

# Open Archief RE:SEARCH

## Editor's Note: Shifting Perspectives

Entering archives can be a confronting experience. It demands one to be constantly flooded with material, histories, seeing images of struggle and strife, as well as seeing the ways these have been represented and contextualised in the past. Archival documents are palimpsests of information as they are continuously being written and unwritten. Bringing new eyes into archives allows for this process to continue, and opens up new ways of knowledge production to take place. This overload of information, threads, and images, which is also often violent, can leave archival researchers – whether that be artists, academics or practitioners – feel both weary and energized. In this publication, we wanted to explore these emotions along with other questions that include insecurities or curiosities that the three artists, Jessica de Abreu, Femke Dekker, and Michiel Huiben, encountered by participating in the Open Archief project.



The publication takes the form of a newspaper. Newspapers as a medium deliver huge amounts of copies to the public at a fast turnover time. Printing and distributing newspapers is a practice that is both institutional but also often used by grassroots and activist groups to deliver their message because of its low cost and high output. Newspapers play an important role in archival research, since they are often collected by institutions to contextualize historical events. This is why we wanted to present to you the publication in this particular form; to give you something to dive into in the same way that archival practitioners and researchers have, which includes playing with the medium of the newspaper itself.

## Open Archief 2018–2021

How can archives and artists work together to bring forward a new body of knowledge by using documents of the past? What can archives learn from artistic research in order to make their collections more accessible? What would artists do, having the opportunity to play around with open-access digital collections? These are some of the overarching questions that inspired the initiation of the Open Archief project.

Open Archief started in 2018 as a joint initiative between the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision (Sound and Vision) and Het Nieuwe Instituut to bring together media artists and heritage institutions to urge the reuse of archival material and to promote the

use of open collections for fueling the creation of media art. Sound and Vision is the Dutch broadcasting archive and is composed of thousands of audio and visual documents as well as the artifacts that make up a history of media in the Netherlands. Het Nieuwe Instituut is the leading Dutch institution in architecture, design, and digital culture. The first edition of Open Archief focused mainly on questions of copyright and knowledge sharing between different actors involved in creative processes that deal with the reuse of the archive: artists, archivists, collection specialists, copyright lawyers, heritage institutions and curators.

In our conversations with artists, it became clear that archives are seen as ivory tower institutions that are generally inaccessible. Even though this idea often holds some standing, there is also a plethora of resources and material that is accessible, available and free for use. Open Archief wishes to shine a light on some of these possibilities, by the joint forces and efforts of archival institutions in making their open collections visible.

After recognizing the limitations of open source archives, both in terms of material and access, the team decided to expand and involve the International Institute for Social History (IISH). Adding another institution would increase the amount of material accessible to artists and expand the collections to include IISH's expertise in documentation of socioeconomic inequity and social movements.

## RE:SEARCH

Going beyond the reuse of heritage material for the artistic research and creation of media art, for the second edition of Open Archief, we question the act of archival reuse itself. We recognize that archives are manifestations of the societal power structures that are at play, and instead of shying away from that, we aim to give space for that exploration and critique.

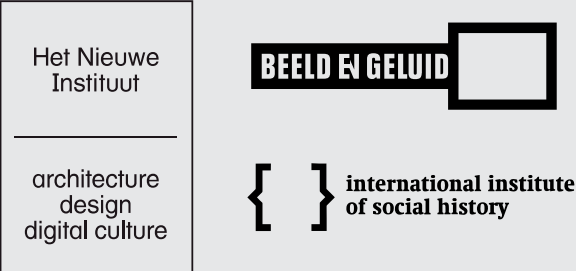
This is why for the 2020–2021 edition, we decided to work with a theme, which would act as an arch over all the activities that Open Archief brought forward so far. The theme RE:SEARCH, highlights the focus Open Archief wants to give on artistic interventions on the archive, which is to say that it always starts with researching into it. RE:SEARCH evokes a sense of playfulness that allows expanding beyond archival research – which is both responsive and reactive but also explorational and directed.

In using RE:SEARCH as an arch we investigate and question the ethical and critical implications that are at stake with the reuse and research of archival material. How is collection making challenged by re-working archival material? What does it mean to re-use material that often was created and collected through duress? How can one remain critical when working with such material? What can institutions learn from artistic research practices? Is it even possible for national institutions to become more open structures?

These questions were explored through the public and internal programming of the project which included an Input Party, organized internally for the artists and team in the early phase of the project, along with two



COLOPHON Open Archief, 2021	Contributing Artists: Jessica de Abreu, Femke Dekker, Michiel Huijben
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Het Nieuwe Instituut  
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public Re:Use clinics. The highlight of the project is a residency programme in which three artists were selected through an open call to take part in a six month residency.

