

A RING WITH MAGICAL POWERS: DUTCH ARTISTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES JOIN THE FASHION PROJECT OUTSIDERWEAR

UM ANEL COM PODERES MÁGICOS: ARTISTAS HOLANDESES COM DEFICIÊNCIA INTELECTUAL UNEM-SE AO PROJETO OUTSIDERWEAR

Josien Vogelaar^{1,*} 

ABSTRACT: This article presents a collaborative project carried out with these outsider artists and a group of young Dutch creatives. The project initiated by the cultural entrepreneur Jan Hoek consists of creating a fashion label Outsiderwear, in which young creatives, mostly fashion designers, were matched with outsider artists from Outsider Art Studios in Amsterdam; working together, the pair developed a collection. The idea was to establish a structural collaboration between professional creatives and outsider artists. Data is presented using interviews in order to construct a case study.

Keywords: Outsider art. Fashion design. Collaborative learning. Adults with disabilities. Creative process.

RESUMO: Este artigo apresenta um projeto de colaboração realizado com estes artistas *outsiders* e um grupo de criativos jovens holandeses. O projeto iniciado pelo empresário cultural Jan Hoek consiste na criação da marca de moda Outsiderwear, na qual jovens criativos, em sua maioria estilistas de moda, foram combinados com artistas dos Outsider Art Studios em Amsterdã; trabalhando juntos, a dupla desenvolveu uma coleção. A ideia era estabelecer uma colaboração estrutural entre criativos profissionais e artistas *outsiders*. Os dados são apresentados utilizando entrevistas para a construção de um estudo de caso.

Palavras-chave: Arte outsider. Design de moda. Aprendizagem colaborativa. Adultos com deficiências. Processo criativo.

1. Outsider Art Gallery – Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

*Correspondence author: jvogelaar@cordaan.nl

Thematic number organized by: Lucia Reily and Selma Machado Simão

Background: Outsider Art Gallery in Amsterdam

Outsider artists tend to be seen as a little bit different. They often sidestep conventional arts education, and operate outside of the mainstream art world. Quite often they face mental or physical disabilities, homelessness and vulnerability. Their artwork is sometimes seen as exotic and they may be considered difficult to work with. In this article I will write about an innovative collaborative project carried out with these outsider artists and a group of young Dutch creatives. But first I want to dig into the concept of Outsider Art and who are these Outsider Artists.

The concept began to receive attention soon after World War I. The first major study of artwork by mentally ill people in psychiatric institutions appeared in 1922, when *Bildnerei der Geisteskranken* (*Artistry of the mentally ill*) was published (PRINZHORN, 1922). This study, by the German psychiatrist Hans Prinzhorn, on the collection in Heidelberg generated interest in many European avant-garde artists such as Salvador Dalí, Karel Appel, Max Ernst and Asger Jorn who were looking for new sources of images.

Outsider Art is a term coined by the art historian Roger Cardinal that corresponds to what the French artist Jean Dubuffet called *Art Brut*, referring to artworks produced by self-taught artists outside the mainstream art circuit (RHODES, 2000). Cardinal stated that outsider artists are on the artistic stage, but to the side, away from the spotlights. The term outsider art describes not only the position of the artist but also a type of art work, commonly created by self-taught artists, produced outside of what might be described as normal practice, and which has its history in the early collections of art work produced by patients in mental asylums such as collected by Prinzhorn in Heidelberg (MACGREGOR, 1989).

I contend that outsider art—what it is, how and where it is made—continues to be an important topic of discussion. Outsider art can be created in so-called studios or ateliers for *artists with special needs*—that is to say, artists with mental or intellectual disabilities. The art these artists create is sometimes also called *disability arts* or *inclusive arts*. In most countries in the western world, studios for artists with special needs are set up by care organizations or community initiatives, such as Haus der Künstler Gugging in Vienna (1981) and Creativity Growth, in Oakland, California. The concepts of disability/inclusive arts and outsider art are generally similar, although outsider art is a broader concept. Nico van der Endt (2007, n/p.), owner of outsider art Gallery Hamer, Amsterdam since 1968, states that “contrary to popular opinion, most *art brut* and outsider art is produced by artists without mental or psychic handicap. They come from all sections of society”.

