Space, Place and the Imagined Urban Community: Sara Vrugt's Textile Installations

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Abstract
In this article, the social and aesthetical potential of community art will be addressed from the perspective of how space, place and community relate to material manifestations within urban community art projects. As a case study two installation works by Dutch artist Sara Vrugt will be discussed. Since 2010, Vrugt, an autonomous artist originally trained in the textile arts, has developed a number of community art projects in which she does not refrain from addressing societal issues. Her textiles installation Look at You 05, addressed self-representation through social media. This work was embroidered by two-hundred people from a local community in The Hague over the course of three months and was shaped into an installation in the form of a four-meter-high elongated embroidery of abstractions of social media profile pictures, which was folded into a spiral to create a spatial structure through which the viewers could walk and watch the work as it were unfold. Vrugt's latest project 100.000 trees concerns climate change and is another embroidery installation work containing one-hundred embraided trees that were composed in four different pop-up studios. The embraided trees in the work refer to the one-hundred thousand trees that as part of the project will actually be planted. I will approach both these installations from a notion, derived from Gottfried Semper, of weaving as the primordial craft, which underlies the creation of spatial surface and thereby that of architectural space as well as place. I will argue these works provide a place for the community members in which their collective effort manifest through the work's embroidered surface: a surface that creates both a space and place for community members as viewers, makers, and active participants within the spatial and social relations in the community to which they belong and to which the artwork relates.

Keywords: Community art, urban community, embroidery installation, artistic participation

Introduction

In the Netherlands, as in other countries, an increasing number of artists work with and for local communities within so-called community art projects (Klaver 2012, 8-9). In this article I will discuss two of such projects by Sara Vrugt: the embroidery installation work Look at You 05, which was made together with local community members in The Hague in 2012, and 100.000 trees that concerns with climate change and deforesting, and was made with the help of participants in four different pop-up studios in the Netherlands in 2020.

Sara Vrugt is a Dutch artist originally trained in the textile arts, who considers herself mainly as an autonomous artist but whose works often came forth from projects that can be regarded as community art. What makes her works so intriguing, is that besides being the product of a community effort, the embroidery in the form of the installation work also forms a surface in the sense of a space-divider within what can be regarded as an architectural urban space—a space through which one moves and within which the imagery of the hanging embroidery can also address the participant to derive meaning from the aesthetic experience. To show how this is related to the very textile craft by

means of which Vrugt and the participants manufactured the work, I will discuss both installations from a theoretical perspective concerned with the relationship between the textile arts and the creation of architectural space. For that purpose, Gottfried Semper's nineteenth century theory on the elements of architecture appears to be still highly relevant.

The aim of this article is to understand the significance of both installations from a perspective on how space, place and community relate to material manifestations that as it were, emerge from collective physical labour and social processes involved in narration. To arrive at such an understanding of the relationship between social processes and artistic participation, or in other words, the concrete production of an artwork, within what is referred to as a community art project, must be discussed first. I will then discuss both installations by Sara Vrugt, which will be contextualized successively from the perspective of theoretical considerations on space and place. I will finally argue that we can understand Vrugt's textile installations as a meaningful manifestation of a collective physical and manual effort which' traces within the images stitched into the fabric of the embroidery, signifies both subject and community. Furthermore, I will argue that these installations exemplify how through spatial-temporal processes urban space becomes a place.

Community art: between social and artistic participation

The term community art denotes those kind of art projects that are principally collective endeavours although a number of different concepts can be used to denote such projects and they do not always have the same significance.[1] Sara Vrugt's projects often engage in initiating a certain artistic process and the involvement of members of a community, in other words, they are aimed at bringing about a process and to involve participants within that process (Stuiver et al., 2013, 300). This involvement of community members in both a social and artistic process is what sets community art projects apart from the artistic practice of the autonomous artist. Arthur Caris and Gillian Cowell emphasize that in socially committed art, the community involved also should have authorship and authority, which means that the pedagogical role of the artist should be aimed at the "publicness" of the project (Caris & Cowell 2016, 471-472, 477-478). Community art arose partly in rejecting the institutionalized artworld of the late twentieth century, which would have become too elitist and thus exclusive.[2] In the United Kingdom, it was rooted in the radical arts and radical political movements of the late 1960s. This radical and political agenda would largely shape the nature of community art as it evolved in the United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s and its objective was often social change (Jeffers 2017, 134). However, Alison Jeffers makes clear that not every project was equally politically driven. The term "participatory arts" is therefore sometimes preferred by artists whose projects also revolve around the involvement of a participatory community but who do not pursue a specific political agenda. Jeffers further explains that participatory arts has been used by institutions for projects that concern promoting and facilitating access to the existing arts for groups that are,

1 - In the Netherlands the term *gemeenschapskunst* literally translates in English as community art, however, *gemeenschapskunst* rather denotes late nineteenth century and early twentieth-century notions on art and architecture as expressing community spirit, or romantic interpretations of medieval art as being made in the service of community such as would have been the case with the Great cathedrals for instance. These large projects were in the German speaking world also referred to as *Gesamtkunstwerk*. After all, they embraced all the individual arts within one big work, an idea that inspired many artists and theorists on art in the nineteenth century. However, both terms have little to do with actual public participation (Maas 2006, 154).