These three artists, Femke Dekker, Jessica de Abreu and Michiel Huijben were invited to critically engage with the collections of the three institutions and to produce new work which reflected on the process of RE:SEARCH through their individual artistic practices. The Open Archief jury, which included artists Pieter Paul Pothoven and Donna Verheijden and the project team, selected the artists because of their strong multidisciplinary vision on the creative reuse of archival material.

The artists started their journey into the collections in early December 2020 and worked with experts from the three institutions to navigate the archives. Activism became a connecting thread among the three artists' works as they explored different streams of activism in their artistic research, whether that be Black activism, squatting movements, or spaces of activism. The six month residencies came to an end in June 2021 and resulted in the exhibition entitled *Archives and Activism*, presented at Het Nieuwe Instituut from June 3rd until September 5th, 2021.

## Archives and Activism

Jessica de Abreu developed the work *The New Plantation*. Jessica aims to open the conversation about how racism and structural oppression are related to our (mental) health. The artwork itself is a visualisation of her approach and process on how to deal with realities of racism and xenophobia as we enter archives, museums and exhibitions. How do we deal with archival material that reproduces (colonial) violence, despite the fact that we consider them as educational and informative about hidden histories? *The New Plantation* is about showing resistance against dehumanization on these new plantations. We might perceive resistance as pro-active deeds such as demonstrations and protests but we should also remember that resistance can come in the form of images of Black people just being happy and experiencing pleasure in a society that continues to dehumanize them. During archival research, she encountered footage of a Black person enjoying eating herring. It is a glimpse of "normality" during and in a time (specifically in 1935) when Black people were exoticized. She embraces this loving portrayal of a Black Dutch experience that soothes her memories.

*RE:ACTIVATE RADIO*, the project by Femke Dekker, focuses on the reciprocal relationship between media and activism. Activists have always used mass media strategically as a platform to broadcast their ideas and this project investigates the notion of mediated activism and activist media.

In the initial phase of her research, Dekker came across the collection of 'the Staatsarchief' at the IISH, founded in 1991 in the Amsterdam Staatslieden neighbourhood. This included the immense audio archive of *Radio de Vrije Keyser*, which brought the local squatter community news about squatting, protests and other alternative information.

The archive represents both Dekker's interest in Do It Yourself (DIY) culture and radio's ability to function as a call to action and as a tool for community building. The topics that were discussed included gentrification and housing shortage but also the need for a fringe and counterculture, therefore still relevant and urgent. In addition to the broadcasts of *Radio de Vrije Keyser*, Dekker will also produce four broadcasts herself that will be aired on the online radio station *Ja Ja Ja Nee Nee Nee*. These broadcasts reflect on the found material and address the position of the archivist as an activist, the artist as an archivist and the activist as an archivist.

Finally, for the work *States of Place*, Michiel Huijben searched the archives for images from which the role of public space within society could be read. During his research process, Michiel started thinking about the relationship between the public and space on the one hand and public space and the archive on the other.

By looking for places instead of events, a complex image appears of what activities public spaces allow and what practices are present in archives. The work created for Open Archief combines images from the three archives with material found on the internet and considers them as a whole, in an attempt to draw out a more complete image of public space, while simultaneously questioning the



authority of 'The Archive'. Michiel's installation portrays, among others, two prominent public places in The Netherlands: Dam Square in Amsterdam and the Malieveld in The Hague. Through the use of different types of archival material, Dutch post-war public space is explored in a two-channel video installation.

## This Publication

We wanted to give the public more context not only on the working process of the artists but also about the emotionally loaded interactions that have arisen when artists are asked to come in contact with archives. We invited journalist Warda El Kaddouri to speak to the three artists, and explore these questions. Warda spoke with Michiel, Jessica and Femke and put together the three texts you see in front of you.

Each text comes with its poster, which is found on the backside of each text. The posters were carefully designed by Marius Schwarz, the graphic designer of the Open Archief project, in collaboration with each artist. Marius used images that relate back to the works created for the exhibition and included several images from the archives.

We invite you to read and reflect on the texts and reach out to us if you have any questions and thoughts.

– The Open Archief Project Team

Image Credits:  
–*Re:Use Clinic #1: Copyright*. With Arlette Bekink and Douglas McCarthy, 25 February 2021.  
–*Re:Use Clinic #2: Uncertain Archives – Ethical Dilemmas*. With Simone Zeefuik and Pieter Paul Pothoven, 26 April 2021.  
–*Re:Use Symposium: Research, Copyright and Reuse*. 22 June 2021.



