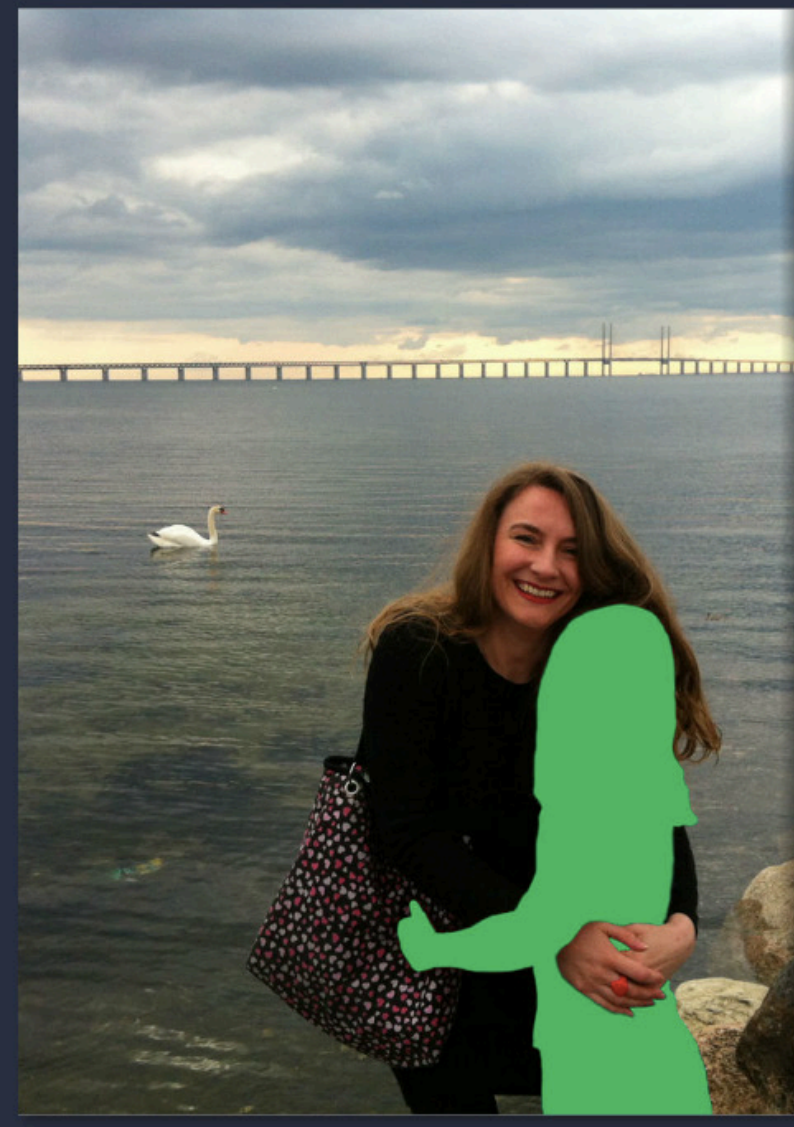


KIM ENGELEN



**Hello Kim and welcome to NotRandomArt. The current issue is revolving around the problem of communication and identity. Is there any particular way you would describe your identity as an artist but also as a human being in dynamically changing, unstable times? In particular, does your cultural substratum (a foundation or basis of something)/identity form your aesthetics?**

As an individual artist, I work cross-disciplinary, from doing socially oriented performances, such as my ongoing artwork Bridges-Performances, to build bridges between myself and the rest of humanity. To deeply personal iPhone photography like my ongoing artwork Sun-Penetrations, on topics such as loneliness. To a diary kind of YouTube videos on for example the journey of learning a new language as an empowering instrument yet problematic barrier. My artworks are influenced by my direct environment and deal with communication and self-development. I seek methods to connect with people (or try to deal with disconnection). Simply said: I want to connect and heal. And hopefully, something of this gets transported in my artworks.

Because of my art career, I have lived thus far in 6 countries. In the Netherlands where I was born, Spain, USA, Sweden, Germany, and now China. My artworks come into existence by my own body traveling and thus living and staying in new homes, but also in hostels, motels, hotels and artist in residencies. All countries have their own history, costumes and thus culture. And I—as an artist living abroad have to adapt to that somehow. You can maybe imagine that there are quite a few communication-confronts in that process. From these challenges (and at the same time potentials) I take something of it with me and translate it into my artworks.

**Would you like to tell us something about your artistic as well as life background?**

**What inspired you to be in this artistic point in your life when you are now?**

I grew up in a small-town harbor city in the Netherlands. My youth is colored by my toxic family life where I was taunted and bullied by my older brother. Up to a level of severity that I had to leave home. Then art found me and saved my life. Art is now my home and my life. Art helps to channel the absurdities of life in order to make sense of it all. Art means life to me—a reason for living—an exit from life and back into it.