2 - Although community art comes forth from serious concerns about art's role within social and political practices, under financial pressure and dependence on local governmental funding, many projects also quickly accommodated the demands determined by what could be regarded as a populist discourse, which since the beginning of the century gained strength and which in turn was highly influenced by neoliberal austerity policy; a policy no longer based on the so-called "self-evidence" of governmental funding of the arts. See (Jeffers 2017, 142-144). In the Netherlands, the sentiment that art had become too elitist, has been fuelled by politicians and policymakers and they particularly exploited this sentiment in the aftermath of the financial crisis of 2008, when in 2010 a right-wing government introduced a harsh austerity policy which affected the arts drastically. The rhetoric with which this policy was promoted was infused by both concerns from the left who plead for more diversity in the arts and wanted art institutes to reach out to new audiences, as well as by the anti-elitist art rhetoric from the nationalist right. Not only was this austerity policy legitimized from these sentiments but also with it came the neo-liberal imperative imposed on artists and institutions to engage in cultural entrepreneurship and to reach out to new audiences such as young people and people with culturally diverse backgrounds. See (Twaalfhoven 2011, 6-13).

for instance, concerned as under-represented within these institutions. In that sense, participatory art connects to what Jeffers refers to as the democratization of culture. In that sense, democratization is by means of participation but not necessarily always in terms of co-producing art, which is the key objective within many community art projects (Jeffers 2017, 135). Since the 1990s, an increasing number of art institutions and artists have been involved in projects that can be called either "community art" or "participatory art", but which are often labelled as community art. Jeffers makes clear that as such, the term "community art" has become too broad and too much connected to projects with all sorts of other social interests rather than an artistic interest towards social change (Jeffers 2017, 137-138).

Besides, the term "community art" has been loaded with ideological connotations and, according to Jeffers, this was another reason that artists wanted to move away from it. Moreover, projects would be increasingly more detached from actual local communities as is also the case with Sara Vrugt's 100.000 trees project. Therefore, the term "participatory art" proved to be more useful and applicable to denote projects not confined to a specific geographical community but who rather engage in temporal communities of individuals drawn to the project who form a "community of interest" (Jeffers & Moriarty 2017, 246; Caris & Cowell 2016, 475). This shift from community to participatory also marks a cultural shift from the collective and politically motivated action of the seventies to projects and programmes, which are rather aimed at the self-development of individuals, or as how Owen Kelly frames it, a move from "class politics (…) towards a politics of identity" (Jeffers & Moriarty 2017, 247). To bring individuals together within an art-project became detached from community development and the fostering of the community's political voice (Matarasso 2011, 216, 226).[3] Owen Kelly points out that for some artists, such as Cathy Mackerras for instance, there is still a clear distinction between participatory art and community art. The latter would be about issues of authorship; questions on who owns the creative ideas, who is expressing whose views. For Mackerras, her involvement in community art is about giving the community the possibility to express their own views (Jeffers & Moriarty 2017, 246; Caris & Cowell 2016, 478).

As stated above, the development of what now is called community art cannot be seen separately from the move away from the traditional art institute.[4] Although many of the once anti-elitist art movements from the twentieth century had become elitist themselves, the powerful potential of some of their artistic strategies, were adopted by activist artists and artists working within the community and could still be used successfully. For instance, the Happenings of the late 1950s and the 1960s also revolved around the process and the participation of an audience. They too were initially an artistic strategy to counter the capitalist art market with its emphasis on objects and sales, an emphasis which would have alienated ordinary people from the realm of art, people who could no longer be referred to exclusively as "viewers". If present in Happenings, objects rather functioned as temporal props and would have had no lasting value after the Happening (Drucker 1993, 51).[5]

3 - Alison Jeffers also recognizes in community arts a move from 'the politics of class' to a 'politics of identity'. (Jeffers 2017, 139). This can be regarded as being analogous to the move from community to individuality as recognized by Matarasso taken into account that communities were traditionally often shaped by class, especially in Britain, while identities are constructs to which individuals can relate regardless of the physical proximity of a community. Owen Kelly points to the fact that issues of class in the United Kingdom have moved down the political agenda since the 1970s (Jeffers & Moriarty 2017, 246).