Het Nieuwe  
Instituut

architecture  
design  
digital culture

BEELD EN GELUID

{ } international institute  
of social history

Femke Dekker  
Jessica de Abreu  
Michiel Huijben

Open Archief  
RE:SEARCH



# THE NEW PLANTATION

## Jessica de Abreu



Man met haring, Polygoon Hollands Nieuws, 1935, filmstill. Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision

### The Mundane as a Form of Resistance

A Conversation with Jessica de Abreu  
by Warda El-Kaddouri

Jessica de Abreu is an anthropologist and co-founder of The Black Archives. Her initial goal for the Open Archief residency was to document and archive the contemporary black anti-racism movement in the Netherlands. By using materials from Open Archief as well as from The Black Archives and Kick Out Zwarte Piet, she wanted to connect institutional and personal archives of Black activists by collecting photographs, videos, and any other digital data.

However, throughout the process, de Abreu became more interested in the idea of portraying Black people in a context that is not necessarily political. "I would like to see today's anti-racist activists laughing and making jokes instead of portraying them in constant pain or suffering." As an anti-racist activist herself, de Abreu experienced the impact of activism on mental health firsthand. Her efforts in the Anti-Zwarte Piet movement have led to a recent burnout, from which she is still recovering. "I am known for doing social community work, but I am also a human being with emotions." During her research for Open Archief, she was emotionally challenged.

"How do you deal with colonial imagery in archives, which is inherently violent?"

She explains this process: "Going through the archives has been overwhelming. It forced me to explicitly deal with what I am going through in my head. I cannot grasp everything, so I *have* to simplify each of them. In the end, my art will be a result of me dealing with an overload of information and emotions, while trying to make sense of it all." The main question that de Abreu finds herself confronted with is: "How do you deal with colonial imagery in archives, which is inherently violent?"

When entering keywords such as 'Zwarte man' (Black man) or 'Zwarte vrouw' (Black woman) during her online research, de Abreu found fewer results than she expected. When searching for words such as 'Suriname' or 'Surinamer', she found more material depicting Black people, but almost exclusively in a colonial context. "It was either people fighting and suffering, or people dancing and being exoticized. Images of Black people doing mundane things were difficult to find."

During her research, de Abreu discovered that there were more human zoos in the Netherlands and Europe than she knew of. "Human zoos were places where Black people and people of colour were displayed; initially for racist scientific purposes and later for the

sake of entertainment. The most known human zoo is the one at Museumplein in Amsterdam during the International Colonial and Export Exhibition (also known as the World Exposition) of 1883. And I thought – together with a lot of other people I suppose – that was the only one in this country, but I found out that there were more than I can count on one hand."

"Black history is very invisible. So how do you then make Black people visible?"

For instance, in the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, de Abreu found moving images of a family of African descent, who were exposed in a human zoo in Rotterdam in 1928. "It is not just written in a book, there is actual footage of these people." She found the video by entering a more controversial keyword. She says: "I entered the n-word in the search system and that video was one of the things I found." With this example, de Abreu touches upon a crucial question for institutional archives: How do you make Black people visible in the archive? De Abreu further questions: "Black history is very invisible. So how do you then make Black people visible? What words do you use? How can you make them traceable without using the n-word and without being colour blind at the same time?" de Abreu does not have the answer herself yet. "I don't think I should do all the work to find a solution. The institutions need to do their part as well."

"How do you bring back humanity to people who have been dehumanized?"

"How do you bring back humanity to people who have been dehumanized?" is another question that de Abreu found herself struggling with, and which created the change in the scope of her research project. In a colonial context, she explains, Black people are almost exclusively portrayed as passive beings. "That is the Western narrative, but that was not reality. Yes, colonization and slavery happened to us, but we also resisted. I want to bring that particular historical resistance to the present and make it visible." However, that does not mean de Abreu wants to portray images of Black people fighting. "That might work for a white audience, but Black people are in need of images showing us that we are human too. How often do you see Black people without them being dehumanized? And how do you then bring back that humanity?"

With regard to the footage of the human zoo in Rotterdam, de Abreu has found two ways to humanize Black people again. "The main thing I am sure of is to search for and use the actual names of the depicted people. They were human beings, not scientific objects. Calling out their names is one way to humanize them again. I already found some of them in the subtext of the images in the archives." Another decision that de Abreu made was not to

use the actual footage in her artwork. "I am participating not only as an intellectual but also as an artist. And art always entails an element of entertainment. So, I decided to provide the information, but not reproduce the image itself. If I would do that, I would be reproducing the dehumanization of those colonized communities."

For the final artwork in the exhibition, de Abreu plans to create a media installation titled *The New Plantation*. "Colonial history is still on repeat. We have undone ourselves from the shackles of slavery but are we truly free? I don't think so. The changes are insufficient for us to live away from stress and poverty." The installation will consist of a compilation of video material and visual images from Open Archief as well as digital data from her personal archive, such as recorded WhatsApp videos and audio voice notes. "I will also use a lot of colours in the installation. For me, colour functions as a form of therapy. Colonial history is very dark, I brought some light and colour into it. For myself."