For me as a contemporary artist when I am connecting through my artwork with people it's different than without it. I feel freer and more confident and life situations and people (myself included) become material to work with. In a good way, it makes connecting with people, seemingly more controllable since there is a form of exchange, a mutual benefit—a sort of helping each

other to understand each other. I have specialized in socially engaged performances, iPhone photography, videos. But I also do temporary collective art projects (as one could call them) and I work with text. Central in all this is the individual in a social context. Inner thoughts, strengths, weaknesses, the body and all this is my material to work with while engaging with life and the people in it. Experiencing social (non) interactions is an ongoing and never-ending process.

**Could you identify a specific artwork that has influenced your artistic practice or has impacted the way you think about your identity as a participant of the visual culture?**

While exposing my own processes of connecting and failing and developing. My contribution as a real-life artist is visual, participatory and prone to be helpful or soothing in some regards.

I am thinking of one of my early performances The Life of a Jogger. With the idea of self-development or self-care, I borrowed from the real-life activity of sport to create contemporary art. I had organized a real jogging event with all the organizational aspects that are involved with it. It took about 1 year to organize it all, from creating a website, flying, giving it media attention, creating a video to finally sending the people who signed up a cobalt blue T-shirt with on the front in white capital letters IK SPORT (Dutch for I sport). Then on a hot summer day in August 2003, The Life of a Jogger took place. The visual aspect of the performance was a blue, breathing and sweating human mass moving 10 kilometers together through the streets, the parks and the harbor of Rotterdam.

**Since you transform your experiences into your artwork, we are curious, what is the role of memory in your artistic productions? We are particularly interested if you try to achieve a faithful translation of your previous experiences or if you rather use memory as starting point to create.**

I think my artworks are my memory (of the events and interactions and how these unfolded). For example, Social Anxiety, which is inspired by living in China—I live in China now for 1,5 years. What do you think was the first word I learned when I was in China—since I heard it, and still hear it, all the time? It is làowài 老外 (Chinese for foreigner or outsider). Every time I go out and hear it, I abhor. It makes me feel like a ghost, a fantasy, a spectacle and yet at the same time ignored. Kind of being visibly invisible. Followed constantly and everywhere by "the eyes" makes me feel dreadfully naked, exposed, yes even objectified. Social Anxiety is a social situated performance, it is set up as an interactive photoshoot-set installation. On the background is a photograph of the Meydan Bridge aka Ghost bridge in Dubai.



The visitors can join me to make fake travel duo-selfies. Since we all sooooo love to make photos or ourselves. For the duration of the performance and further lasting on photographs, I will be their fffff; Friendly Foreign Fake Female Friend.. With this artwork, I exemplify and react to my current reality living in China as a white, blond, unmarried female artist of 45 years old with no kids. But most probably it will become a memory. Since more and more, not status quo foreigners are coming to China and the spectacle effect will diminish over time. The visitors can join me to make fake travel duo-selfies. Since we all sooooo love to make photos or ourselves. For the duration of the performance and further lasting on photographs, I will be their fffff; Friendly Foreign Fake Female Friend. With this artwork, I exemplify and react to my current reality living in China as a white, blond, unmarried female artist of 45 years old with no kids. But most probably it will become a memory. Since more and more, not status quo foreigners are coming to China and the spectacle effect will diminish over time.

**What is the role of technique in your practice? In particular are there any constraints or rules that you follow when creating?**

Via art, I seek methods to connect with people (or try to deal with disconnection) and use the medium that I believe fits best with it. I think in the (absence of) meeting with another through conscious reflection, development (or deterioration) can take place. More positively speaking or ideally, my works are about self-development, critical thinking, and condition of being human. I feel free and comfortable with the medium video and the computer. I also like making books of the artworks. I also enjoy showing my work on the different online channels we have now at our disposal. There is maybe one parameter I have with my ongoing Bridge-Performances. During the performance, I give my camera to another person I don't know. What I like about this, is the ephemeral trust exchange on a bridge somewhere on the world between two complete strangers.

I coined these temporary encounters of co-creating the Bridge-Performances. These are performances documented by photographs taken of me by randomly chosen people who happened to be on the bridges. To me the bridge is a wonderful stage to work on since it stands as a metaphor symbolizing; connection, movement, and transformation.

**How do you see the relationship between emotional and intellectual perception of your work? In particular, how much do you consider the immersive nature of the viewing experience?**

