

Bas Hendriks - Beste Pedro

Goodmorning Pedro,

They say the personal is political.

That reminded me of your performance, *my body, this paper, this fire*, that I saw a few months ago, in which you spoke about the political and cultural situation during your youth. But you also discuss your fascinations; as for instance for corporeality, representation and immateriality. We share an interest in the immaterial, although I know that you're thinking particularly of voices. I think of systems that by all appearances we take for granted, like the cloud..

As of today, the moment I am writing this, the consequences of the Covid-19 virus are becoming tangible here in Amsterdam. We are being encouraged to work from home, which is what I am doing. I'm looking at the street from above. Few people are to be seen, but a lot of corporate activity takes place just as any other day, buses driving to and fro in order to make deliveries; packages, the post, or groceries ordered online. In the stairway I tread over bags of clothes that the downstairs neighbour has ordered and the brand new bike frame that will remain there until the inhabitants of the adjacent flat collect their delivery.

The fine mechanics of the postal system date from centuries ago; in the case of the British Royal Mail all the way back to 1516. Henry VIII had appointed a servant, a so-called Master of the Posts. Whenever the King wished to send a message, post a letter, or issue a command, the messenger jumped into action. They could not afford to lose any time during delivery. For this reason he traveled by horseback. As horses legs eventually get tired, he commanded over a threesome of horses, or to be more precise, a threesome of horses in every town. He could move in between cities and villages and swiftly resaddle during stopovers in order to arrive on time at his next destination. The system by which horses were stationed in stalls came to be known as posts. Later on such posts became part of an entire network that was used to spread daily mail and made available to others besides the King exclusively.

Not far from P////AKT a building was recently delivered. It's situated at the edge of the city within a calmly secluded university campus. It's fairly bulky, but in spite of this commands a certain elegance. When I go for runs I look at it from a distance. Depending on the weather, it is often greyish, not unlike the other buildings in the environment. Yet it does have a certain glamour. The black and white exterior is decked out in a pattern of long, elongated triangles that cover the entire facade. If you walk or drive past, it subtly changes colour from light to dark grey and sometimes, if the sun drops in, silver before turning back again. The moiré-pattern gives the illusion of the whole facade moving as you pass it. I keep looking at it. The

success of the effect is concealed by the fact that the pattern is never interrupted by windows. The building doesn't need them; it is a building full of servers.

The post, once intended for communication, has since become a system for distribution. Ever since the written word no longer needed to assume a material form, the post was left no other option but to reinvent itself. At a fairly early stage a number of pioneers seized upon the possibilities they envisioned to use the commons (that customarily constitutes common property and can therefore be used for the common good), in this case the roads, railways, and the post, to be in the service of e-commerce. What initially had been intended for private use is increasingly employed by companies. The roads are full of transporters; the postal service is used to deliver books and clothes. In *A Hacker Manifesto* McKenzie Wark called it the 'vectorialist class'. Wark is speaking of a group who have played their cards in such a manner as to be able to stake natural resources, energy, land, and distribution systems on a large scale for individual profit, or to monopolize. This class has the power to claim the rights of those vectors by which sources are distributed; sources that were otherwise common property. With the last mile delivery it concerns the efficiency of the last part of the chain: the physical shop has turned into an online interface. The consumer is no longer responsible for the transport of the acquired goods from the shop back home; the salesman does so, or an intermediary; the easier the way from the shop to the client, the better.

What are to be the luxury products of the near future? Here we are encouraged not to hoard due to the virus; no excessive stocking up on painkillers, pasta, nor toilet paper. Solidarity will keep the Supermarket shelves stacked. In your work *Espelho* you mention the Portugese lithium mines, one of the resources in laptop batteries, telephones and electric cars. If the megalopolis of the future has become so large one can no longer take for granted that city-centres are accessible for stocking, will electric transporting vans still be a solution? As long as the mines keep providing lithium, the deliveries will be made... but what if the bottom of the pit comes into sight, what is the next *new white gold*?

All best,

Bas

Translated by Daniel Vorthuys