4 - In the second half of the century the influence of popular culture on the art world increased significantly. See (Witkin 2003, 30-32). Elements of popular culture were absorbed by artists and found their way to the institutionalized artworld in the form of movements such as for instance pop-art. Forms of visual expression that altogether emerged outside the institutionalized art world, such as graffiti, which originated literally on the streets, were soon to be recognized by galleries and museums and were eventually incorporated into the institutionalized art world. See (Murray 2004, 10). Nevertheless, these developments could not prevent that by the end of the century, popular culture in the form of cartoons, films, games, magazines, pop music, video, websites and forms of leisure time activities, had irreversibly undermined the once self-evident authority of traditional art institutes such as museums. Technology has contributed in important ways to this process. When recording equipment became increasingly cheaper and affordable, more and more independent musicians and record labels arose and undermined the dominant position of larger record industries. Similar processes occurred with photography, films, websites. Technology has been the main driving force behind a process in which humans have become increasingly both consumers and producers of cultural content. See (Kelly 2017, 231-233).

5 - Although the traditional sense of a work of art as an object to be

Many projects that are referred to as community art can be regarded as social interventions by artists whose aim is to unravel certain processes and highlight social structures as will become clear in the following sections. Besides, many projects such as for instance Sara Vrugt's Look at you 05, came into being against the background of local government funding. Such funding is often motivated by political concerns for social inclusion of what is referred to as marginalized groups, for instance, people with non-Western cultural backgrounds of which is assumed they have less access to the institutionalized artworld (Jeffers 2017, 149).[6] An important question is therefore also whether incorporating as many people within the artworld as policymakers plead for, is indeed always socially including them, especially within a political climate that tend to stimulate the further commercialization of the art world at the same time. In such a climate, potential art audiences are approached from the same neoliberal perspective as audiences in other fields of the market economy (Jeffers 2017, 151). In other words, it must be questioned to what extent these new groups were really allowed to be included, in the sense that beyond being a visitor in an art institute, their voices were heard as well.

This is an important question because too often politicians and policymakers have argued that art projects should be above all low-profile, accessible and aimed at predefined and calculable "social" targets (Belfiore & Bennett 2006, 8). This call for reaching out to new and larger audiences can have the effect that community art projects indeed become low-profile in terms of accessibility. The latter is often also a demand to assure local governmental funding but it comes with the danger of losing a critical perspective and projects therefore becoming rather unchallenging with regard to form, participatory process and content (Jeffers & Moriarty 2017, 245). The emphasis on the importance of measurable social outcomes can overrule the creative objective of community arts project while in this article it will become clear that it is the active creative participation in the making of the community artwork in particular, which might contribute more to social inclusion as opposed to passive spectatorship, regardless the fact that for institutes the latter might be easier and more opportunistic in terms of reaching higher numbers of visitors (Jeffers 2017, 153).

Look at you 05

The inclusion of participants within many of Sara Vrugt's projects concerns the actual manufacturing of a material work of art, which in both projects discussed here takes place in a workshop, which also becomes a social place where participants meet and where stories can be exchanged. In her project Look at you 05 Sara Vrugt departs from the textile craft of embroidery. To manufacture a work by means of a textile craft appears to be a relevant and appropriate means for Vrugt to include participants in her projects, considering the relative ease of the technique and the scale of the final work, which enables many participants to join the project. Embroidery is related to other textile crafts such as weaving in the sense that both embroidery and weaving essentially concern the connection of fibres to create a spatial surface.

The alternation of different colours of fibres allow the artist to make patterns and images, which in essence endows the two-dimensional surface with the power to represent something. Inspired by how young woman represents themselves today on social media such as Facebook, Vrugt transferred images of these women to the design of the embroidery. Within this design the images of the young women slowly merge with an abstracted version of an image of the retina

The final embroidery would become four metres high and was hung onto a spiral construction by means of which, as it were, an architectural space emerged—a space through which the spectator can move and observe how the embroidery unfolds in the passing-by.

The work on the embroidery was executed by two-hundred-and-fifty volunteers from the local neighbourhood of the Regentessekwartier in the Dutch city of The Hague.[7] It took

displayed no longer necessarily applied, community artists, however, never completely abandoned it. Many projects were concerned with both social processes as well as with creating a concrete work of art. This is also explicitly clear in both projects by Sara Vrugt.

