

## Episode 3: These people are an element of my work

**Rosa Zangenberg:** You are listening to Taking Art Apart, a podcast presented by West Den Haag.

I am Rosa Zangenberg, visual artist and writer.

**Yael Keijzer:** I am Yael Keijzer, philosopher and writer.

**Rosa:** We're launching an experimental series of themes that one may come across when stepping into the artworld, whether as a young artist, established institution, or curious viewer.

This episode is about authorship and the reception of art. Is art about the artist? What happens when an artwork is finished? Does the artist take responsibility for how it is received? Does it matter if art is used for a different purpose? ... Who is really the artist? In this episode, we hear fellow podcaster Yael discuss her research on the death of the author - a concept originally attributed to the arts of writing - but, nonetheless, as relevant in the context of visual arts. We also invited Dutch artist Mark IJzerman for a talk on what happens in the process of art making - dealing with the complicated authorship of art.

But first, the creative part, written by Yael for the podcast. A curious conversation that covers the theme from two seemingly opposing perspectives, namely from the two French philosophers and writers of surrealist literature - Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Blanchot.

### SCENE ONE

**Rosa:** *Somewhere in France, a museum of modern art is hosting renowned works of art. Maurice BLANCHOT invited Jean-Paul SARTRE to view and discuss it together. They meet up and slowly move from the foyer to the exhibit.*

**SARTRE (Xaver Könniker)**: [slowly enters, clumsily putting his wallet, paper ticket and guidebook in different pockets of his coat, where BLANCHOT has been waiting for him]: Maurice, I don't really understand why you brought me to this museum. You know my views about fine arts. . . Fine art fails to be committed, it's only for its own sake, a load of blah, blah, blah; its purpose falls apart in the face of our profession! Sure, it has some potential, but -

**BLANCHOT (Erik Kamaletdinov)**: Just wait, Jean-Paul, I brought us here to re-analyse the state of things. To reflect on everything and nothing. Usually we go to museums to 'stimulate the senses', or to 'get inspired'; to get away from reality by setting foot in a white cube, on a day out, with the expectation of an entertaining, aesthetic and cultural experience. I understand how one might find this bourgeois, believe me. Perhaps your reluctance will only aid our aim, help our cause!  
Now let us walk on, shall we?

## SCENE TWO

**Rosa**: *BLANCHOT takes the lead and walks to the exhibition space, SARTRE follows. The first artwork they pass is a print by Banksy called "Napalm (Can't Beat That Feeling)" from 2004.*

**BLANCHOT**: Seeing as we're both writers, what if we were to imagine this artwork as a work of literature? We, the audience, are the readers and the artist is the writer. But where does the work begin, and where does it end? At what moment does it come into existence?. A work is like a process of dying. It slips out of the author's hands at the moment it is finished. And it is never what one intended; there is uncertainty about its effect, and an unpredictability that is not in control of the author. That is why, for me, literature and art goes hand in hand. The artwork takes on a life of its own. The only thing Banksy did here was put a few images together, that out of context have no relation to each other, but in context are loaded with meaning - the response is completely up to the audience. And what a response it evokes in us. Suddenly I feel disturbed, angry, political, cynical and. critical of American capitalism!

**Rosa:** *he animatedly waves a finger in the air*

**BLANCHOT:** Seeing as it's using an image as a sign, committed to a political narrative, would you put art in line with literature here?

**SARTRE:** The work in front of us could actually be in line with your suggestion, Maurice. I see literature as a mutual gift of freedom between the reader and the writer. The writer is posing an appeal to the reader and demands an investment. Freedom must be the end goal in order to make it exist! Having to relate to the work and form an opinion! As an illustration I always like to contrast literature with a newspaper. A newspaper doesn't evoke anything, mean anything. In prose, and perhaps in this work too, one is moved by the human seizure of what is displayed. I would think in art the composition is the end, and the art being merely an instrument for something else. However, this work uses loaded imagery. By putting familiar icons together in this random fashion, you have to fill in the blanks as a viewer and work along with the artist. It invites engagement. Just like I believe writers should write for an audience, I feel that the artist also tried to tell us something, an unambiguous message. . .