"I am not abstract nor subtle; I am very clear and direct. And I mean what I say."

With her project, de Abreu hopes to open the conversation about mental health in the Dutch anti-racism movement. "Art is not just art, but an extension of me and a way to deal with the past and the present." Though, she does give a warning: "I don't want to hide behind my political message. I am not abstract nor subtle; I am very clear and direct. And I mean what I say."

"Black people are more than their skin colour, more than slavery, and more than a legacy of colonialism."

During her research in the Sound and Vision archive, de Abreu found a video of a Dutch market, where a Black man is smiling and eating a herring. He is in the frame for only six seconds, but those six seconds meant a lot to her. In her research blog for Open Archief titled "The New Plantation: A Postcolonial Depression" she describes the image as a "loving portrayal of a Black Dutch experience that soothes my memories that we are human too." She adds: "Within this art project it was important to me to find counter images or produce counter material to make me understand that Black people are more than their skin colour, more than slavery, and more than a legacy of colonialism." She experienced archival material of Black people doing mundane things as healing. "Resistance can come in the form of images of Black people just being happy and having pleasure in a society that continues to dehumanize and stereotype them."

Next to the 'fish-eating-man' she also came across license-free images at Sound and Vision of Josephine Baker, an American-born French singer, actress, and activist who was

in the resistance movement during the Second World War. "Although Baker used colonial imagery herself, she was aware of that and used it to reclaim power. In the footage, you can see her just enjoying herself and her success."

Unfortunately, de Abreu did not find any other images besides these two which she considered healing. "And that is a problem. If this is what archives are able to produce, then that is all we can make of it. Researching the archives comes with mental challenges as there is limited material of Black people, simply living their lives outside imposed colonial frameworks, political contexts, and stereotypes. My art installation reflects a healing process, but I also see it as being part of the conversation rather than the final product."

The fact that Open Archief focuses on archival material free of copyright and licenses was a crucial factor for de Abreu. "Most of the images I used date back to more than seventy years ago, so in most cases, they were license-free. But for new images, I had to request access, which was a bureaucratic procedure. To me, open access is important because you need accessibility in order to reach a wider audience. I want to be able to pass on what I see and learn. So, people can also look into this archival material easily themselves."

"I will show images of Black people eating fish. I will also show images of Black people loving each other and laughing, and just... being."

The residency for Open Archief brought de Abreu a little bit closer to answering the question of how to bring back humanity to those who have been dehumanized. "I will let everyone see that Black people also do mundane stuff. I will show images of Black people eating fish. I will also show images of Black people loving each other and laughing, and just... being."

Image credits poster:  
–*Man met haring*, Polygoon Hollands Nieuws, 1935, filmstill. Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision  
–*Zwartboek*, "gesloten wijken", 1978, magazine. The Black Archives  
–Ankie de Bruijn-Muller, *De kraakacties in Gliphoeve*, 1976, bookcover. The Black Archives  
–Jaye Brunsveld, Anti Black-Piet protest in Reigersbos, 2015. ©Jaye Brunsveld



1978 Amsterdam



ZWARTBOEK  
"gesloten wijken"

1935



1976 Bijlmer



Reigersbos 2015



# STATES OF PLACE

## Michiel Huijben



All images: Maya Pejić, *Telegraafrellen*, 1966. IISH, Inv.No.147A-B, Fotocollectie Maya Pejić

### Framing Public Space in the Archive

A Conversation with Michiel Huijben  
by Warda El-Kaddouri

“How do we shape the world?” That is the question that is always on Michiel Huijben’s mind, a visual artist whose work centres around how architecture and space influence our lives. Huijben studied in Breda, Amsterdam and London, and currently lives in Rotterdam. He explains how he sees the world: “I am trained as a fine artist, but I look at everything through an architectural lens.” The question of space in a broader sense inspired Huijben to dive into the Open Archief in search for the history of the social function of public places, such as the Malieveld in Den Haag.

When Huijben used to focus on space in his artistic works, he would do so intuitively. As he reflects back on his works he says: “At one point I realized that the intuitive approach I used was not a choice. It was all I had.” That realization came when Huijben read the book *Eccentric Spaces* by Robert Harbison. “That book was a real eye-opener,” he declares, “Harbison discussed architecture in a different way than I did, connecting it to imagination and fiction. I started researching him, and when I discovered that he found a course in architectural theory in London, I decided to do that.”



