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Frans van Lent, L'espace de vingt-quatre heures, 2020.

Interview with Frans van Lent

15 April 2021

[Frans van Lent](#) presents *L'espace de vingt-quatre heures* as the fourth cover of the month in 2021, a video of a path recorded by the artist at different times of the day. The systematic concept of the video as almost a solar clock, in contrast with the intimate way it was filmed, results in a work that is both clinical in its conception and personal in its result. The artist describes his works as “methods to create experiences”, focusing his efforts on the process leading to those experiences. In other works, such as *Pain Location* or the *Unnoticed Art Festival*, the artist explores how the involuntary can be made voluntary, how the mind, body and space can be made to be a part of one organism that functions as a whole, testing his relationship with his surroundings as well as the public. Frans van Lent keeps exploring the

limits of art experience both in his artistic and curatorial practices, recreating concepts of art production and exhibition in its foundational levels.

Margarida Oliveira – Walk us through the conception of *L'espace de vingt-quatre heures*.

Frans van Lent – A few months a year, I live in a house in this village. I walked this track around the village so often, a few times a day, that it became a ritual, a necessity. I started to identify the walk around with a rhythm in two ways: first, every walk takes more or less the same amount of time; and second, the repeated walks define the order of my days.

For the work *Pain Location* (2019), I started to train myself to develop a headache at a certain spot of the track. For thirty days, I tried to train my body to connect that specific place to a certain spot in my head (just behind my temples) and, by doing that, I connected the shape of the path with the topography of my brains.

In July 2020, I decided to literally connect the walk to the experience of passing time. Every hour of 24 hours, I walked the track and filmed while walking. This repetitive circuit turned the track into a lifesize clock. I edited a video by using parts of every single walk into one combined walk around. I realized that the French translation of “24 hours” is *L'espace de vingt-quatre heures* which, in a perfect way, connects the notion of time with the notion of space.

MO – Why this village?

FVL – In fact, it could have been many other villages. It is mainly a matter of personal history. For many years, I stayed a part of every year in this village and that creates the possibility to look at it without a romanticizing point of view and to reflect on a fundamental basis.

MO – I find myself looking at your work as a balance between solitude and community, having filmed *L'espace de vingt-quatre heures* alone you invite the audience to experience it with you at a different time, as an experience that is both personal and shared. Considering the concept of “unnoticed art” and how you have questioned engagement with the artwork, in what way has the relationship with the audience influenced your artistic practice?

FVL – The core of my work is usually not in the visual presentation of my own experiences. I just happen to be the first individual executing the works. Anybody can carry out the works and by that create his/her own experiences. All experiences are essentially personal. I am a human between other humans. Many works consist of written text only. I think about works as described methods to create experiences. The fact that I am an artist gives me the opportunity to research this kind of things. But my experiences are not on another level, just have another focus.

MO – The curatorial process of a performance festival can be seen as a performance itself, an extension of your artistic practice through others. What is your approach in curating the *Unnoticed Art Festival*?

FVL – During the *Unnoticed Art Festival*, the works are carried out in their preferred habitat. Not within an artistic context and in a hierarchical relation between the artist and the audience, but by anonymous persons between other anonymous persons. All with their own aims and attitudes. And this being “anonymous” gives the performer a certain freedom to act. A private space in the public realm. Here again, it comes back to these personal experiences, the basis of my artistic process.

MO – As a multidisciplinary artist, what goes into the process of materializing your ideas?

FVL – First of all, I always focus on the process of the work. In fact, the process *is* the actual work. The material form is only the residue of that process. It follows its directions and has the function to communicate the work as clearly as possible. Therefore, the final outcome is open and undefined at the beginning, the process can lead to anything.

MO – Watching your videos as they relate to what is currently a European setting – our relationship with time, the different velocities that it can assume in relation to the inside and the outside world as well as us individually and our communities – I find it interesting that the theme of time has grown in relevance as society is forced to face it without the relief of speed. How has time, and its association with space, become the main focus of your work?

FVL – Orientation has always been a basic drive in my work. And orientation involves both space and time. In the work *Crossing* (2009), the combination of these aspects is leading:

A car drives five times along the same route. Each time it travels the route it passes a man who, very slowly – less than an inch in each step –, is crossing the road. During the fifth pass (thirty minutes have elapsed) the man finally reaches the other side of the road. The car finishes the last part of the route and stops.

MO – Can you elaborate on the concept of “orientation”?

FVL – In *Crossing*, both performers are locked in their own positions. The man who crosses the street is focused completely on his own activity. And there is the woman in the car, driving quickly through the woods and being confronted five times with the man in different stages of his crossing. She is not able to notice his moving, because she is stuck in her own perception of time. He seems to be just standing at different spots on the road. When approaching him, she has to slow down and carefully drive around him. They both remain in their own realities, their worlds meet but never connect.

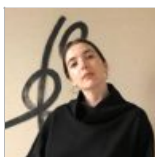
In the work *Raam* (2006), there is a man in a room. Through the window, you can see branches and leaves of a tree and you see cars passing. Every minute the man repeats exactly the same activity. He walks to the window, looks outside and touches the glass with his hand and forehead. The window seems to be the border between cyclical and linear time. There is an interesting relation between the man’s forehead in this work and the man’s temples in the mentioned work *Pain Location*. They both function as transit places between internal and external spaces.

MO – There is a ritualistic aspect to your work, the repetitiveness of a movement, its documentation, do you recognize this sort of rituals in your life?

FVL – In repeating a movement or a pattern, its original meaning is taken away. The movement becomes something else, steps away from mundane life. Repeating is a method of de-familiarisation. Maybe this functionality is also the main quality of the ritual as such.

MO – Future projects?

FVL – Main thing is a residency project at AADK/Spain in Murcia in October/November this year. The subject of my research will be *Subjective Topography*.



MARGARIDA OLIVEIRA

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