### SCENE THREE

**Rosa:** *A few steps away, they come across a white urinal - a readymade sculpture called "Fountain", produced by Marcel Duchamp in 1917.*

**BLANCHOT:** Haha! Now this is more like it! You see, my main concern is to face the extreme consequence of the modern condition, where there is no anchorage for authority or meaning anymore. God is dead! You talk of freedom as the starting and ending point, but behind that is an original instability at the core of our selves. What kind of experience is this? And how to deal with this instability in thinking? This here is a possible approach! It is very experimental and open for the taking.

**SARTRE:** Personally, a work that is more situated rather than abstract avant-gardist is more effective for trying to answer the question of the modern condition. Here, the artist doesn't

show an evident plan, or project, no context. It is a deliberate evasion of responsibility; a deliberate becoming passive. Duchamp's readymades are not made as sculptures, but produced ordinary objects; not authentically signed; and not even made by himself. It is completely useless. Instead of ultimate ambiguity, art needs a sense of recognition.

**BLANCHOT:** Your frustration makes me frustrated, Jean-Paul. You keep talking in terms of agency, utility and goals. I'd rather see literature without 'use'. What is elementary is the literary experience, not the material or content. The reception has a productive quality to it, and actually does all the 'work'. What is at stake, admittedly, is a matter of unknowing from artist to art, and art to artist. But this is a space of unlimited freedom where anything is possible. We're not the source of agency, neither as artists nor as audience. Nobody makes the work what it is. It happens. It just happens! Perception is about... wondering, moving without direction, dispersing. The maker should be betrayed by his own novel! He risks it all, loses himself and the work through making. Just like the writer will never be able to read his work as if he were a reader. It never completely says what it says. It is a fountain now! It's not a urinal!

**SARTRE:** I guess. . . And now that I think of it, knowing my agenda, and agreeing with our common grounds, Dada as the ultimate passivity. . . it's in fact a resistance. A wilful, deliberate decision to resist the status quo through ambiguity, and refusing a fixed sense. It is provoking and in that... engaging. It questions established truths even beyond the sculpture itself. How playful. But does it really seize the human condition? Maybe. . .

#### SCENE FOUR

**Rosa:** *Trudging towards the end of the exhibition, they stumble upon a white column in a corner, and a golden plaque with the German word 'NEIN' inscribed. On it lies a box of chocolate bars. Blanchot takes a chocolate bar and holds it up.*

**BLANCHOT:** There is no artist here, I am the artist! And I am the art!

**SARTRE:** I give up; do whatever you want with this Maurice.

THE END

**Yael:** This dialogue script was written by me, Yael, as part of the podcast's theme on the reception of art. It is a made up dialogue based on research on Jean Paul Sartre and Maurice Blanchot - a conversation that could have happened, but is fictional. When viewing a work, do we see the artwork or do we see the artist? Do we have to connect the two, or is there authorship in the viewer themselves? In a way, this was also an exercise for myself in relating to someone else's work in the same manner.

Just for some background: Sartre and Blanchot have both written extremely interesting essays on literature, art, the imagination and authorship. The oeuvre of both these French intellectuals spans throughout the Second World War all the way to the 80's. They were also writers of surrealism, yet with opposite agendas. In this fictional conversation they discuss art that either demands a lot of engagement from the viewer, or that is more guided by the artist's intention.

Sartre made philosophy fashionable - with famous images of thousands of students attending his funeral, he could be described as the first celebrity philosopher. He specifically saw freedom and responsibility as important endeavours. Because of his stern communist views would later cause many objections among other intellectuals.

Blanchot's life, on the other hand, is more ambiguous. His political activities remained very polemic, starting as an editor for controversial magazines before the war, yet siding with the left in the 60's, and inspiring postmodernist thinkers today. He lived isolated in the later decades of his life, and in its own way lived his theory on paradox and impossibility.

Want to know more about these thinkers? Read the podcast description for some recommended material.

**Rosa:** In the last segment, we heard young visual artists Erik Kamaletdinov and Xaver Könneker in the roles of Sartre and

Blanchot. If one were to ask the question whether the reception of art is separated from the artist, many would say they are inseparable. But can we be as radical as to neutralise this relationship entirely? Next up, I go into dialogue with Dutch artist Mark IJzerman. Mark is an interdisciplinary artist - his work intersects ecology and media art. His bio curiously states he "uses digital technologies to create processes that have their own agency, to make works creating intimacy between us and the other-than-human." Art with its own agency?

