

Mental architecture Sarah van Sonsbeeck

“Sarah van Sonsbeeck is not a very good architect.” Annick Kleizen once wrote of me. I couldn’t agree more. Initially trained as an architect, I have an enormous need for *and* mistrust of walls and borders. As my noisy neighbors once taught me your home is definitely not defined by walls. Your home is your head. And anything in that space can become art.

To me, all objects are performative. They get meaning from the space they are in and how they interact with that space, a new space could radically change them. I’m baffled by the dogma that objects of art are unallowed to change. Everything in the world, ourselves included, is in constant flux. As an architecture student I was greatly inspired by Ludwig Wittgenstein, who argues that *change itself is the essence of the creation of all meaning*. Perhaps this is why what I love in a space is always the unintentional: a slight color difference where something hung before, the view, the neighbors, the light, the smell, the small signs and traces time and people leave in a space. They tell me about its *mental architecture*, what the space means and has meant to people over time.

I like simple everyday things: a molehill, a flag, a letter. I don’t work with a specific medium, preferring materials that are more common to architecture or to life in general than to art: floor felt, earplugs, a water tap, pavlova cake, light, noise, silence. My medium really is the performative object *itself*. I like things and situations we all know but hardly notice. By replicating them in a different material or unexpected situation I translate them into something you recognize at first glance and feel physically connected to, yet have never seen in this way - like a landscape of molehills inside a building. They become personal, performative, stretching the borders of what we think we know and of where art can be encountered, re connecting us to the world.

If your home is your head, public space to me is the home we all share. Corona with its government based rules on use of public space, as I had never encountered before in the Netherlands, has made me radically rethink public space. In public space the performative object has a special role in the form of monuments. Ever since my solo at De Oude Kerk Amsterdam ‘We may have all come from different ships, but we’re in the same boat now’¹ (2017) I have been intrigued by the ritualistic ways we use objects to remember and connect to the world, leading me to research and imagine new more personal and more transient ways of remembering. A work in point is the pink triangular ‘Willem Arondéus pavlova cake’ (2020) that I made as a temporary edible monument to resistance hero and openly gay artist Willem Arondéus. The pink triangle emblem, initially a mark of shame by the Nazi regime, was later re-appropriated by the queer movement as a symbol of pride.

Fundamental to my practice is the investigation of the formal and conceptual qualities of materials – often less common in the world of art - that we all know yet take for granted. For the past ten years I have been using gold as a medium for minimalist works which engage in a dialogue both with their surroundings and topical issues: questioning the historical foundation of our current financial system, the value and allure of this material, but also of art itself. If we connect more deeply to the omnipresent objects and resources around us, we might reconsider how much we have come to consume the world that is our home, instead of connect to it.

¹ The title is inspired by a quote often attributed to Martin Luther King.