

# DEAR KRAFT- WERK,

LETTER BY  
**LÉON**  
**KRUIJSWIJK**  
CURATOR

EDITORIAL LETTERS  
**\*SEVEN  
CLICKING\*  
INDEX  
FINGERS**

GRADUATES MENTIONED

- NICCOLO PELLARIN
- COLIN O'CONNELL
- ROMAN TRACHENKO
- JOANNE VOSLOO
- CINDY WEGNER
- STEPHANIE  
SCHUITEMAKER
- GABRIELLA  
GOLDSMITH
- LUCA SOUDANT
- PEDRO MATIAS
- ANTO LOPEZ  
ESPINOSA



Dear Kraftwerk,

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Cc: all other signifiers of a paradigm shift

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A couple of months ago I wrote you an e-mail to introduce the inspiring draft proposals of 10 graduates of the Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. Although I shared it with some people, it somehow slipped my mind to send it to you, or maybe it did not slip my mind, but I might have been reluctant to actually click 'send'. Sometimes, when we express thoughts, they become more part of reality than before, don't you think? I believe I was not ready yet to actually share my formulations of the world we were, and still are, living in, as I wrote to you about the plethora of turns that have been taking shape, which we un/expectedly still are in the midst of grasping. Since that letter, many things have shifted in the world and I continued to think about the best way to grasp our current living condition, which I could compare to a dystopian novel that, by leaking through cracks and bursts, has left the realm of fiction invading our tangible everyday life. I cannot even count the alienating moments of the past months in which my reaction was a mixture of finding myself gawking, feeling unsettled and trying to pinch myself awake, though knowing that my dreams came to an end the moment my alarm went off that morning.

Now they have finalized their graduation projects, I feel a need to update you on the works of these artists, with which they offer us fresh perspectives on, insights in and tools for navigating the present into the near future. As pioneers of a generation, they have been making sense of as much as deconstructing current tendencies – like you have been doing, when you embraced the electronic turn, while fundamental other turns of structures and modes have been taking place simultaneously.

Our present mode of living has been reduced to the microcosm of our home and a limited radius around it,

if we follow the impeded travel restrictions respectably. Nevertheless, Nicolò Pellarin, one of those 10 students, gives us tools to still be able to move to a place of refuge. Taking his Sisyphean attempts to reach Noorderhaaks, a deserted sandbank located in the north of Holland, as a starting point, the work *lands end – 0223 621570* stems from the idea of the physical experience of a place as an object that can only be reached by our imagination. Would this be a strategy to deploy in order to go on adventure without neglecting safety measures? Cindy Wegner gives us advice on how to do this collectively, based on her experience of working with the spacious environment and community on Zeeburgereiland to find ways of making a common space, or a space for the commons. As formulated by Pedro Matias, *They namely said the ‘I’ was never an island*, and he recommends, if/anytime you get a chance, to immerse yourself in cotton candy clouds, or an imagined universe at large, to seize the opportunity to enter a fluid state of being. I second that.

It will be Cóilín O’Connell who will teach us how to get blood from a stone, while being on such a trip/tripping. The figure of speech expresses that you “make someone give or tell you something, when it is extremely difficult because of the character or mood of the person or organization you are dealing with”, but O’Connell gives it a different spin by scanning a number of Neolithic stone monuments dotting the landscape in his nearby surroundings. With this act of mapping valuable sites in his vicinity, he takes us from the idea that the sky is the limit back to the microcosm of a neighbourhood – familiar, pleasant and palpable. But can a neighbourhood be a safe space if it is ever changing? With the installation *Neighbours of Zero* Roman Tkachenko points out that, due to the real estate investments in our neo-liberal world, the future purposes of properties is as randomly defined as a gambling game. Such changes and developments can profoundly disrupt its nearby public spaces and the community living in a neighbourhood, as we have learned from the consequences of gentrification.

So, dear Kraftwerk, what to do when life is unsettling on many levels, from the macrocosm of geo-politics to the microcosm of your neighbourhood? Luca Soudant investigated the mechanisms and potential of the sonic for healing purposes, and asked their peers over the phone when sonic vibrations offered a soothing moment for such feelings of disconcertedness. Or perhaps it is an excellent opportunity to look at mundane, repetitive acts done by our older relatives over the course of years, like collecting ribbons, as Gabriella Goldsmith has explored to eventually turn these findings into sculptures. Stephanie Schuitemaker demonstrates why such acts can resonate among us and are so touching that they can be considered a work of art.

The days spent in confinement at home may also lead to a de-mapping of the self, in other words, exploring other selves, as Anto López Espinosa has among others been doing through a way of writing resembling the surrealist method of *écriture automatique* and by learning from lucid dreams. López Espinosa eventually plays with modes of representing the plural self with a lip-syncing performance, thereby stressing the impossibility of all-encompassing representations. Joanne Vosloo also embarked on an adventure of exploring the self and her alter ego Octo Jozer. The writings show with an unfettered imagination how fiction can become a fact, or how facts are actually fiction, and how fiction is all we need to articulate our lived reality.

Dear Kraftwerk, can I invite you with your pioneering vision and taste for the undiscovered to a durational session of thinking, discussing, collecting, daydreaming and healing to formulate with sound, words and visuals a world we want to slip into through cracks and bursts?