In the Netherlands, most facilitated art studios for people with (mental and intellectual) disabilities were founded by care organizations in the early nineties, as is the case of Galerie Atelier Herenplaats in Rotterdam established in 1991 (GRONERT, 2010). In Amsterdam a small studio and gallery called Galerie Amsterdam was set up around 1992 in the center of the city.

In the Dutch cultural field, interest in outsider art goes back around fifty years. Galerie Hamer in Amsterdam was founded in 1968 and is still one of the few galleries for outsider and naïve art in the Netherlands. In 1985 the Foundation Museum for naïve art (called Museum de Stadshof) was opened in the city of Zwolle in 1994. Although it was a great success in terms of building up an international network, curating striking exhibitions and active collection policy the museum, it closed its doors in 2001 for lack of financial support (BLOOS, 2019).

Outsider Art Gallery Amsterdam

In 2016, for the first time a new museum completely focused on outsider art opened in Amsterdam along with Outsider Art Gallery/Studios/Art Lease Program—the latter being a gallery and art lease as well as a facilitated art studio for artists with disabilities. Outsider Art Gallery in Amsterdam is a venue that showcases the artistic production of artists who are usually not visible in society and in the art world. There is an exhibition space where local, national and international outsider art is exhibited and sold. Outsider Art Studios are located above the gallery and sometimes the production from the Studios is shown in the Gallery. The Gallery and the Studios are located at the premises of Museum Hermitage Amsterdam in the Netherlands; this endeavor is an initiative of two museums (the Hermitage Amsterdam and the Museum of the Mind in Haarlem and a health care organization (Cordaan)¹. The Hermitage Amsterdam is housed in the Amstelhof, a historic building in the heart of Amsterdam that was built in 1681–1683 by the Dutch Reformed Church as a home for elderly women who needed to be cared for. Later, men were also received there, so it is fitting that the Amstelhof would once more welcome people with disabilities through a platform for collaborative artwork.

The studios and gallery are part of a health care organization that provides for the professional staff and all the care-related, financial, logistic and administrative conditions. Around 25 outsider artists, some of whom have learning or mental disabilities, work daily on their individual art projects, supported by art facilitators (most of whom trained as professional artists), guest-artists, volunteers, a sales manager and interns. Their pieces can be shown, sold and rented to the interested parties; there are regular exhibitions, publications and dissemination through social media. Outsider Art Gallery offers an art platform for these colorful outsider artists—whose work is seldomly included in the *official* art circuit—not inside the walls of a care organization, but rather in an inspiring museum environment. My role involves curating, planning the gallery program and coordinating artistic collaborations between outsider artists and regular artists, designers and other creatives. The Outsiderwear is one of these projects.

The Outsiderwear Project

This article aims to present the current Outsider Art Gallery project initiated by the cultural entrepreneur Jan Hoek which consists of the fashion label Outsiderwear. In this project young creatives, mostly fashion designers and fashion brands (both emerging and established), were matched with outsider artists from our studios (but also other outsider artist studios). Working together, the pair designed a collection; the idea was to establish a structural collaboration between professional creatives and outsider artists. The process involved a matchmaking stage through to the final results. Data is presented using interviews in order to construct a case study². For the first edition of Outsiderwear, some 40 out- and insider artists joined forces, sometimes in pairs or in larger compositions.

The initiative was carried out in 2019 by visual artist Jan Hoek (1984), who has been working with various outsider persons (or groups) over the last ten years. He has collaborated with homeless trans sex workers on a fashion magazine and he lived in a psychiatric hospital for over three months to work with talented patients on the comic *Mental Superpowers*. Through such initiatives, Hoek created a large network linking two disparate worlds; the creative, artistic scene and the world of mental and social care.

The Outsiderwear project consists of undertaking a diverse range of creative projects: from performances and exhibitions to a series of clothing lines. The result of these experimental collaborations will be exhibited and sold in several venues in Amsterdam during the multidisciplinary Outsiderwear Festival lasting for six weeks (planned July–August, 2021).

By joining the project, both designers and outsider artists (legally represented by care organizations) signed a contract in which their collaboration and commitment is stated. Matters concerning royalties, fees and responsibilities are described in the contract. The project aims for a longer lasting commitment in which both parties profit. Part of the income gained by selling the end products will be reinvested in continuation of the collaboration.