**Yael:** When I arrived at the venue to see the event of Mark IJzerman, one that would showcase his current research, I saw chairs and microphone stands set up in the space. I also saw many men, older and dressed in striped shirts, red caps and clogs waiting around. I thought perhaps there was something going on before I came, another event perhaps, and that this group was still hanging around. However, when the host of the event announced the evening, and announced the performance of the shanty choir, I was so surprised... I asked Rosa: "Are we at the right place? Is this IJzerman's artwork?" \*

**Rosa:** So, Yael and I, we were visiting one of your shows there. We were met with a choir as your presentation of the work that you're currently doing. So we were a bit surprised and we were wondering if you would like to tell us a little bit about this specific process, bringing in choir?

**Mark IJzerman:** So my research started with when you first think about biodiversity, you think about different species than humans, for some reason. And I was already working with these species from the beginning of my research but I was kind of missing a way to talk about different time scales and also the human scale. So how do you bring the human scale and the poetic scale into a project which can be very much about biology? And that can be quite far from us as humans. You can also bring in data about biodiversity, for example, like, how is the water good... is it fertile water? Is there like a lot of biodiversity going on. This can be data that you can use. But I was missing the human factor and I first thought, well, would it be like if I would give or bring in an ode to these species with a singer or brass band or what would happen then? And then I thought, no, of course it has to be related to the

sea and to the port. So I started researching. Actually I didn't know the word Shanty choir. But then I thought, "but there are, are these choirs of old men who sing sea songs, right?". And I started researching this and its history and that they were songs that were being sung on boats while they were working, to hoist the sails, et cetera, et cetera. And in this way I ended up contacting different choirs. And with this choir that I work with, it really clicked because they were like, "yeah sure you are not crazy. Your idea is not crazy". Basically, they told me and they were really willing to work with me. And also because my project is talking about the history, the present and the future of the Nieuwe Waterweg, or the port area, and I had this idea of letting the choir sing about how this port area was, is, and always will be the same. There's this 'sea Shanty', or this song about this and I subverted it and used it in a different way. So. I kind of did an edit of this song and so they'll be singing that in the final installation.

Of course, it's one thing to have a media, or having a media art piece in which you use some singing from a choir. And for the tests, I also heavily deformed it in the computer and I took out the accordion so there were some glitches in the background. That maybe wasn't played loud enough, so you could hear, but there's also something kind of sticking with it and then actually working with the choir, however confronting that may be to go up to a choir and say, "Hey, I'm a media artist and I want to work with you and I have this strange idea of talking about biodiversity in the Rotterdam ports, not only through this species, but also by having you in my installation in some form". That process for me is super daunting and scary, but it's also a lot of fun when it works out. And then I spoke to Florian (Weigl), the curator of V2. He also suggested, "you know, you could record the choir at V2 and then maybe ask them to perform". And that kind of stuck in my mind. And I thought this is actually a nice way of paying them back. Like, I record them and they have to do what I say and they have to, you know, have strange pauses in their singing. And because I want to, you know, do stuff with this or they have to be on camera, et cetera, et cetera. But that's only taking stuff from them. So how do I give something back to these people, is by offering them a paid gig where they get to do what they love most.

**Rosa:** Did you have an expectation of the viewers of the people who would come? Did you hope for a surprise or some kind of, yeah, an unexpected reaction?

**Mark:** It's a very thin line to walk, when you invite a choir like that, it doesn't become a laughing stock. They don't become victims of us placing ourselves as, you know, media art-loving-people above another sort of culture. And what I think I was able to achieve is that they talked to a lot of people also in between when they didn't play. They sort of played three sets and in between, they also talked to some people and that you get to know them as people. They were born in a different time than most people who were at V2. They sang songs that some of us know from kindergarten, like 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor' or something like that. Yeah, it's also bringing together, bringing the audience closer to these people who are an element of my work and also to make sure that the audience doesn't think that I'm using them just for effect or to laugh at, but it actually has a function and I respect them for what they do.