Greetings from the unknown,

Léon

Dear Kraftwerk,

First of all, I want to express my condolences on the recent loss of Florian Schneider – one of your founding members. All together you created a band that would change the understanding of tone, sound and music infinitely. You have started on the paved way of an Autobahn (1974), but your journey with an unknown destination led you off the beaten track, during which you explored, assessed and embraced the possibilities of a new mode of music creation through the sole use of electronic instruments. Not only the technique was new – your lyrical views were visionary of a world becoming ever more structured, defined and controlled by electronic devices. Considering your work as the prelude of an electronic turn, a plethora of other turns are taking shape at the moment, which we are only in the midst of grasping. An obvious turn emerging from the electronic sphere is the digital one, which, like a liquid entity, found its way to the deepest point possible, as the digital sphere has become one of the fundamentals of many societies across the world.

Naturally this phenomenon has been used as much as critiqued within the arts. For example, Nicolò Pellarin leaves behind a fictional landscape with non-alphabetic language in urban spaces, with which he unsettles everyday scenarios in real life to revert attention back from the digital sphere to the physical one. This might be a solution for the way we increasingly inhabit the world through our digital devices. Cóilín O'Connell contrastingly creates an abundant archive of digitized Neolithic stone monuments to scrutinise our methods of processing the past, present and imaging the future. How did you, dear Kraftwerk, continue to imagine the future while pandemics and disasters; fights for systematic changes and equality; economic and political crises; upheavals and wars were profoundly shifting the world around you throughout the years?

While Roman Tkachenko has been investigating the political implications of the design of public spaces in order to disclose its vulnerabilities and misuses,

the meaning of the term ‘public’ is shifting due to the COVID-19 pandemic. People across an entire globe have been confined to their private spaces, at least those who are privileged to stay at home and to have a home. The private sphere has never been so closely intertwined with the public one. Forced to meet with appropriate distance, over the phone or digitally, it has become clear that a sense of belonging among people is created not only within, but also beyond both these physical spaces. Communities have gathered through proxy moments of contact, considerably online.

Some might even say that our online identity has become more important than the offline parallel universe, like Joanne Vosloo is exploring by crafting digital images as well as through the writings of her alter ego Octo Jozer. In addition, Cindy Wegner is looking into which actions have been undertaken to connect people when togetherness was missing. Wegner in particular focuses on the reunification attempts and processes of the former East and West after the fall of the Berlin wall, which also raised questions on the sense of belonging.

Your electronic sound, dear Kraftwerk, actually travelled from West-Germany to the USA, where it laid the foundation for house music and influenced many musicians, as we among others can hear in Aquabahn (1994) by Detroit’s Drexciya. Some of their new sounds, as well as from many others, created on the other side of the Atlantic then crossed the ocean. From the late 1990s, the Berlin record label Tresor started for example to release records by Drexciya. Such sounds have heavily influenced the capital’s techno scene, which became world-renowned. So, my dear Kraftwerk, it is safe to say that we can feel connected through art regardless of its form, right? However, as Stephanie Schuitemaker is asking us, why do we resonate with art and why do some works resonate more than others?

Over time, another wave of changes rooted in the era you started has become more and more layered in order to represent the complexity of issues at stake. The relationship between body, sexuality, gender and

identity has increasingly challenged dominant norms and systems such as patriarchy and heterosexuality. This has led to more fluid ideas about this relationship, opening up space to let the actual mind and feelings reign, as in the work of Gabriella Goldsmith.

Gender performativity in sound and music has been scrutinised too. Luca Soudant investigates the tactility of sound and the way it can touch a body, both emotionally and physically. They explore how we can use that to our benefit in order to bend it in ways we prefer to think about the world, away from rigid and normative structures. As a matter of fact, following Pedro Matias' line of thinking, the future of the world is letting the body fully sink in softness, to eventually surrender into soft matter until we have no shape, with the purpose to accept and embrace liquidity, fluidity and continuous flux. Will an Autobahn or Aquabahn then still be needed to start journeys to the undiscovered? Can I invite you for a group discussion with these artists about such unknown futurities? Let me know, because I definitely want to embark on this adventure with these graduates, but before I do so, I will join Anto López Espinosa in uttering a goodbye:

[...]  
A sonic farewell,  
towards nowhere,  
but the map of the one who got  
lost,  
on purpose,  
for the one who needed to find,  
not to achieve,  
to find  
where there's nothing to be eaten,  
nothing, but the shadow,  
of the infinite blossoms,  
of the infinite sssuns,  
of the infinite moons.  
[...]

Léon Kruijswijk



Graduates mentioned:

[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/nicolo-pellarin](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/nicolo-pellarin)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/coilin-oconnell](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/coilin-oconnell)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/roman-tkachenko](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/roman-tkachenko)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/joanne-vosloo](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/joanne-vosloo)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/cindy-wegner](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/cindy-wegner)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/stephanie-schuitemaker](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/stephanie-schuitemaker)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/gabriella-goldsmith](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/gabriella-goldsmith)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/luca-soudant](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/luca-soudant)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/pedro-matias](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/pedro-matias)  
[sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/anto-lopez-espinosa](https://sandberg.nl/graduation2020/final/anto-lopez-espinosa)

Léon Kruijswijk is assistant curator at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin. Besides working on the main exhibitions and public program, he co-curates evenings at KW's Pogo Bar – a bar in the basement of the institution with a discursive program focusing on emerging local and international artists. At KW, Léon started as a curatorial fellow in 2018 with support from the Mondriaan Fund.

Besides his institutional affiliations, he also works as a freelance curator and writer. In the Netherlands, he organized exhibitions and events as a freelancer at Framer Framed, NEVERNEVERLAND, De School Amsterdam, ROZENSTRAAT – a rose is a rose is a rose, and Perdu, among others. His most recent articles were published on Mister Motley and were included in the graduation catalogue of the Sandberg Instituut. With his practice Léon addresses themes at the intersection of identity politics, queer and gender theory, activism, and institutional critique. He assesses how these themes come together across visual art, literature, experimental music, and performance.