Outsider Art Gallery Artists Joining Outsiderwear

During the course of 2019, Jan Hoek contacted Outsider Art Gallery to speak about his proposal. After official consent by Outsider Art Gallery/Cordaan to become a partner of this project, Hoek and his team organized other partners (designers, fashion and media-communicators, other outsider art studios, galleries, venues and stores and to obtain funding (several funding and crowd funding actions were undertaken). By June, 2020, enough funding and partners had been found for the project to get started, complying with all COVID safety measures.

We received a pdf file in which the *insider artists* (the fashion designers) were presented. As a starting point, the staff and artists of Outsider Art Gallery were invited to look over the file to see which designer they would be interesting in working with. Several live talks and studio visits took place; these meetings between outsider artists and fashion designers were productive, and soon matches were made. The most important criteria were mutual interest and enthusiasm for working together in order to reach creative cross-fertilization. Most matches were initiated by the designers, rather than by the outsider artists.

Creative Collaborations

In the studio of Outsider Art Gallery three matches of two and three-way partnerships were made:

- Benedikt Fischer & Rudy de Gruyl;
- Patta & Regillio Benjamin & Desmond Tjon a Koy & Osmel Herman³;
- Bonne Suits X Sijtse Keur X Norbert de Jong.

In the following section, I will describe how the process of matchmaking and working together transpired. I carried out 30-minute recorded interviews to understand how the artists and designers viewed and experienced this collaboration process, what they liked and disliked, what they expected from it. I used a semistructured interview guide with the following questions:

- How did the matchmaking process come about?
- How did the creative process flow?
- What are the current results?
- How did the participants experience the collaboration?
- Did they learn something from each other? What did they learn?
- What are the necessary conditions for carrying out such a project and achieving successful results?

I have worked for a long time with most of the artists as an art facilitator, however I did not know the creatives before we started this project. In the interview process, my aim was to give all the participants a voice. In order to maintain a certain level of objectivity, the same general script of questions was followed in each interview.

Benedikt Fischer & Rudy de Gruyl: A Friendly Couple

Benedikt Fischer (Austria, 1984; Fig. 1) is a jewelry maker who also teaches at several fine arts academies: “Working with outsider artists really appeals to me because their way of working is less inhibited by the types of expectations and rules I hold myself to. It’s really inspiring to be around someone who has this sense of freedom. It also feels like unspoiled creativity so for me there would be a lot to learn or unlearn from how I got programmed by art education and working in the field for a while”.

Rudy de Gruyl (Amsterdam, 1962; Fig. 1) is a self-taught artist with a philosophical view. In his paintings and drawings, he portrays many subjects like aliens, animals, nudity, typography and fruit. “I like to work with many colors and love plants and animals. I also like fairytales. Sleeping Beauty I like the most”.



Source: Cordaan¹.

Figure 1. Benedikt Fischer and Rudy de Gruyl.

For Benedikt Fischer (BF) it was soon very clear that he wanted to collaborate with Rudy de Gruyl (RdG): “I had already noticed his work when I did another project at the gallery. It was so colorful and so friendly and sometimes also erotic. Everything about his work intrigued me. [...] It seemed like a good match”.

BF and RdG’s project consists of making a set of silver rings, a shelf to present them on and some other jewelry and objects made of materials such as ceramics and paper. BF comes weekly to work together with RdG at a table.

Facilitator (F): “I observed you two working together and I found it so enjoyable to see, like you were entering into a world together, talking about pyramids, this world of imagination”.

BF: “We have that very much in common”.

Although BF often took the initiative, he tried to build in space for RdG and not influence him: “I tried to start with something that came from me so that there would be an element that I could bring in. But then I provided the possibility there should also be something on it [the ring]; we talked about a certain topic and then Rudy would write something about it. In the writing, I wouldn’t influence. That’s what I find really interesting: the thoughts he wants to share, how his stream of thoughts goes, very abstract but interesting and that comes out in the writing, but also in the drawings. I only give a hint like ‘today we draw something erotic.’ And then he doesn’t even have to think about it, he grabs a pen and starts to draw. It really looks like something he has already seen somewhere. This not-knowing where it comes from, there is such a certainty when he starts doing things... It’s really nice to watch”.

RdG was then asked about what he was making with BF and what he thought about that.

