

# *I want to believe*

A performance evening with Bas Schevers (NL/B),  
David Sherry (UK), Jean Charles de Quillacq (F/CH),  
JODI (NL) and Pablo Wendel (D)

*I want to believe* was a night of performances that took place on September 15, 2012, during the Incubate Festival in Tilburg (NL). The performing artists were selected by [pietmondriaan.com](http://pietmondriaan.com). Their works are defined by gestures and tend to blend with daily life, at times appearing inconspicuous. They are carried on through stories - perhaps the most powerful proof of their existence.

*You will never believe what happened...*

by Jochem Naafs

The other day I went on a trip to Tilburg. I was heading to NS-plein and after taking the wrong way at first, I finally arrived there twenty minutes late. I saw a strange wheelie bin in front of a building. It was grey like any other bin, but the strange thing was that it was full of power sockets. An industrial lamp was attached to it and lit the facade of the building, although it was still light outside. I went inside the building and through a wide hallway I entered a white room with a small bar at the very end. On the left, I noticed a small ladder against the wall. It was not made to be climbed, at least not by humans.

Half an hour later David Sherry was standing in the white room with the small bar. The ladder was attached to his forehead via a small walking bridge. On his forehead, a tunnel. Not a proper tunnel, but an image of a small, bloody tunnel that seemed to be entering his head. I could imagine myself being small enough to climb the ladder and enter his thoughts.

The work by Sherry was durational. He stood there for about an hour. Within this hour the context he was in changed; more and more visitors entered the space, the bar was opened

and people started talking and drinking. They also watched Sherry and his ladder. For a longer or shorter time they stood still, walked around him, came a little bit closer, and looked. But there seemed to be a certain distance that - at least most - people kept. A circle with a diameter of about 2,5 meters around him was empty most of the time. And Sherry stood there, still, not changing posture or mimic. But the meaning of this living statue changed during this hour, at least for me it did. It kept changing.

One of the reasons for this change was Jean Charles de Quillacq. De Quillacq's work is partially defined by referencing works of other artists. In this case he was referring to the work Sherry was performing at that moment. About fifteen minutes after Sherry entered the space, de Quillacq followed. In his mouth there was a clothes hanger with a shirt hanging from it, in his right hand a stepladder. He took a spot between a group of people, stood still and manoeuvred the stepladder in such a way that it was leaning on his forehead. The image he created was rather absurd and comical, in contrast to the serene and poetic image of Sherry. The situation that De Quillacq created had a certain air of 'what happened?' and 'what will happen next?' to it.

Of course the people who were in the spot that De Quillacq chose backed off a bit. But during the hour he stood there, it was obvious to everybody there that there was no such thing as a sacred space of 2,5 meters around him. But why not? The serene, vulnerable and poetic image of Sherry

versus the absurd, comical, but just as vulnerable image of de Quillacq. A number of reasons could be given: the location both artists chose within the room, the fact that Sherry was already there when most people entered the space, the fragility of Sherry's ladder.

While both Sherry and De Quillacq were still present, four young persons with smartphones entered the room and started moving. Holding the phone in one hand, they were obviously trying to do something that the phone was telling them to do, and by doing so, making the phone show them something else to do. Moving up and down, holding the phone high up in the air or close to the floor, letting the phone rest on their heads or moving it forwards and backwards they looked like people who are alienated from their environment and controlled by a technology they can not really grasp.

It reminded me of people trying to calibrate the compass of their Nokia or the GPS on their smartphone. Looking just as silly, trying to gain control of their world by handing it over to technology. Forgetting that they are also being watched by others who could actually help them. Should I help or should I wait for them to ask for help? On the other hand, these performers also seemed to enjoy themselves. They were playing a game, going through various levels with a variety of tasks that ask for different skills and techniques, strategies and ideas. I actually want a phone that tells me what to do, and I want a phone that makes sure I don't walk in the wrong direction when searching for the NS-plein in Tilburg.



This performance by JODI added yet another layer to the whole performance evening. Moving in-between Sherry and De Quillacq, the performers made the air move, the visitors move. They redirected attention and challenged the people to stop talking and start looking again. People tend to forget the durational presence of non-moving performers and the playful intervention of JODI made them aware of the space they were in. Just for a while. Ignoring people that are jumping up and down and holding phones with flickering lights is just as easy.