**Rosa:** Yeah. I think you already mentioned this a little bit in the beginning, but that this fragment of the Shanty choir. At first glance, it seems totally different from the rest of your work. So how do you plan to connect the dots so to say?

**Mark:** I must say I'm not super good at connecting the dots of my own work. I always think when you're an artist, you have the privilege to kind of research something different every three months. Though I have been really researching these topics around water which is also something I did before, while working on organising FIBER labs, for example, with the FIBER festival where we worked around bodies of water and deep time and nuclear deposits, et cetera. But in this case, I think what you're alluding to is the fact that I'm using elements, which I cannot control, or I I'm giving control out of, out of my hands to another entity, in this case choir and marine worm, that will be part of my installation, which has to grow. And I have to allow time to grow. And in other work, which I did previously, which was just in the computer, it was, for example, I set up rules of how pixels would behave to certain sounds coming in and then I start playing my music and the computer with this organic video synthesiser would create



the visuals for it. So I would be steering it. And I kind of like that as a sparring partner.

**Rosa:** And this is a bit what you mean with art having its own agency also.

**Mark:** Yeah. And for me, that's then very close to the other-than-human, kind of attuning to other-than-human. There is a link there as in, you can set up a computer system, which has chaotic behaviour, which you cannot predict. Um, and of course, when you start overgrowing a sculpture in the harbour, or working with a Shanty choir of 40 old men, you also don't know what's gonna happen. And I think it also has to do with a lot of my works, maybe you saw, are collaborative so I hardly ever work solely by myself. This is something I love because there's something that happens. When you work with other people or with an entity like this, that you cannot predict before. And I like to be surprised.

For the last few years, I kind of got to realize there's a friction in my work in the sense that I come from a background where I used a lot of technology. And I'm very privileged to know all these techniques and work with AI and do some stuff with the graphics and work with sound. But I use this now to kind of create more intimacy or attune to the more-than-human through the lens of these technologies. And of course there's a friction in that because the more we use AI technologies the less coral reefs there will be, you could kind of make a link between those two. And because I get these questions sometimes, like: "Okay, but what kind of artist are you? If you are making work about ecology, but you're using data centers or you're using projectors, which are on for like six hours a day?". But I really like the friction between it.

**Rosa:** What would you say? This is a very broad question probably but what would you say the role of an artist is? Because there are some artists who make works and then they finish it and then they have very clear ideas about how it should be and how it should be hung. And what is the idea of the work? And it should not change. But for you, it seems a bit more that there's space for..

**Mark:** Yeah. I used to do a lot of live audiovisual shows. And it would never be the same each show. Like there's always

something that changes just half an hour before the performance. I think "ah, it might also be interesting". And you try it on the spot. I did a lot of times try, like if I rehearse something too much, it becomes very boring for me. I played a show here at Rewire in the Hague when I was still doing live AV just by myself. And I was very stressed and it was a very busy period and I programmed everything. Like, I knew what was gonna happen. I felt like cheating. So it didn't feel like a lot of fun. I think it comes out of being an artist who used to work mainly with technology. And when you work with technology, it's very easy to have everything set. I mean, you basically fill in an Excel spreadsheet and you can then play that out, you know? And you know, what's gonna happen. And for me, that's not necessarily the most interesting. I think when you talk about the role of the artist is then also to surprise yourself and also to be surprised by new combinations that emerge during your process. And I mean, we now live in a time where lots of people are making money with boring NFT stuff. And of course it's a way to make money, but then I also think as long as I can sustain myself by doing research work where the process is open. And this is something which V2 two is very well supported, huh? Like the process of stuff. I would love to keep doing that as well as possible because otherwise you become a designer.

**Rosa:** It seems like the most important thing about the NFT is this idea of owning it because there is this very clear protocol about how you own the work that gets imprinted into the code or something. It's the most important thing. It's not really that important in the art world that we just need to own it and have ownership over..