RdG: “We made a shelf, and five rings will be presented on top of it. I had an interesting secret thought in my head and he engraved it on the rings. I wrote the text. We both like jewelry. One ring is with text and the other one is erotic. We both had the idea of making something erotic, it was a coincidence. The rings came out beautifully and should be sold”.

About the collaboration process, BF commented on RdG’s artistic approach and inner source: “You see his passion in it and his pride when he finishes something, this enjoyment beyond what is going to happen to the work, if it is going to be appreciated by someone or not. [...] Being educated in art at the Art Academy, you learn this conceptual way of working from A to B and everything is logical; I don’t find that so interesting. You have different moods and you want different things, so it is nice to discover different approaches. In Rudy’s case, it seems unknown where it comes from and that is what I like; it seems to be inside of him and it comes out, but why and where, there is not such a logic to it”.

RdG pointed out that “I have learned new things from him. Making the rings and engraving. I would like to do that myself. I would like to engrave a silver lampshade. You can earn 400 or 500 euros with that”.

Regarding their expectations, BF stated that the rings will unfortunately be expensive, because of the production and material costs, but that they will be sold anyway because they are *good pieces*. He prefers artistic products to be cheaper: “That’s often a problem in my field, that things are so out of reach, because they are so expensive, I couldn’t buy it myself and that takes away the fun and the pleasure. It becomes so exclusive. I want to make it affordable for a normal person and then people would have and appreciate it”.

For RdG, there is no doubt about the value of the rings: “BF is going to sell it. He is going to earn a lot; the rings are more than € 100. What he is going to do with the money I don’t know”.

They both had ideas about a possible future collaboration:

RdG: “Yes, to make colored flags. A flag in the shape of flowers or a smile, that is something not yet discovered. Cheerful flags in a shape, a moon, a sun, a puppet”.

BF: “Yes, definitively, it is really fantastic as an artist to have this routine, that every week this happens, but also to see him work and to be here, I quite enjoy it”.

Patta & Regillio Benjamin & Desmond Tjon a Koy: Crew Love

Patta is a Dutch urban streetwear brand founded in 2004 by two friends who were also prominent figures in the Dutch hip-hop scene in the 1990s and early 2000s. Their brand expanded and they now have stores in Amsterdam, London, Milan and sell their clothes and sneakers worldwide. They do a lot of collaborations with known and lesser-known brands, artists and musicians. The slogan on their website reflects their way of thinking: *Out of love and necessity rather than profit and novelty.*

Regillio Benjamin (Paramaribo, 1974) is first of all an athlete. Regillio mostly paints running tracks and flowers in an abstract and colorful way. “I would like to have real appreciation for my work, I put my heart and soul into it.”

Desmond Tjon a Koy (Amsterdam, 1992; Fig. 2) is a young artist inspired by black culture, rap music and comics. He makes impressive line drawings with an eye for detail. “I hope that people can see that I have worked very hard, and that I make beautiful things and all by heart.”



Source: Cordaan¹.

Figure 2. Guillaume Schmidt and Regillio Benjamin.

Interviewe with Guillaume Schmidt from Patta and Regillio Benjamin About their Collaboration

The collaboration started in the Outsider Art Studio. Owner/marketing director Guillaume Schmidt and graphic designer Vincent van de Waal soon clicked with the artists Regillio Benjamin (RB) and Desmond

Tjon a Koy (DT). Their bond was based on aesthetics but also on common interests, i.e., running (RB), music (DT), and shared cultural background. Both DT and GS were fans of the same American underground rap artists MC Eiht. They agreed to make a drawing of MC Eiht to be printed on T-shirts. GS: “We found Desmond interesting because MC Eiht is not a famous artist like Tupac (American rapper Tupac Shakur-JV). Also, we saw what he was capable of; he makes fantastic work, we wanted to collaborate with him”.

Regillio’s work will be used for a T-shirt print as well. GS: “Regillio has a background in sports and he translates this knowledge about athletics into colors. [...] Desmond knows what he is doing and we hardly direct him. With Regillio we are a bit more directive; we had him make several paintings of his idea, which colors would work, which shapes he likes”.

RB: “They chose to work with me because of my color combinations. When you see my paintings, this really stands out. I showed them some of my paintings and they really liked them. When they asked me to work with them, I really liked it, I had to think a bit but then I was ok”.