6 - Including new audiences was hardly met with objections by the artworld but one can imagine there were reservations with regard to the underlying motives. These had less to do with social and artistic motives but were mainly financially driven (Jeffers 2017, 134).

7 - The project was partly funded by the municipality of the city of The Hague and produced by contemporary art institute Heden, kunst van nu.

Fig. 1-: Sara Vrugt, Look at you 05, 2012, installation with embroidery, 400 cm. Photo: © Lisa van Wieringen

Fig. 2- Detail of the manufacturing. Photo: © Lisa van Wieringen

Fig. 3- Workshop Heden Hier contemporary art institute with the original design in the background. Photo: © Lisa van Wieringen

Fig. 4- Workshop at Heden Hier Contemporary Art Institute. Photo: © Lisa van Wieringe

three months to make and during the project, ten to fifteen volunteers at the time would work on it, on and off, around a long table on which the embroidery was laid out.

It was at this table that people met, were getting to know each other, where stories were told and where, even though the design of the work was predetermined, each participant with every stitch put something of her- and himself into the work. Besides, they were literally represented in the embroidery. Sara Vrugt made pictures of each participant which she successively embraided into an ornamental band at the bottom of the work.[8]

8 - Vrugt, Sara. "Look at you 05". Vrugt.com. http.vrugt.com/#/look-at-you-05/. (accessed 25 October 2020). To an extent Vrugt's working practice brings to mind the medieval workshop in which craftsmen would anonymously dedicate themselves to something that would last, that to an extent transcends the self. In terms of the final result of the project in the form of a large embroidery it of course also reminds of the narrative medieval embroidery works and tapestries such as that of Bayeux. See Bayeux Museum: Bayeux Museum. "The Bayeux Tapestry". http://www.bayeuxmuseum.com/en/the-bayeux-tapestry/. (accessed 26 October 2020).

The aspect of working around a table while telling each other stories brings to mind the emphasis architect and historian of architecture Gottfried Semper already laid in the nineteenth century on the presumed importance in early cultures of the hearth as the central spot were men would gather and where according to Semper culture would have emerged through storytelling exactly. Semper recognized the significance of a central architectural element such as the hearth and considered it a distinct motive in architecture, which would translate in the course of history into forms such as for instance the altar in temples and churches (Semper 1851, 55-56). Although the embroidery table in Vrugt's project is not comparable to a hearth, it did function as the central element around which stories were told and through which a sense of community could emerge (Stuiver et al 2013, 300-301). From that perspective, the embroidery table was the concrete element that preconditioned the initiation of both the artistic and the social process. In a sense, the social process, the meeting

Fig. 5-Sara Vrugt, Look at you 05 (detail of seam), installation with embroidery, 400 cm. Photo: © Lisa van Wieringen