**Mark:** I mean obviously I can only talk from the perspective of an artist, not from a collector for whom I can imagine it's very important to own something. Also there's definitely artists in our field who like to be these sole artists on the bill, you know. And this is also what I like in a more collaborative practice, which is really hard because people are not used to it. People are not used to seeing three or four different names for one artwork. People still believe in a myth of the sole artists. And this is also something that I thought about for a long time. And I thought for a long time, maybe I have to move more towards being, you know, the sole

artist, but why would I do that? If it is fun to collaborate, why would I? Well, it's, I mean, let me say this is important that my name is on it, for sure. But if there's some other name I'm also fine with that. But I am all for crediting who did the work.

**Rosa:** So you mean more like, uh, the authorship?

**Mark:** Yeah. The ownership is also more from a consumer. Like, if you're a collector or someone who yeah collects it, then it's more ownership. But I think we're talking about authorship.

**Rosa:** Yeah. But yeah, authorship is different because then it just means that you were creating the work, but you give permission to let people interpret your work.

**Mark:** Yeah they make the starting point, but indeed the audience is also part of the equation because without an audience, it doesn't make sense. I think the choir that I worked with is in a sense also the audience, because they also get something from my process, if that makes sense, because they also know what I'm working on and I had this session with them where I was explaining to them my ideas on the artwork. And then... they all worked, or most of them worked in the harbour at some point. And they also started talking about the port and how it changed and when I asked them, like, "what do you think will be left?" They also start thinking about, okay, probably the fossil fuel industry will be gone. What will be there? What will, what will remain? And I don't think these are things they think about every day, even though they sing about them. So there's this difference, there's this funny friction there.

**Rosa:** Yeah, they don't think about it in that combination maybe, but then when you stimulate it with your work, it will come together.

**Mark:** Yeah. Um, I hope at least.

**Rosa:** I'm really curious to see how it will end up.

**Mark:** Yeah me too.

**Rosa:** From the conversation we just had, Mark IJzerman seems to be aware of the many active agencies that are at stake in his work process - whether human or other-than-human - not only in terms of how the work is composed but also how it is received. As a result, the work can transform and evolve by itself - yet the artist still initiates it, which might still be regarded as the fundamental agency.

But could we take it a bit further? Now, Yael gives a mini lecture, on the death of the author - or could it be the artist? Allegedly, the now world-wide known Dutch artist of the 20th century, Piet Mondriaan, only became 'hip' again after a plagiarised work of his surfaced. It is not uncommon that artworks exposed for plagiarism and vandalism gain popularity. And so does their maker - even if this popularity is based on other people's actions towards the artwork. What does it mean for the role of the artist?

#### The Death of The Author - Yael Keijzer

**Yael:** For this lecture, I would like to tell a story about a number of artists and thinkers whose life somehow got intertwined - willingly or unwillingly. Before that, however, we need to revisit an important concept in cultural history that could help us understand why and how this unusual intertwinement took place.

The notion of 'the death of the author' is set out in the famous 1967 essay "The Death of the Author" by French literary critic and theorist Roland Barthes. This essay sort of announces the movement in the history of ideas linked to post-modernism, where truth is not linked to one narrative, but is considered to be fragmented into a pluralism of truths and knowledges. Barthes argues against traditional literary practices that rely on the intentions and biography of an author to explain the ultimate meaning of a text. Instead, new insight can be gathered in the process of the reader's interpretation. Perhaps relevant to our times, readers must, according to him, separate a work from its creator in order to liberate the text from interpretive tyranny. Of course this is up for debate.

A work of art or literature spreads, as in the story of the tower of Babylon. In this Biblical story, everyone speaks a different language and is trying to build a tower to heaven, so that there can be a divine, shared universal understanding. This is often what we try to do when interpreting a work. We try to understand the original meaning, the initial intent of the artist. However, perhaps every interpretation makes the reader or viewer an artist himself. Perhaps we are creators in disguise, already by the act of conceiving and relating to the work. We tie together the elements of a piece of art and what it says to us, or tries to say to us, like we once learned to read by learning the alphabet. This act of reading is an act of creation, while we are not aware of it. Instead, we idealise or mystify the original creator. This is what Barthes meant when he announced the death of the author.