Eight years later, Huijben finds himself doing archival research as an artist-in-residence for Open Archief. “Honestly I am overwhelmed by the amount of material that is open access.” For the exhibition Huijben plans to use a mix of moving images from the Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision as well as scans from the International Institute of Social History (IISH) and Het Nieuwe Instituut. He describes his current state of his work: “I am making a timeline to create a story with all the material I have collected.”

Due to the Covid-19 measures, physical access to the archival institutions was very limited. Huijben completed most of his research online. “I was a bit sad about that. Online research is much more direct. You type in a keyword and it brings you exactly there. But when you are in the physical space of an archive, you can also find something by accident.

Sometimes the folder you searched for contains other things as well.” Huijben also points out that digital archival research also brought practical questions to light that would otherwise not have been addressed. He exemplifies this by mentioning how the user interface works or how archival material is indexed online.

“The city and its architecture are in fact also an archive. You can read history from them, but unlike the archival institutions, they don’t come with a description.”

The only archive Huijben was able to visit physically was Het Nieuwe Instituut. That experience of physically being in an archival institution, gave him the intimate feeling of being close to history. “In online research you are researching representations of something, whereas in the physical archive you are looking at the object, without a filter,” he says, “when I am holding a drawing of the 1800s, then I am the link between history and present. The same goes for architecture and the city. The house in Rotterdam where I live was built in the 1940s because the city was bombed during the Second World War. That is also history persisting into the present. You could say the city and its architecture are in fact also an archive. You can read history from them, but unlike the archival institutions, they don’t come with a description.”

During his research process Huijben started thinking about the relationship between democracy, public space, and the archive. At Sound and Vision he found a silent black and white moving image from 1924, portraying a homeless couple living presumably somewhere outside Amsterdam. You can see the man making the bed in a seemingly improvised sleeping space and handing over a cup of water to the woman. “It was a haunting image. It really touched me. But what surprised me was that this was the only material I found depicting homelessness in the city. How is that even possible?”

“People experience the city in different ways. Women’s experiences are not comparable to men’s experiences. But that is not reflected in the archives.”

This question inevitably poses further questions on representation and whether the archive itself is a democratic space. “The archival institutions try to be. But we know that there are principles and committees who decide what is considered acceptable in the archives. People experience the city in different ways. Women’s experiences are not comparable to men’s experiences. But that is not reflected in the archives,” he points out and adds “archives are supposed to be *national* archives. I grew up in the countryside, but you don’t find places like where I am from represented in them. The archive is a very urban environment.”

At some point Huijben realized that he wanted to start localizing portraits of public spaces in all three archival institutions by focusing on the Dam Square in Amsterdam and Malieveld in Den Haag. “They are prototypical architectural public spaces, so the choice was obvious.” Huijben achieved that by following three trajectories. First, he researched the design process of the artists and architects involved at Het Nieuwe Instituut. Then, he tried to find moments of celebration in Sound and Vision, like the Queen’s visit to Dam Square. And finally, he searched for moments of conflict in the IISH.

“The material I found is beautiful, but it is incomplete. There are lots of gaps in regular daily life between these moments.”

He clarifies: “I am aware that this is not a realistic portrait. The material I found is beautiful, but it is incomplete. There are lots of gaps in regular daily life between these moments.” That is why Huijben also found some material outside of the three archival institutions. “I started researching material on the internet that is free of rights. And I found footage that would make the image more complete. For example, I came across a YouTube video of a tourist filming Dam Square in a very methodical way, showing everything that was going on, just on a regular day.” Huijben thinks that this is one of the inherent problems of the archives as he says “what they focus on and what they show are rarely those non-moments. Just a regular day in someone’s regular life.”

“The Dam and the Malieveld are the places that are pronounced in the archive. And that is quite a challenge, because I don’t necessarily want to make a work about the Dam Square or Malieveld. They have been documented extensively already.” But then, how to tell a story about public spaces if some are already represented more than the others? Huijben’s experience is an illustration of the vicious cycle that many archives can find themselves in. Because when a particular place, event or person is so evident in the archives, there is inevitably more research about it which in turn creates more representation in the archives. Huijben responds: “I decided I want to make a more general story about the idea of public space. Something more general, that is not tied to specific events of conflict, celebration, or to a specific time frame. Only then, can people fill in that gap with their own imagination and feel the liberty to project what they see onto their own environment.”

During a rare moment of physical research in Het Nieuwe Instituut, Huijben stumbled upon an architectural model of the monument of Dam Square. “The architect who was in charge of the monument and the artist who made the allegorical sculptures surrounding the pillar used the model as a speaking object. It was a way for them to have a discussion on the possibilities of how the monument would look like.” Yet, what intrigued Huijben was not necessarily it’s mere function, but

the idea of two men holding, touching and passing the object around the table.

