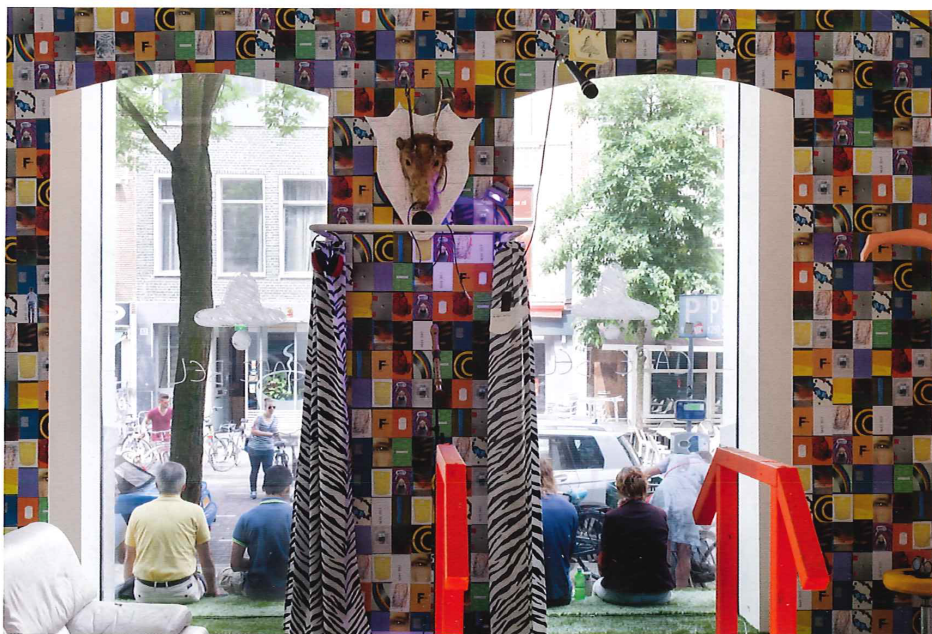




Café Bel
2014

32–41 Installation views and events



Interview

Maarten Bel [MB] with Bernd Krauß [BK]

BK Who is the fool and who is the hermit? *(In response to two Tarot Cards hanging on the studio door.)*

MB I'm the hermit and my cousin is the fool.

BK Does he have a name?

MB If I would have to give him a name I would call him... David.

BK Is that a good name for a hermit?

MB I don't think so.

BK At which point does the fool come into play?

MB My cousin assists me. He is an undercover fool and tries to engage with other fools without actually being one himself. Sometimes he goes around the village and tries to get people engaged. He uses them and collects material. This cousin brings things back to the cabin and gives the material to David. David finds a place for it in the archive.



And there it can grow together with the other materials and ideas, thoughts, phrases, drawings, and images. The hermit wants to cure the people in the village.

BK What is the aim of that tactic?

MB The hermit can get a sense of the importance of things in this way, but he keeps his distance to create an overview. He believes small things, such as a conversation or a situation that suddenly appears, can be resampled into bigger things.

BK How do they get reactivated?

MB Sometimes my cousin goes back to the village and brings the material back in a new form. This material can appear in many ways, sometimes in really small ways, as a test to find out its potential value. For example, there might be a badge on his shirt with the phrase: 'everybody knows how to play the game.' He tries to plant a seed that will grow in another person's brain.

BK When do they get reactivated?



MB The things have to wait until David is having a shower or riding on a bus or sitting on the toilet. In these moments, he steps aside from consciousness and starts to connect things. That's when he finds the right box into which these things can perfectly fit.

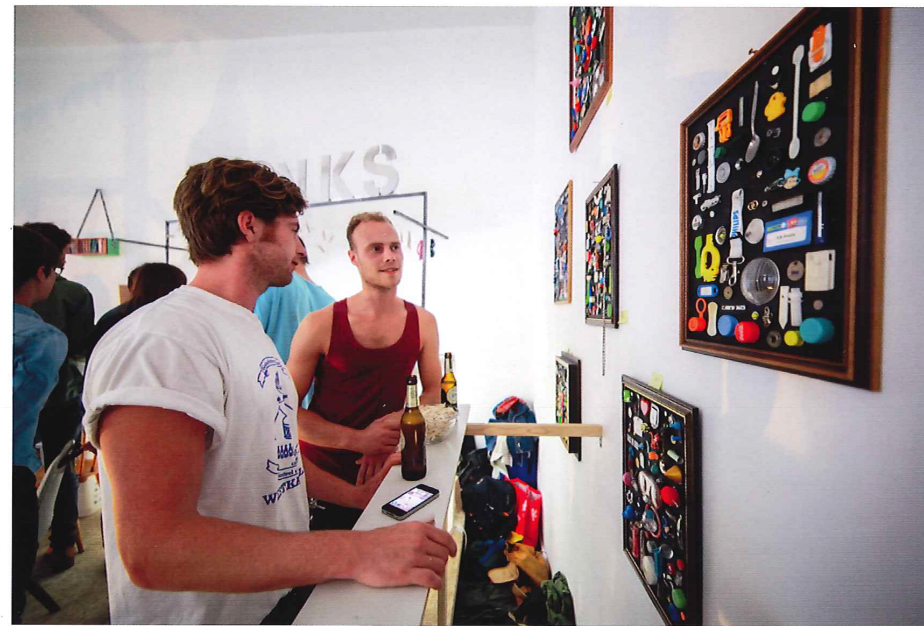
BK What kind of box is that?

MB It can be a physical box. Sometimes it's an imaginary box. The box provides us with an alternative perspective.

BK Is *Café Bel* such a box?

MB Yes, in this case the box takes the appearance of a bar. The previously archived materials need to be transferred into the box, just as they would be invited to a party in a bar. They cannot just turn up as a note or a phrase. They have to team up with each other, to work as narrative aids—like a costume might, for example. And I am the bouncer. I decide which materials come in and which stay out. Or I suggest improvements, and they can try again the next time.

BK What kind of bar is *Café Bel*? What is it made out of?



MB There is some important hardware that is required: a stage to host performances, a bar where you can get drinks, a toilet, and an amplifier. The software involves things that are floating around, stuff that can assist or comfort the hardware. One example is the reindeer head, which I use to amplify my voice on stage. Another is the way the book covers I have designed function as decorative wallpaper in the background. The archival material is filtered through the stable elements of the bar. So the amplifier appears inside the reindeer and the books become wallpaper.

Then there is programming. In addition to being present at *Café Bel* myself, I ask people to submit to an 'open call' and invite people I have already worked with or with whom I would like to work. I believe there is great value in bringing people of different backgrounds together to share knowledge.

BK Why you think the bar is a good place for this?

MB The atmosphere, or what the Dutch call *gezellig*, is quite important. It gets rid of that fence or boundary people have around them. Authorship is beside the point. It allows me to challenge them.



BK You could call that the sauna effect. What is the outcome of such a heated session?

MB You become relaxed with other people. There is a momentary cure for both David and all these cousins. At least both are capable of drawing an imaginary map of the session. This can be a starting point to change their perspective on the world.