Along with Barthes, many novelists and philosophers played around with authorship and how through this, perception can be challenged and our relationship to our environment. German literary critic Walter Benjamin is a figure notorious for being an elusive thinker of the 20th century. He is often feared for being incomprehensible and difficult to read. Still, he is picked up by a lot of philosophers and also artists for his inspiring cultural theories and creative writing style. You might know him from his essay Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction from 1935. Interestingly, he also wrote many early essays on the task of the translator. He has curious perspectives on the two questions: 'who is the artist' and 'is an artwork inseparable from its maker'. Benjamin lays out the art to translation, and says that making a translation of a text is like creating an artwork. It is not really about making a translation as accessible as possible for a reader in a new language. Rather, a translation tries to weave together ideas in a similar fashion as the original author. And besides we can wonder, does an author, poet, photographer or musician produce their art with an audience in mind? And if so, should they care about making it accessible?

To grasp the full meaning in another language, might mean letting go of the receiver. If you think about it, we praise Leonard Bernstein's renditions of Chopin's pieces on the piano as art in its own right. Or we prefer specific translations of the Bible over others. Now there are inevitably things lost in

translations, like there is a certain loss when looking at a picture of an artwork versus seeing the real thing. But there is also meaning that can be gained, or deepened. Translating throughout time is a performative act; one that reflects the culture the translator is in and through which symbols they interpret a work with. This relates to how we read a text, but also how we 'read' an artwork, or how we even 'read' the land- or cityscapes around us.

Now technological reproduction has challenged, and perhaps demystified, our aesthetic experience. The uniqueness of an artwork does no longer guarantee a heightened sensation. We no longer need to care about translating the meaning of a work of art; when everything is reproducible, even ourselves, art can mean anything we want it to mean.

Now that I've covered the theoretical part on Barthes and Benjamin, I am brought to a curious event in the history of modern art. Namely: Benjamin's Mondriaan lecture in 1986 titled "Mondrian '63-'96" at the Marxist Center in Ljubljana. This is where it gets interesting. This was a lecture about Piet Mondriaan paintings from between the years of 1963-1996, but note that 1996 is ten years after the event itself. History tells us that Walter Benjamin died more than seventy years ago. So how is it then that Benjamin is out doing lectures in the 1980s? His reappearance in Ljubljana comes from the transcript in the posthumous publication 'Recent Writings'. He mysteriously ponders the questions raised by these pseudo-Mondrian's and posits a "problematic understanding of art is a reflection of the uncertainty of the human soul." All this might just show that history is just a story, and just as there are different ways to interpret a text, a character, or an artwork, there are different takes on historical persons as well. The lecture is being held sporadically to this day and in different languages.

To unfold this story, I want to talk about a specific artist who has been preoccupied with Mondriaan too. Serbian artist Goran Dordevic is someone who has made copying an artform. Through Dordevic's story, we can see how a work of art can change its meaning and role depending on the story in which it appears. Until 1983, Dordevic had made it his practice to specifically copy Harbinger's; paintings that were considered

of little value, in an appeal to absurdity and triviality. When he started copying Mondriaan's *Composition II* however, he realised something else was going on. In his recent 2021 publication "Remembering a Mondriaan", he writes "In a way, copy has at least two layers of meaning. By making a copy we remember the original. Each new copy is like a renewed memory and it can play not only one role (like in art history) but different roles in different stories, both physically (that means on display) and symbolically (like in a narrative)." He goes on, "While an original stands for itself, copy is its representation, thus having the properties of a symbol. And in case of a symbol, its dimensions are often of secondary importance."

He even went so far as to generate computer graphics of Mondriaans. And making Mondriaans on all kinds of pieces of furniture or any surface he could get his hand on, to then paint *Composition II* by heart, in the exact ratio according to the changing measurements. He had noticed that throughout opportunities to exhibit that institutions expressed concern towards the measurements of his copies - would they be the exact same size as the original? And is size, then, the determining factor that makes an original a one-of-a-kind?

His initial motivation to choose Mondriaan's *Composition II*, he describes as practical above anything. He saw himself as an inexperienced painter. The first copy he made he painted in what eventually was dubbed a 'public demonstration' in 1983 and it was called: "How to Copy Mondriaan" where he put up an easel and painted in public for two days in front of the original.