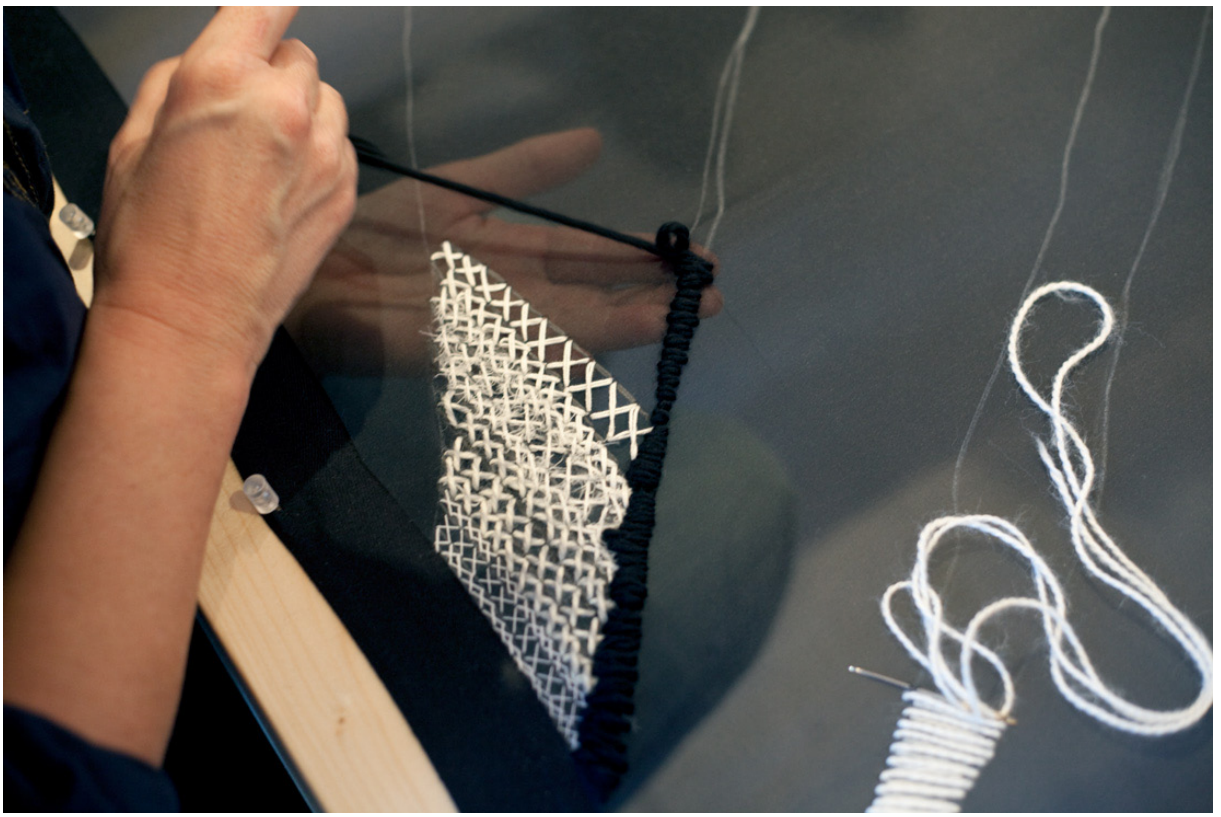

Fig.6- Sara Vrugt, Stitching of the fabric. Photo: © Lisa van Wieringen>

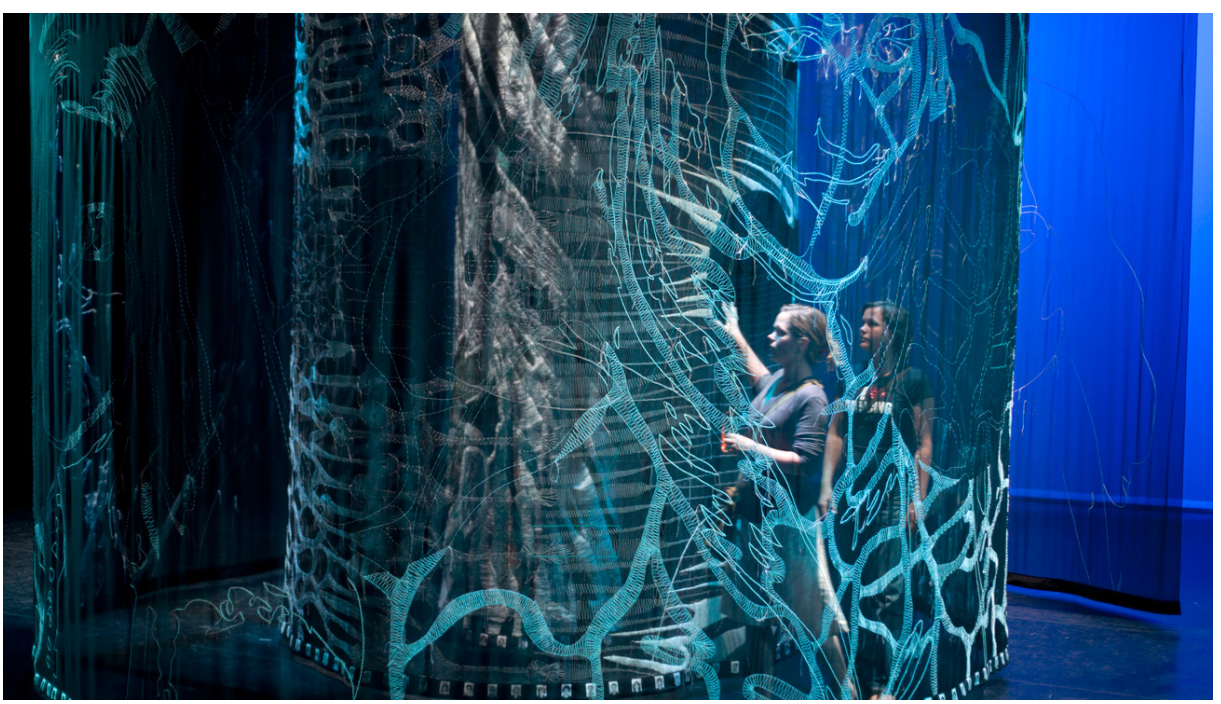

Fig. 7-Sara Vrugt, Look at you 05 (detail with spectators), installation with embroidery, 400 cm. Photo: © Lisa van Wieringen>

of the embroiderers and the stories told at the embroidery table over the course of three months, as well as the events that take place, people shifting place, new people coming in, mismatches in the embroidery etcetera; all that cannot be separated from the artistic process. Firstly, the latter is the very reason why the participants came together in the first place. However, it also translates into the embroidery work as every participant also has its own way of stitching in each part that she or he contributed even though the image of the work itself was predetermined.