For RB it is very important that the choice of which painting is used for the T-shirt is done together, preserving his artistic freedom: “I am an artist, they let me be free in my way of thinking. They don’t tell me what to do. I like to work with them, if I didn’t like it, I would opt out. We choose together which painting will be used”.

It was agreed that GS would come every Tuesday to speak with the artists and monitor their process. This is all done in an informal way, with less directing and more bonding. GS: “It is about personal things. RB is Surinamese, I am Surinamese, there are a lot of similarities, in food, the music he listens to, where he has been in Suriname. With DT I share the love for music”. When GS comes in, he talks with almost all artists who are working at that moment. GS: “I am there for Regillio, Desmond and Osmel, but meanwhile I also have talks with some other artists. You become a familiar person [in the studio]”.

After a few months (sometimes interrupted by COVID-19 measures) the outsider artists RB and DT visited the Patta Store and studio, where the work is photographed in order to print on T-shirts. This visit helped to make the production process less abstract. RB said that Patta had explained everything, but there was a lot of information to process.

F: “Did they learn something from each other?”

Everyone involved reported that they learned from each other. RB: “I learn something different. That is good for me. I learn from Patta, they learn from me, we learn from each other. [...] They don’t label me with ‘this is not good’, they just look and say ‘it is beautiful’. It gives me self-confidence”.

GS: “I learn every moment. About honesty, openness. About the importance of making agreements and how important these are. That responsibility comes from two sides. I learn about patience”.

In relation to expectations, in terms of presentation and revenues, RB said: “The T-shirts will be sold, they will print 1000 pieces, I think. In all the [Patta] shops, worldwide. I would like it if my design were in their shops. It is a piece of me, my work is in it, I will be proud”.

GS: “There will be a release date and we will show the art works (and printed T-shirts) in the shop or in a pop-up space. [...] We will connect to the project plan of JH. We will organize interviews with the guys. [...] The T-shirts will be sold for around € 40”.

What stands out most in the interview with RB is the pride and confidence gained in this collaboration. What is important to him is to be valued and respected in his artistic integrity and in his own decisions. He is positive and would like to continue the collaboration. RB does have many questions, especially about the business side of the project: the producing and selling, the legal and financial consequences, but also in communication. Sometimes he felt insecure when the regularity of their sessions together was interrupted due to corona measures. It bothered him when GS was unable to come.

Bonne Suits & Sijtse Keur & Norbert de Jong: A Pure Form of Creativity

Designer Bonne Reijn (Amsterdam, 1990) always wanted to create clothing that could be worn by anyone on any occasion. For that reason, he created Bonne Suits: two piece unisex suits (trousers and jacket). His suits are worn everywhere by everyone: young, old, men, women, nonbinary, punks, business people, housewives, rappers, intellectuals etc. Bonne's disabled sister makes music and he noticed that her creative ability was not limited by her physical and intellectual disability. "Creativity is in everyone and should not be limited to the elite, that's why I am enthusiastic about Outsiderwear".

Sijtse Keur (Amsterdam, 1951; Fig. 3) is a legitimate Amsterdammer. Painting is his great love. "First I paint and then I scratch with the back of my pencil on the canvas. Then something emerges, I don't know beforehand what will come out. I hope people feel what I experience in my painting, that it comes from the heart".

Norbert de Jong (Heerlen, 1965) is a self-taught painter as well. His work is expressive and figurative. People, animals and buildings share space in colorful, swinging and playful compositions.



Source: Cordaan¹.

Figure 3. Sijtse Keur.

For the interview I talked separately with Norbert de Jong (NJ) and Sijtse Keur (SK). I interviewed Bonne and his intern Daan together.

For Bonne from Bonne Suits the selection process was easy. B: "It clicks or it doesn't click. We have a certain number of suits available. Everyone who wants can get started. I don't need to select".

After consulting with the outsider artists, both SK and NJ were interested in joining the project. Since Bonne is very busy with his business but wanted to join, he delegated most of the practical work to Daan, his intern. Daan came to work with SK and NJ every couple of weeks and sometimes Bonne was also able to come, watch the process and talk with the artists. They were given blank cotton suits on which they could paint with textile paint. Not a lot of directions were given. They are encouraged to do their own thing.