During the performance of JODI, I noticed four strange rucksacks in the room with four booklets on top of them. They seemed to be a promotional tool for a company called Performance Electrics. Pablo Wendel, CEO of this company, promotes his products that deal in electric current. There is a Power Station that saves the energy (or what is called Kunststrom, art(ificial) current) collected by other products like the Off-Road and the Varta Bande. This last product is the rucksack shown in NS16. These packs can collect energy from public venues like libraries and bars and the carriers can transport it back to the Power Station or a venue that needs a source of energy. What about the wheelie bin outside? It is the Ottomobil: a mobile current point for Kunststrom. The presence of these objects stimulates thoughts about the possibility of stealing energy from businesses for the arts and the exchange of energy in general.

After an hour, Sherry detached the ladder from his head, walked towards the wall where I spotted the ladder

in the first place, and left it there. Walking up close, much closer than I dared before, I saw that this time, the climb up the ladder would end at an image of a sign saying 'fantastico'. Fifteen minutes later De Quillacq also left, taking his step-ladder with him. The presence and energy of Sherry remained, the spot where he stood was never touched during the evening. The spot where De Quillacq stood was soon forgotten and occupied. No physical trace was left. This is in contrast with the two performances that Bas Schevers did with the help of various people.

Schevers announced his performances, putting a written sign on the wall: 'Performance 21.04'. Twenty minutes later a new sign read: 'Performance 21.24'. At these times the performers – who were all present in the room already, either as artist or visitor – started doing something that could be described as typical gallery-behaviour. A woman with some papers in her hand seemed to be the catalyst of all this. Others were talking with each other, clacking their heels, tapping on a beer bottle, watching works, walking around and – something a bit more odd: singing in the toilets. Suddenly a wine glass fell on the floor and shattered. Or were there two wine glasses? After the first time I wasn't sure. Glass was scattered around the place and was picked up or swept together, left in a corner or next to a pillar. The second time, I watched and listened even more carefully and now I knew, although I didn't see or hear it: two glasses were dropped. I also noticed the noise of a plug being taken out of an amplifier, causing a buzz through the speakers. It seemed to

announce a kind of beginning – even before the woman with the papers started walking around.

Reflecting on the performance, I realized that I missed a lot and only reconstructed things later. With his work Schevers enhances this awareness of missing out on things and actions, which is probably not only the case in his work, but also in watching other works of art. Furthermore, Schevers makes you more conscious of everyday behaviour. After the performance I heard people tapping on the bar, I watched other people talking, walking. I did that before as well, but instead of looking at people, I looked at performers now: performers of everyday life.

*I want to believe* could be seen as one performance. One with various (conscious and unconscious) actors and pietmondriaan.com as a director. And Pablo Wendel could be the technician. He made sure NS16 was up and running: chilling refrigerators, lighting lamps and charging smart-phones. Leaving the building at the end of the night, full of experiences, or rather of memories of these experiences, I saw a group of people passing by. A man almost tripped over the industrial light. It broke. I want to believe that it was part of the performance too.





Pablo Wendel, 'Varta Bande'





Pablo Wendel, 'Varta Bande'





David Sherry, *'One in all in all in one in'*





Jean Charles de Quillacq, *Untitled*



David Sherry, *'One in all in all in one in'*





Jean Charles de Quillacq, *Untitled*





JODI, 'ZYX'





JODI, 'ZYX'





Bas Schevers, *'Impulse'*





Bas Schevers, *'Impulse'*





Bas Schevers, 'Impulse'



*Jochem Naafs* is a dramaturg and theatre scholar. As a researcher and lecturer he is connected to the Utrecht School of the Arts. As a dramaturg he works with Stut Theater and choreographer Minke Elisa Brands. Previous years he worked with theatre collective Powerboat, live artist Michael Pinchbeck, choreographer Jack Gallagher and with the participants of Choreoroam. He wrote articles and texts for various organisations and magazines. As a live artist he created two lecture performance at the HKU (one of which is still on tour), the performance Pauze for Huis aan de Werf, and an alternate community game in the city of Utrecht.

*pietmondriaan.com* is a contemporary artblog and exhibition platform founded in 2009 by Michiel Huijben and Simon Kentgens. By playfully responding to each other's choices of work, common correlations and connections within contemporary art evolve. Next to the website, *pietmondriaan.com* serves as a mobile platform for exhibitions, and has curated several group-exhibitions in the Netherlands, such as *What's the point of giving you any more artworks?* (KOP Foundation, Breda 2010), *I want to believe* (NS16, Tilburg 2012) and *Sorry for not standing still* (Kunstvlaai / Art Pie, Amsterdam 2012).

*pietmondriaan.com* is run by:  
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A performance evening curated by [pietmondriaan.com](http://pietmondriaan.com)

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*With:*

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