This narration in the form of stitches unfolds again as the participants moved through the spatial constellation of the artwork when turned into an installation. In this condition, every stitch in the work is a reference to both the work process and to a specific participant—even though the participant's stitch cannot be traced back to its maker.
The power to represent something, to point to something, to refer to content that is outside the embroidery itself lies not only in the alternation of different coloured fibres by means of which images can appear. Since every stitch to an extent is an index to a maker, the accumulation of stitches indexes the community of embroiderers as a whole and as such becomes a reference to the collective physical labour as it unfolded in space and time, and as it keeps unfolding in space and time in the form of the imagery on the embroidery that hung up within the form of an installation artwork becomes an architectural space within which the spectator can move (Crucq 2018, 99-105). And, as will be discussed later, this active moving through space turns the installation into a place.

100.000 trees

Sara Vrugt's latest project is quite similar to Look at you 05. It again concerns an embroidery work which also will be hung up within a spiral-shaped installation.
This project was carried out in 2020 and in terms of content concerns the relationship between humans and nature, climate change and in particular deforesting. For this project too, Vrugt worked together with participants to make the embroidery. However, in this project the participants were not necessarily bound to a specific geographical location. The workshop in which the embroidery was made was also not located in one specific place as with Look at you

Fig. 8: Sara Vrugt, 100.000 trees and a forest of thread, 2020, model for installation with embroidery, Photo: © Sara Vrugt

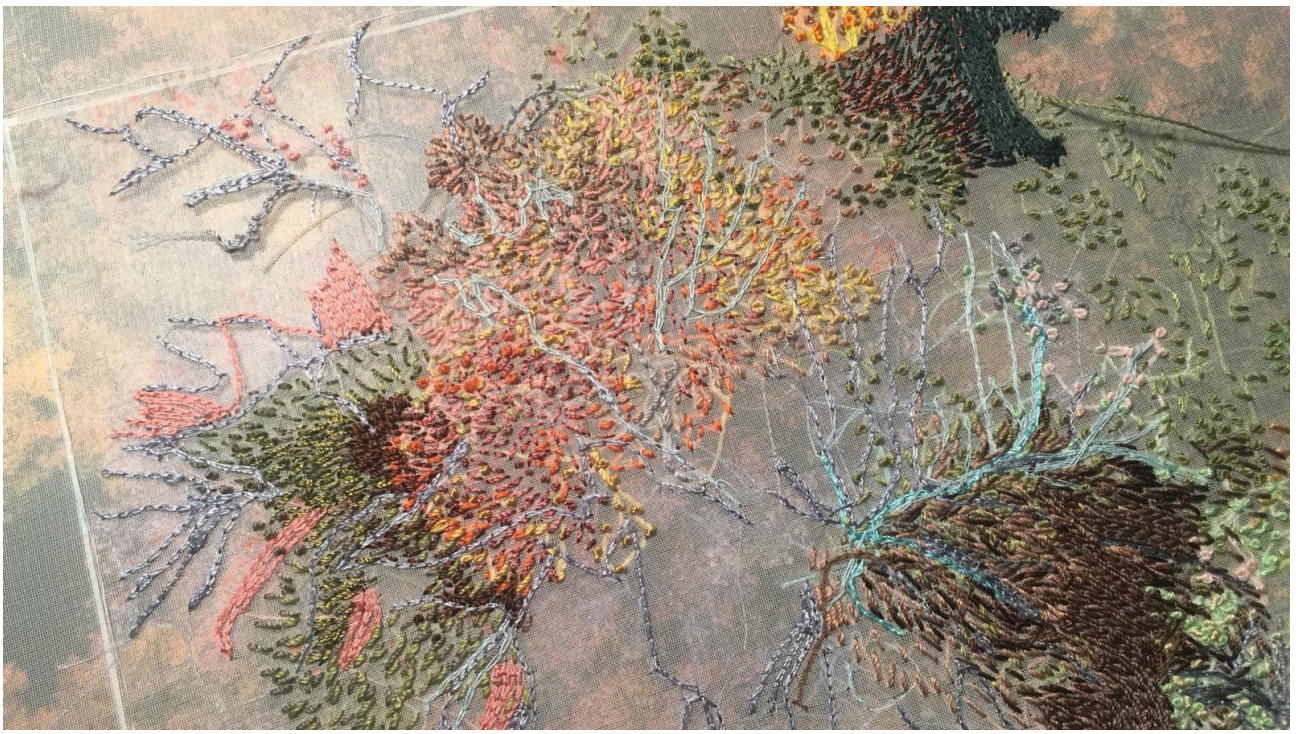

Fig. 9- Sara Vrugt, 100.000 trees and a forest of thread (detail), 2020, installation with embroidery, Photo: © Sara Vrugt