The original *Composition II*, painted in Paris in 1929, acquired by the Belgrade National Museum, was not exhibited or written about until being taken up in the permanent installation in 1952. In a way, Dordevic managed to bring Mondriaan back to life, or at least into the relevancy of the Belgrade artscene. Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, it seemed the only Mondriaans exhibited in public were those signed with Mondriaan's name but dated after his death. Naturally, Dordevic wonders: Does it make sense to put his own name on the label next to the works?

Years later, Dordevic is not sure anymore which of his copies came first, and whether they are his at all, or rather copies by others. Also the one that appeared at the 1986 Walter Benjamin lecture, which showed two copies of *Composition II*, remains elusive because he had made only one for public presentation at that time. The mystery remains also which ones are copies of the original or copies of copies. Some were made as single reproductions, but at some point Dordevic experimented with a different working method - of painting multiple canvases in an assembly-line manner.

What this all brings up is what connects the artist to his work. When is it a Mondriaan or a Dordevic, or is anyone simply an artist? Or are we all amateurs? What implications does this have for museums and history? Dordevic suggests the following: *"Anybody can make a copy for various reasons: substitution for an original, forgery, learning to paint, or one of these Mondriaan paintings dated after his death, and in each of these cases it will play its specific role. Also, if it doesn't make sense to attach the notion of an author to a copy, it is still possible for a copy to have the notion of ownership attached to it. The work itself as a physical object could belong to someone and be an object of transaction as a gift or commercially."*

What Dordevic's case shows is that the author or artist is not only dead, but they are undead, they take on different hosts and acquire an extra layer of meaning in a way the original never could and never can. It moves and breathes with its time to be read, interpreted and applied over and over again. Its place of origin, art-historical context, or artist's intent become unstable values. Challenging the notion of authorship might actually stimulate institutional and curatorial reception and recontextualisation of art, and in that, it might secure a certain sustainability for art and art practices in the age of mechanical reproduction.

**Rosa:** That was it everyone.

Special thanks to: Erik Kamaletdinov, Xaver Könneker, the Shantykoor Barend Fox live for the 3x3 event at V2\_Lab for the Unstable Media and Mark IJzerman for taking part in this episode.



If you want to know more about the guests and their practices, as well as extra source materials, please have a look at our description box. This podcast is made possible by West Den Haag.

We will be back soon with another episode, one which, once again, will be about the artist and their artwork. Following on from the reception of the artwork, what happens if this reception is not turning out to what we hope for?

**Guests in this episode:**

Erik Kamaletdinov, <https://www.haagsekunstenaars.nl/cv/81627>

Xaver Könneker, <https://xaverkonneker.com/>

Shantychoir Barend Fox, <http://barendfox.com/>

Mark Ijzerman, <https://markijzerman.com/>

**Further references:**

Maurice Blanchot, *The Space of Literature* (1955) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice\\_Blanchot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maurice_Blanchot)

Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* (1948) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What\\_Is\\_Literature%3F](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/What_Is_Literature%3F)

Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author* (1967) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Death\\_of\\_the\\_Author](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Death_of_the_Author)

Walter Benjamin, *Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1935) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Work\\_of\\_Art\\_in\\_the\\_Age\\_of\\_Mechanical\\_Reproduction](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Work_of_Art_in_the_Age_of_Mechanical_Reproduction)

Walter Benjamin: Piet Mondrian 63-69 <http://pietmondriaan.com/tag/walter-benjamin/>

Goran Djordjević, *Remembering a Mondriaan* (2021) <https://esthesis.org/against-art-by-other-means-the-case-of-goran-dordevic-1972-85-branislav-dimitrijevic/>

'Alphabetum IX: L'écriture avant la lettre' at West, [http://westdenhaag.nl/exhibitions/21\\_10\\_Alphabetum\\_9](http://westdenhaag.nl/exhibitions/21_10_Alphabetum_9)

'3X3: Center for Genomic Gastronomy & Mark IJzerman III' at  
V2\_Lab for the Unstable media, [https://v2.nl/events/3x3-  
center-for-genomic-gastronomy-mark-ijzerman-iii](https://v2.nl/events/3x3-center-for-genomic-gastronomy-mark-ijzerman-iii)