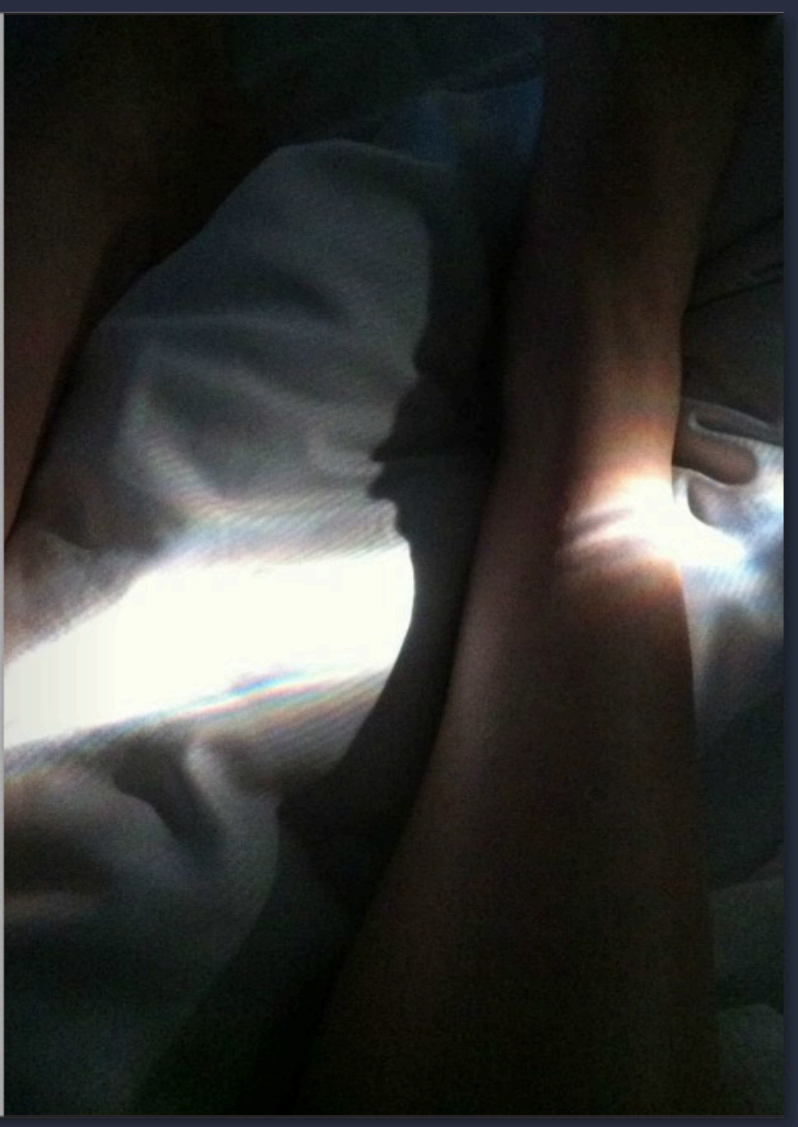
To me, a great work of art is one that touches the heart and the brain. My works are participatory, either in bodily

involvement or by immersive or intimate watching. My latest book is called The New Score - Collective Creation for Visual Artists. In which I combine my knowledge in creative methodology and art practice. I wrote this book during a 31-days exhibition in the Netherlands in March this year. My work was an over eight-meter-long installation consisting of 31 black letter trays. Everyday day via (digital) post I sent a new version of The New Score - Collective Creation for Visual Artists. This updated version was then printed and placed in the assigned letter tray for visitors to read. Returning visitors could follow day-by-day the progress of the document. Exposing the writing in its development was also part of my work for this exhibition. The meters-long line of letter trays externalized the many lines of words written inside of the document; as well the interpersonal closeness yet the physical distance between the sender and the reader.

**Thanks a lot for your time and for sharing your thoughts, Kim. Finally, would you like to tell us readers something about your future projects? How do you see your work evolving?**

What is great art and how to show this? These are questions I am currently thinking about. Presently I also very much like to create books. Books are as a private exhibition for the viewer. They can look at it alone. No one is watching them or overpeering them like a guard might do during a museum exhibition. They can sit back comfortably at any time and can take the amount of time they want and immerse themselves in the work. Visiting the sometimes-huge museums are more like an activity or entrainment in itself. I like both and I think that an artwork can be viewed in several ways. To me, an artwork can be like a diamond with many angles that shine their own colorful lights because of the different external viewing angles. So, I want to explore not just one way of presenting my works but experiment with the different angels an artwork can take by the context they are placed in.

Another side project I am doing now is Art Park—Intimate Gatherings. Which are 4 intimate gatherings in April and May of this year in the Taiziwan park in Hangzhou. With each time 1 poet and 1 contemporary artist whose work is influenced by living in China. This is followed by an open discussion. Creating these kinds of projects give me joy. I love making a small booklet of it afterwards. So, I like these kinds of settings where there is room for intimacy and that the work can go deeper by communication and shared information. At the same time, I also want more people to see and experience my work. So how does intimacy work when working with a larger number of visitors?





Currently, I have a solo-exhibition from 3 May to 3 July 2019. It is an art project in the Yibox in Jingning, meant to disperse Contemporary Art feely and available to the Chinese people from Jingning and beyond. For this project, I am showing Sun-Penetrations - The Experiencing Body. In my art, there is always some sort of intimacy involved by alone making the private, public. Since it is real and personal: It deals with inner thoughts, the body, and social interactions. It can be exposing and thus vulnerable. So, I want to create intimate-sort of spaces within a public space. So that it can have a sort of particular private/public feeling to it. For this solo exhibition, the work is presented in two accessible boxes. The boxes are placed inside a bigger space. This is also super exciting to me since the estimated number of visitors during only the May Day Holiday are > 100.000. So, the number of visitors in China is huge!!

For future exhibitions, I wish to make my works better and better. My intention is to create powerful manifestations of life. Possibly envelop visitors in a temporary state where they can transcend and see things in a more general or helpful perspective.