05 but moved with each season of the year to a location in respectively The Hague, Amsterdam, Leiden, and Enschede. Although the content of the work is again predetermined by the artist, the imagery appears to leave more room for the participants. As Vrugt indicates on her website, the works she makes together with the participants concern an embroidered forest that will be based on the personal stories of the participants as they will describe their experiences with nature which they will successively stitch into the work in the form of a tree in compliance to how the participant imagines a tree.

The result of the accumulative trees of all the participants will be a forest of embroidered trees, which will be hung up into a spiral shaped construction as was also the case in Look at you 05. The cloth will remain semi-transparent and will therefore form a layered collective forest through which the participants can move. In the seam of the work, which also played a role in Look at you 05, Vrugt will process real plant seeds such that when the work will be permanently installed in the future, it can potentially grow together with its environment. In the meantime, participants and supporters of the project can make a financial donation with which, during the project, an amount of 100.000 real trees will be planted.[9]

As made clear, this project is less concerned with a specific urban community as was the case with Look at you 05, which took place in a destined The Hague neighbourhood although even in The Hague people from outside the neighbourhood were welcome too and not everybody from the neighbourhood of course participated. However, like in Look at you 05, although now even more explicit, it is through the participant's stories that a community is created, so to speak. Moreover, as their personal stories about their experience of nature will be transformed into the imagery of their work, each imaginary tree will not only be an index to a participant's physical effort dedicated to the work, but also an index to this experience exactly. Again, the accumulate forest of all the participant's trees will be an index to the community brought together within this process as a whole, as well as an index to the 100.000 trees that will be planted.

9 - Vrugt, Sara. "Bomen". Vrugt.com. http.vrugt.com/#/bomen/. (accessed 25 October 2020). See also the project website: Vrugt, Sara. "100.000 trees and a threaded forest". http.honderduizenbomen.nl/home/english. (accessed 26 October 2020).

By referring to her project as a forest of thread, Vrugt allows an interpretation of the artwork as a surface of intertwined threads that, through their semantic reference in the form of images of imagined trees, refers back to the origin of human culture in nature. As will become clear with respect to the question of space in the next session, Gottfried Semper had imagined the earliest architectural structures to have emerged from braided sticks, plant fibres and pieces of bark. According to Semper, architectural space emerged when natural materials were used to create a two-dimensional fence by means of which it became possible to demarcate one space from another (Semper 1851, 55-56). What Semper argued and what also becomes manifest in 100.000 trees, owes to these natural materials provided by the forest that as humans we were able to build things. Processed by means of men's physical labour which in turn is fostered by men's cognitive competences, these materials are transformed into a work that, as we can understand from Hannah Arendt's insights on the essence of what makes something a work, becomes a sustainable part of what we call "the world" (Arendt 1998, 136-138). This common world though, remains inextricably linked to its natural origin, no matter how much it evolved.

Although both works discussed clearly emanate from a commitment to that world and can be interpreted as a commentary on that world, the question is whether they are also activists in the sense they serve a political agenda. Vrugt encourages people to act and the works have the power to encourage change. After all, she initiates a process in which the participants not only contribute to the creation of a collective work of art, but also through their stories, collectively weave a social structure. This is certainly the case in the 100.000 trees project in which by means of the planting of the actual trees a real change in the world is made possible. The social process which underlies the creation of the work and which, as it were, through the artistic process becomes manifested in the work therefore gains a matter of permanency. As such, the work is also capable to be an agent of the voices that are less explicit, that does not cry out for attention loudly but voices that call for dialogue. The work then becomes an agent for a variety of voices who nevertheless share a common world.

Space, place and community

At the basis of what in Vrugt's work can be interpreted as "community building through storytelling (be it literal or in the form of embroidering)" lies the literal creation of what can be regarded as an architectural space, which given its creation by means of a technique from the textile arts, allows to be interpreted through Semper's theoretical explanation on the relation between architecture and the textile arts, for Semper weaving in particular, and the emergence of culture through storytelling, for which according to Semper, shelter and protection appeared to be an important condition. Before discussing the relevance of Semper, however, the complex concept of space must be discussed briefly first. It is a concept which has not only been a concern for architects and art—and architecture historians but obviously also for geographers and mathematicians, as well as for instance for philosophers and linguists.