Although he came across this physical object, he decided not to use it for the exhibition. The idea behind his decision was to share with the audience the same online screen experience as the artists-in-residence had while doing their research during Covid times. “We had very limited physical engagement with the archives, so I wanted to reflect that in the work itself.”

Huijben came up with the idea to show a split screen video via two upright screens. “That is how people engage with space nowadays: through their phones.” By fusing moving and still images together, he hopes to create a video essay. The model of the Dam will only be present as a moving image. Huijben describes his process: “I will film the object, so that it will still maintain its role in the exhibition. Maybe I will even show the practice of archiving and how the model is handled; it is very neatly packaged, and you have to wear gloves when you touch it.”

When looking at specific moments of protest in public space, Huijben realized that a lot of materials were not accessible due to copyright and licensing issues. “Thanks to the IISH, I came across these beautiful photographs by Maya Pejić of the Telegraaf riots in Amsterdam dating back to 1966. Pejić was a photographer and anthropologist, who was really *in* the crowd and not reporting from a distance. She donated her archive to the IISH, so it became license-free.”

Huijben explains how requesting licensed materials can be quite a bureaucratic challenge: “Materials by the Dutch architect Gerrit Rietveld are almost never license-free and will almost always cost you. I think that system is based on the myth of the artistic genius. As if Rietveld himself was never inspired by other artists. His work may be copyrighted, but all the intertextual materials that he drew from the other artists that also influenced him are in there as well.”

“To have been able to work with and have open dialogues with the archivists as well as with the other artists, who each have their own ways of searching through and looking at the archives were so enriching. This artist residency at Open Archief brought me a lot of inspiration for future projects and artworks.”

Image credits poster:  
–Ben van Meerendonk, *Onthulling Monument op de Dam*, 4 May 1956. IISH  
–*Walking in Amsterdam City Dam Square July 2019 4K*, 29 juli 2019, filmstills. Youtube  
–Rob Mieremet, *Jongelui op de Dam, Nationaal Monument, na schoonmaken*, 14 August 1969. Nationaal Archief  
–Bert Verhoeff, *Mariniers verwijderen damslapers van het Nationaal Monument*, 25 August 1970. Nationaal Archief







STATES OF PLACE, Michiel Huijben, 2021

Open Archief: Het Nieuwe Instituut, Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision, and International Institute of Social History



# RE:ACTIVATE RADIO

## Femke Dekker

### Radio, Activism and Archives

A Conversation with Femke Dekker  
by Warda El-Kaddouri

Femke Dekker is a curator, educator, and broadcaster who is one of the main contributors of *Ja Ja Ja Nee Nee Nee*, an online radio about art. In recent years her artistic practice moved from the physical to the auditive. She says: "Through *Ja Ja Ja Nee Nee Nee* we have necessary conversations about the field such as the precariousness of art practices or sexual and power misconduct. There are also autonomous contributions of artists doing audio collages or radio performances." With the Open Archief residency, Dekker wants to explore the role of the archive as a catalyst for activism. Fuelled by her living conditions in the urban environment of Amsterdam, her work is inspired by the counterculture. She states: "Physical spaces for artists have been pushed outside of the city centre as a result of gentrification. With this residency, I would like to focus on squatting as a counterculture and radio as a medium."

"The purpose of the artist residency is to work with available and license-free archival material to create something new. And DIY culture is also about sharing and creating, so it made sense for me to stick to that."

Do It Yourself (DIY) culture refers to the idea of believing in creating and organising things for yourself, just like squatting movements do. Coming from DIY, Dekker is drawn to the idea of Open Archief. "The purpose of the artist residency is to work with available and license-free archival material to create something new. And DIY culture is also about sharing and creating, so it made sense for me to stick to that."

Dekker already has some experience with archival research. "This time it was more extensive, and also more challenging." Due to the Covid-19 measures, there were some restrictions to physically visit the archival institutions. "When I finally made it into Het Nieuwe Instituut it was such a joy! The difference between searching the archives digitally and digging in the institutions physically is that in the first case you don't know where the objects *actually* are or what other material is in the folder. So, when I went to Het Nieuwe Instituut, I found all these giant folders with posters, besides the ones that I asked for."

The Netherlands Institute for Sound and Vision contains officially televised and broadcasted shows, and archives of private home videos. "That did not really fit my purpose. The squatting movement operated underground and did not use these mainstream media channels for their message. I did find national news reports of the squatting movement, where you could see how negatively the squatters were portrayed. Sometimes they were invited to voice their opinion, but the format was always fixed. That material was still helpful for my own research, but I will not use that material for the exhibition."