About the artistic process, Bonne said: “It goes really well. [...] There is no question about what it will look like, because they are already in a kind of [artistic] mode. I like that. They just work and you don’t need to talk about the content. That is with the artists. I value the people I collaborate with. [...] I gave SK and NJ two white suits and those are now full with what is in their heads. I find that a pure form of creativity”.

The meetings with Daan usually consisted of friendly chats and some of advice about the material and how to proceed with colors or shapes. For SK this worked out fine, NJ, however, was a bit insecure and needed some guidance. NJ: “They say what is good and what could be better. They give advice; like paint bigger figures or smaller ones. I value the advice; I learn from it. [...] Sometimes I overlook things with painting, and they see it. I still have to find out whether it is better to mix with turpentine or with water. I tried both and it worked out fine. Daan will bring odorless turpentine. I don’t know exactly what is the advantage of turpentine.”

SK is more confident about himself: “I always clean my brushes with water, otherwise they fall apart. He said with turpentine, but I do it my way!”

Both parties talk about how the process develops and about possible obstacles. Bonne and Daan report that they are quite satisfied and see a lot of progress. B: “With NJ, I had the feeling he was stuck a bit but he persevered and it came out beautifully. He was much more relaxed the last time I saw him. I think he learned to let go”. SK does not work well under pressure, because it stresses him: “Daan asked me, ‘Would you like to paint another suit?’ ‘Ho ho’, I thought. ‘First this and then we will see. It should not be a quickie, that makes me nervous!’”

It is interesting to understand their views on the financial value of the final results. SK and NJ spent a lot of hours painting the suits. They consider their work as art and that should be taken into account on the price. NJ: “I don’t know, maybe 6000 to 7000 euros. But maybe that is too high. Difficult to say. It is an artwork”. SK: “In my opinion such a suit cannot be sold for € 150. There is too much work in it. Such a suit is priceless. There is only one like it”.

To Bonne the pricing depends on the context. His brand is about making the price accessible to everyone; therefore, he doesn’t want to make it too expensive.

“It depends on how it is organized. A regular Bonne suits costs € 225. We can sell these suits for € 250 or € 300. But if we exhibit the suits beautifully in a renowned gallery, within the gallery system, advise about framing, really explain about the value of this project and show what kind of artists these outsiders are and what they can become, then you can price these suits between € 500 and € 1000. Because those are painted canvasses. It also depends on what the organization will do about it. Will they invite an art loving audience or a fashion audience? It really depends on what kind of people come.”

Analyzing the Interviews

Interviewing these creatives and outsider artists, I came across many different ideas, opinions and expectations. On the one hand, there is a lot of unanimity on the value of artistic freedom, commitment and responsibility. Both parties take each other seriously, which to me, along with endless enthusiasm and creativity, is one of the most important conditions for such a project to succeed.

On the other, there are also opposing views, mostly about the financial value of the end product. The obstacles the outsider artists mentioned had to do with the end products, where they would be exhibited, and what would they earn from their work.

There is a difference in perspectives of the outsider artists and the creatives. For the creatives the bigger picture and storytelling are reasons to commit to the project. Working with outsiders fits their core values. It is good for the image of both parties: outsider artists and brands. “Bonnesuits are for everyone and therefore Outsiderwear fits very well with our brand. We show that we do projects with outsiders. It is beneficial for us, great marketing”.

When asked about the collaboration, all the outsider artists were positive. They value the frequent contact moments and the new input. It has made their world a little bigger. The outsider artists also get something from joining this project. Their perspective is mainly focused on their personal development. Most of them reported that they learned something new. NJ: “Painting on textile is quite difficult, it requires a lot of capacity. Maybe I can use these capacities for my own work. Maybe I will get offers to make more clothing”. RdG: “I have learned new things from him. Making the rings and engraving. I would like to do that myself. I would like to engrave a silver lampshade”.

Income, pride, dignity, fame are also important reasons to participate. SK: “Maybe they can sell the suit in an auction, that will raise more money. I am not doing it for nothing. [...] Success, that’s why I am doing it. Not to become famous. But more recognition for me”. RB: “I would like it if my design were in their shop. It is a piece of me, my work is in it, I will be proud”.

