and came later.

The Cedar Tavern had been a workingman's bar and therefore cheap. It was just a long, narrow space with a room in the back. It was where Pollock had kicked the bathroom door off its hinges and they left it that way. The fluorescent lights looked green. They had Audubon and horse prints on the walls. I can just picture the bartender right now – he had a funny eye, and because of that he looked at you strangely. For dinner you could go to Nedicks around the corner and get a fifteen-cent hot dog. I began hanging out at the Cedar Tavern, where I went with the sole purpose of meeting the grand masters of abstract expressionism.

[...] John McMahon, another of Bill's assistants, knew de Kooning well by this point, and he told me a funny story about how he first met him. "One day I was walking down the street," he said, "and there was de

Kooning. I saw him at the Cedar Tavern but I'd never talked to him, so I crossed the street and said, "Mr. de Kooning, I'd like to talk to you about painting."

"Talk about painting?" de Kooning said irritably, as if I'd brought up a thoroughly unpleasant subject. "I hate goddamned painting. Are you that son of a bitch from Yale that's been leaving notes under my door?"

"No, no," I said, "that wasn't me.

"Aw, to hell with it then," he said. "Good-bye!" And he walked away." [...]

From *Painting Below Zero* (2009) by James Rosenquist and David Dalton.

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Willem Besselink

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Courtesy Galerie Frank Taal, Rotterdam

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