Unknown, Poster, Staatsarchief Amsterdam, IISG BG E35/170

Dekker knew from the start that she wanted to work with audio. "Radio is my medium. I initially started researching archival radio materials in the broadest sense. This led me to find such items like the feminist radio show 'Rok & Rol' from the 80s." But then she came across the immense radio archive of *Radio De Vrije Keyser*, which ran from 1980 until 1998, in the collection of the Staatsarchief, a collection of archival material about squatting which is a part of the International Institute of Social History (IISH). "They started broadcasting from the squatted complex De Groote Keijser in Amsterdam, using different FM frequencies to avoid shutdowns." *Radio De Vrije Keyser* broadcasted daily and brought news on squatting and protests.

"I knew that the *Radio De Vrije Keyser* existed, but I never had the chance to go through their entire archive. And I never knew they broadcasted for that long. The excitement of finding their archives was huge. Through sound, I was immediately transported to 1980. It really felt like a time machine." When she listened to an episode, in which the radio hosts were discussing what the medium of radio could mean for the movement, she immediately knew she found something precious. "That feeling when you know you found something that is going to be at the centre of your research is amazing. It was more than I could have hoped for."



Groot Feest in de Groote Keijser, 1981, poster, CSD BG D66/500

Her artwork for the exhibition will be twofold. First, Dekker plans to disclose episodes of the sound archive of *Radio Vrije Keyser*, consisting of the first years when they were most active between 1980 and 1986. "During this period, radio was still being developed and the radio makers were trying to navigate in a new world of broadcasting audio. And this coincided with the greatest squatting riots in Dutch history." Second, Dekker will broadcast herself for three episodes about her research for Open Archief via *Ja Ja Ja Nee Nee Nee*.

In the first episode "RE:ACTIVATE: the archivist as activist" she talks with the archivists of the three institutions who helped her during the process of her research residency. In another episode, she will have an open conversation with people involved with both the squatter's movement and *Radio De Vrije Keyser* in the 1980s.

"It was not easy to find them. The radio shows were illegal. The hosts operated under aliases or remained anonymous because they faced a constant threat of being dismantled or authorities tracking their physical location." After some weeks of what Dekker calls "detective work", she was able to identify and contact one show host called Els. "The starting point was of course the radio show itself, where some of the hosts went by their first names. But I also read Eric Duivenvoorden's book *Voet Tussen de Deur* about the squatting movement, in which he talks about *Radio Vrije Keyser*."

Dekker got in touch with Duivenvoorden, who gave her a couple of names. "Then it all came together when I watched the VPRO-show 'Andere Tijden', where they investigated the Pierson-riots in Nijmegen and they interviewed some people about *Radio Rataplan*. Through them and a few other connections, I was able to find Els."

"Maybe that is my secret agenda with this project: showing people that they can use radio and mainstream media for activist purposes."

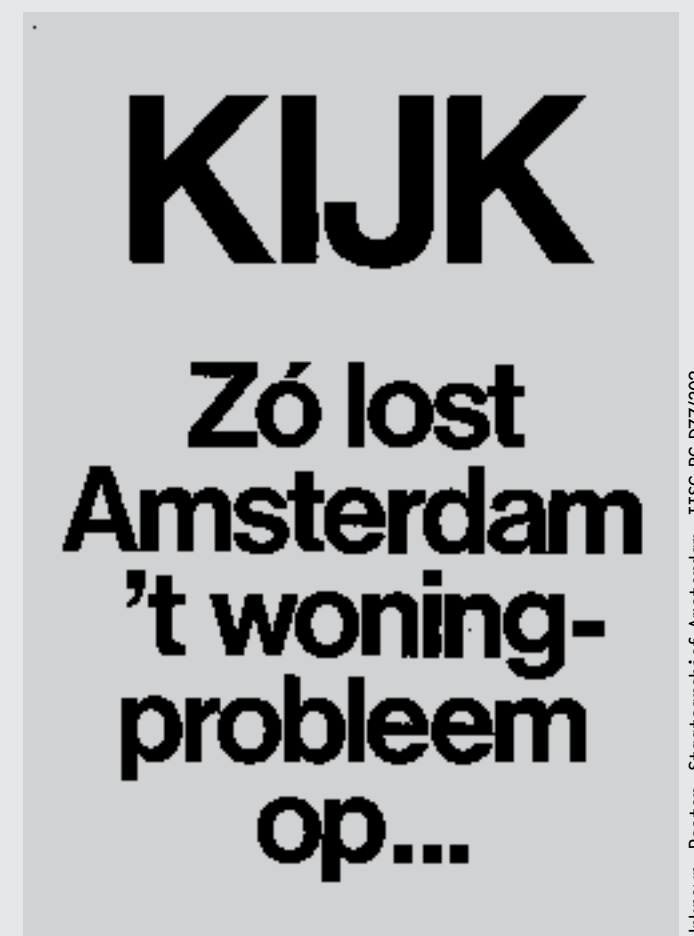


Radio Rataplan, 1981, poster, CSD BG E30/181

By using radio as a medium, Dekker hopes to create a form of intimacy. "After listening to hours of *Radio De Vrije Keyser*, I became intimate with the radio hosts. When I first emailed Els, it felt like I knew her already." Radio is not only an activist tool but also an instrument for community building. "Maybe that is my secret agenda with this project: showing people that they can use radio and mainstream media for activist purposes."

