

Press release

02/06/09

*Weak Signals, Wild Cards*

An exhibition of commissioned works and a day of talks and performances: The final project of the de Appel Curatorial Programme '08/'09 in Amsterdam-Noord

***Weak Signals, Wild Cards* is an exhibition of commissions and a day of talks and events curated by the participants of de Appel Curatorial Programme '08/'09. Presented in the former canteen of the Shell Research and Technology centre in Amsterdam-Noord, ten international artists, artist collectives, and four contributors from other fields have been invited to react to the development plans for the locality and conjure a set of alternative futures. The curators have taken the current local situation as their starting point and view it under its global conditions. The artists have created works for and from their envisioned future contexts, while the speakers will foretell their imagined futures, from the perspectives of their expertise. The commissions will be displayed for one month, with an opening event on 26th June.**

**Opening:** 7pm, Friday 26th June 2009

- with music by The Routines and food by the Vrouwenbazaar

**Exhibition:** 12–6pm, Wed–Sun 27th June–26th July 2009

**Talks & performances:** 2–8pm, Sunday 28th June 2009

**Venue:** Shell Kantine, Shell Terrain, Tolhuisweg, Amsterdam

**Artists and contributors:**

YOUNG-HAE CHANG HEAVY INDUSTRIES (KR/USA), Heman Chong (SG), Design Negation (NL), FlyingCity (KR), Yvonne Dröge Wendel (D/NL), Famed (D), Andreja Kuluncic (CRO), Alon Levin (USA), Oda Projesi (TUR), Merijn Oudenampsen (NL), Laura Oldfield Ford (UK), Maria Pask (UK/NL), and Lee Scrivner (USA/UK)

Amsterdam-Noord, the largest borough of Amsterdam with a long industrial history, is undergoing a series of public and private regeneration initiatives. As in many other cities in the Netherlands and globally, the social and architectural reshaping of the landscape is driven by the idea of the 'Creative City'. The combined architectural, social and cultural vision for Amsterdam-Noord is now so strongly anticipated and visualised that it already has the air of a *fait accompli*.

Amsterdam-Noord's projected 'creative' future implicates not only artists but an expanded creative subjectivity, in a society made up of self-reliant, resourceful and flexible individuals on a constant quest for self-improvement. However, the hiatus caused by the actual or

supposed impact of the global economic crisis can foster the imagining of alternative scenarios. In contrast to the instrumentalised role of artists as gentrifying 'settlers', the artists and practitioners in *Weak Signals, Wild Cards* imagine and make works stemming from as-yet-unknown futures: works that come from utopias and dystopias, acting as warning signals, or manifestoes. If the conditions on which urban regeneration is based no longer hold fast, it becomes necessary to rethink what other kinds of urban structures, environments, and societies might be possible – and what artistic practices might result.

The title *Weak Signals, Wild Cards* uses two terms from futurology. Weak signals form a pattern of phenomena that serves as an indicator of possible future developments. Wild cards refer to events that are difficult to predict but have a high impact. The exhibition and events will take place in the former Shell Kantine, at a moment in between its function as canteen for the workers of the Shell Corporation, and as the upcoming contemporary arts centre the Tolhuistuin. *Weak Signals, Wild Cards* occupies this remarkable 1970s interior as an interruptive moment in its history and opens the Shell Kantine and its garden to a wider public for the first time in decades.

Through the commissioning of alternative futures, the works, talks, performances and events in *Weak Signals Wild Cards* will compose a common body of imagination. As the project seeks to problematise the 'usefulness' of art, these commissions seize the potential of art to slip through time and form itself in response to multiple possibilities. The contributions are not finished works or statements, in that they are documents of a society that is still to emerge. Relevant both to global and local situations, their arrival allows a reconsidering of the present.

Among the commissioned works are Laura Oldfield Ford's drawings, fly-postings and zines, made on residency in Noord, which distribute the rallying-cries of bands of a future group of people struggling to survive. Some works, by contrast, respond directly to the Shell Kantine and its future: Maria Pask retells what might have come of the attempt of feminist and class activist Kate Millet to establish a female artist colony in the face of aggressive land developers, in a film made onsite. Alon Levin's two new sculptures echo the corporate aesthetic of the Shell Kantine, capturing an ambivalent artist's role somewhere between function and enigma.

In parallel to the exhibition is, on Sunday, 28th June 2009, a day of imagined futures from practitioners from fields related to the questions *Weak Signals, Wild Cards* poses; including urban theorist Merijn Oudenampsen will take the industrial history of the area and interrogate the meaning of labour in a future creative society. The day will end with the inaugural performance of *Lord Garden's Masque*, a short musical satire by playwright and theorist Lee Scrivner that spins around the central ironies of state-led artistic patronage. All documentation of the performances and talks will be presented in the exhibition.

## Notes to Editors

### The Shell Kantine

The Shell Kantine is the canteen of the workers of the former Shell oil research complex. Shell are consolidating their activities and have sold large portions of land to the public-private housing development initiative Overhoeks, consisting of the municipality of Amsterdam Noord, ING Real Estate and the private social housing company Ymere Ontwikkeling. It is sited on the waterfront and in the shadow of the iconic Overhoeks tower, one of the largest and most recognised structures in Amsterdam. This 1970s canteen will form part of the arts centre Tolhuistuin, directed by broadcaster, former director of De Balie, and journalist Chris Keulemans. *Weak Signals, Wild Cards* occupies this space in between these two functions of the canteen.

### de Appel Curatorial Programme

de Appel Curatorial Programme is a nine-month long professional programme for the development of young curators. The programme was initiated in 1994 by Saskia Bos, and has since been reshaped to have a strongly context-responsive focus by the current de Appel director Ann Demeester. de Appel Curatorial Programme '08/'09 is Clare Butcher (ZW/ZA), Lilian Engelmann (D), Mia Jankowicz (UK), Christina Li (CH), Ana Nikitovic (SR) and Ji Yoon Yang (KR).

[www.deappel.nl](http://www.deappel.nl)

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