For some, there is a whimsical side to their participation. RdG: “I hope for a miracle caused by the things I made with BF. That it will have magical powers. That the rings will go to a museum and that people start to think really well and don’t do wrong things after they have seen the rings [...] Saving people”.

Another issue is the concreteness of working together. What is a collaboration in their eyes and how does it work (best)? The two brands (Patta and Bonne Suits) are used to working together with all kinds of creative people. GS: “When I collaborate with people, I always hope it clicks, it makes collaborating pleasant”. Bonne talks about adapting to different collaboration schemes: “We work with all kinds of people. Some are more insecure; some go by different schedules”.

For the creatives, there was not much difference in working with outsider artists or with other people, as far as creativity is concerned. But they had to adapt to the need for structure and close proximity most outsider artists require. BF was careful about how he related to Rudy: “It is a bit like working with a child. You say how and when and in what a way. You have to be very sensitive to not be the one who says do this and do that. To make it equal”.

The arts facilitators mediation was often indispensable. They seek a sensitive balance so as to avoid becoming overprotective. The facilitators ensured a smooth continuation and intervened whenever there were misunderstandings or obstacles. Bonne pointed out that the results were better with the art facilitators.

Collaboration between a health care organization and a creative initiative is relatively new. Whereas the creatives are used to flexibility and fast decisions, a healthcare organization is big and less viable. It has to deal with public governance and is very aware and careful with legal, financial and privacy matters. Many problems were sorted out along the way, and some of the outsider artists reported that they sometimes felt overloaded with information or were unsure of what was expected of them. Clear communication is an important condition to the outsider artists. What conditions are needed by the creatives in order to get such a project to succeed? Both Patta and Bonne Suits mention time and commitment as the most important condition. Bonne also mentions budget and (organization) structure.

Conclusion

My conclusion is that Outsiderwear was a success primarily because of the enthusiasm, commitment and creativity of all the participants. In this article I offered an insight in how outsider art in the Netherlands is considered in general and specifically how we work with a certain group of outsider artists: people with mental or learning disabilities. I zoomed in on a particular project that the organization I work for is participating in, because of the current interest politics, culture and society in ways of promoting *inclusion*.

But what does inclusion mean in a real life, in a concrete situation? What are the obstacles and what can we learn? I consider this project to be a fine example that shows how inclusion can work. Although there are still quite a few issues to work out, nevertheless, I find this project hopeful. It shows a new generation of young creatives willing to step out of their own scene to work with people who are considered to be different. I am thrilled about the participants' seriousness, enthusiasm and lack of prejudice, proving that creativity is a universal language that can help us by step the inclination to rigidly label people.

Acknowledgements

To Lucia Reily, Rudy de Gruyl and Benedikt Fischer, Guillaume Schmidt, Regillio Benjamin and Desmond Tjon A Koy, Bonne Reijn, Sijtse Keur and Norbert de Jong.

Funding

Not applicable.

Notes

1. Cordaan is a large health organization that offers various kinds of support for people with disabilities and special needs.
2. All participants agreed to the interview and to be cited in this article.
3. Osmel Herman (Curacao, 1974) joined the collaboration at a later date. He makes colorful paintings and drawings about Curacao, his island of birth. He also paints on clothes and joined the collaboration with Patta on his own initiative after showing them his painted clothes. "Painting makes me peaceful and happy."

REFERENCES

BLOOS, A. **Including outsider art**: An ethnography of the revision process of the collection presentation of Museum Dr. Guislaind during spring 2019. 2019. Thesis (Master's in Art, Culture and Society) – Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, 2019.

GRONERT, F. Atelier Herenplaats, un taller extraordinario. **Arteterapia: Papeles de arteterapia y educación artística para la inclusión social**, Madrid, v. 5, p. 41-48, 2010.

MACGREGOR, J. **The discovery of the art of the insane**. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

PRINZHORN, H. **Bildneri der Geisteskranken**: Ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und Psychopathologie der Gestaltung. Berlin: Springer, 1922.

RHODES, C. **Outsider art**: spontaneous alternatives. London: Thames & Hudson, 2000.

VAN DER ENDT, N. **Glossary**. Available in: www.galeriehamer.nl. Access in: 20 Apr. 2021.

Received: 06 May 2020

Accepted: 11 Dec. 2021

Associate Editors:

Elizabeth dos Santos Braga e Silvia Cordeiro Nassif