"People don't realise that being an activist is exhausting and traumatizing. You are always with a small group of people, always by yourself, always fighting."

Yet, Dekker does not consider her work activist. "It's a call for subversiveness maybe, but not activism." Dekker has a history in animal welfare activism but had to take a necessary step back from activism and had some time to reflect upon it. "With Jessica [de Abreu], I had a few conversations about activism. People don't realise that being an activist is exhausting and traumatizing. You are always with a small group of people, always by yourself, always fighting. And your call for awareness makes your opponent aggressive." Maybe Dekker will return to activism someday, but for now, she is content with just raising questions. "That's another reason why I felt such a strong connection to *Radio Vrije Keyser*. They were discussing their strategies together and often disagreed. Activism can give you a lot of positive energy, but also a lot of negative energy."



Unknown, Poster, Staatsarchief Amsterdam, IISG BG D77/302

"When people think about the archives, they think about objects that are categorized and frozen in time."

"When people think about the archives, they think about objects that are categorized and frozen in time. And by being in the archives, they have acquired the status of objectivity and impartiality." Dekker expresses how one of the topics was also raised while talking to the archivists of the Open Archief for her first broadcast: "The previous edition of the Open Archief artist residency was about the archive as such, whereas this year's second edition was more about *the role* of the archive." For this reason, Dekker invited the archivists from the three institutions of Open Archief to have a broadcasted conversation on questions like "what is archival research?", "who is in charge of the archive?", "what

material are they disclosing?" and "how are they telling their stories?"

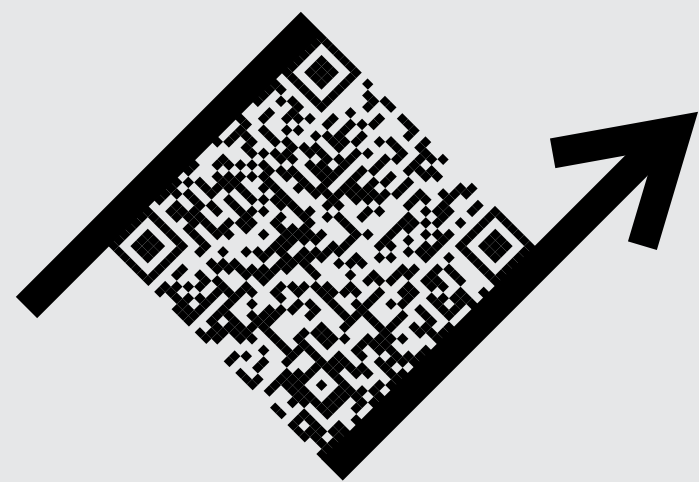
"With a renewed interest from the cultural field, where visual artists are using archives more and more in their work, I felt like that development also needed to be discussed. It was a very open talk with very experienced people. I asked them, for example, how their work has changed in the past five to ten years. They told me that now the cultural community is more involved in disclosing the archives, it helped them see the material that they have been working with for so long with new eyes."



Unknown, Poster, Staatsarchief Amsterdam, IISG BG C20/274

Although the focus of the exhibition will be sound, Dekker plans to also add a visual component. "I gave Marius Schwarz, the designer in charge of the exhibition, a lot of amazing posters I found at Het Nieuwe Instituut and the IISH to make a collage." Her goal is to create the same impression as walking through a city and seeing posters of the squatting movements hanging on the walls. "There will also be sound umbrellas where you can listen to the radio episodes and see the posters at the same time." All of the posters that Dekker selected are anonymous. "None of them are signed by the designer. That is the output of DIY culture: the message is more important than the maker. Besides, it was a form of protection because hanging those posters was an illegal practice."

In the future, Dekker sees herself working with archives more often. "This residency really set me on a path. I will definitely continue using archival material. Maybe I will dive even more into the squatting movement."



Listen to Femke Dekker's RE:ACTIVATE RADIO on [www.jajajaneeneene.com](http://www.jajajaneeneene.com)

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# KIJK

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als eigendom gezien  
wordt als diefstal  
dan wordt kraken  
gezien als het begin  
van rechtvaardigheid  
***kraken* ?**

# kraken