One of the key questions concerns how space is conceived and imagined by humans and how it is experienced in daily life. In the latter sense, space relates to place but they are not the same. Space, for instance, denotes something broader than just geometrical space; as said it is also something imagined. Marian Stuiver et al., explain that beyond the binary view of space as both real measurable space and imagined space, scholars in geography conceptualized space as tri-partite. Space is also shaped by the activities of those that inhabit it. In that sense, space points to place, meaning that place is something constructed in the activities of those that inhabit a space (Stuiver et al. 2013, 302). One could therefore argue that place is performative. While space can be regarded as an abstract structure, place is the way space becomes meaningful through those social and spatial activities. In other words, only through social practice space becomes a place. Because social practice is continuous, place is also continuously re-imagined through that social practice exactly. Tim Creswell makes clear that place as constituted through social and spatial practice has a locality and is material in the sense that it contains concrete stuff such as objects and buildings, which as products are in turn themselves produced through human spatial activity. Imagined places are material too in the sense that, for instance, an imagined place, like a room described in a novel, contains objects such as chairs and tables (Creswell 2004, 7-8). Marian Stuiver et al., explain that different from geographers, the philosopher Michel de Certeau, distinguished place from space akin to how

grammar would relate to spoken language. Place would then be the abstraction of space while space the lived practice of place. Through playing with its abstract structures, for instance in a city where inhabitants navigate the spatial grid of sidewalks and roads using their own distinctive routes, space would then become meaningful space.

Drawing mainly on Edward Soja's concept of 'Thirdspace' Stuiver et al., conclude that space, however, is neither just geometrical, imagined or lived but all of this at the same time and as such multi-layered (Stuiver et al. 2013, 302-303). Soja's concept of "thirdspace" must then be understood as the "simultaneously, real, imagined and lived" (Stuiver et al. 2013, 303). To an extent Semper's theory anticipates this multi-layered notion of space but then from the perspective of his interest in the emergence of architecture, which Semper conceived of as rooted in cultural rituals, and architecture's relation to the decorative arts. Semper was one of the first theorists to emphasize the importance of textiles for architecture in particular and for the history of human culture in general. He thereby implicitly criticized the importance attached to sculpture, painting and architecture, within the then still relatively young discipline of art history. Semper showed how these disciplines were indebted to the textile arts exactly. Although with his theory Semper would not have had an explicit intention to revalue a craft that in his time was mainly regarded as female, his theory did became important for the arguments of later female artists and theorists who published about the role of the textile arts and correspondingly did revalue the textile arts from a feminist perspective in the twentieth century. We can see this, for instance, in both the work and writings of Anni Albers (Fer 2018, 22).

As has already been argued above, an urban community implies the reconstruction of both space and place. In the discussion of Sara Vrugt's embroidery works, the central element of the embroidery table within the temporal workshop around which the participants' stories emerged and took shape, echoes the importance that Semper attributed to storytelling. I made clear that according to Semper culture emerged when members of early civilizations started to tell stories around the hearth, which for Semper was in a symbolic sense the central element of architecture. When humans erected fences around the hearth a demarcated and protected space emerged in which this storytelling could take place. When humans started to use more refined natural fibres that were woven into a cloth that could be suspended from one or more poles, the first architectural structures would have emerged (Semper 1860, 227-231).[10] When following Semper's theory on the elements of architecture it is not surprising that Semper attributed a great significance to weaving. It was the woven cloth that even when later replaced by brick and stone walls, that in the form of hanging carpets, would have remained the "true" space divider although now in a symbolical sense (Semper 1851, 58). Semper came to this insight when he saw the stone panels from the palace of Nineveh at the British Museum.

After all, the decorative patterns of these panels resembled those of carpets. Both the woven patterns and the initial function of the carpet as a space divider were now, as it were represented in a different material (stone) and by means of a different craft (masonry and sculpture). The notion that original patterns of braided surfaces could be translated into other media and materials, prompted Semper to realise that all wall art, such as relief sculpture, tapestry and painting, must have essentially originated from the braided surface. When for reasons of durability the braided surface was replaced by brick and stone walls, this did not end the practice of humans attaching woven, sculpted or painted surfaces to the walls. On the contrary and even though the once abstract patterns from the craft of weaving became increasingly more complex and naturalistic imagery entered the realm of tapestries, reliefs and paintings too, something of the original motif(s) of the hanging cloth as a space divider would according to Semper continued to resonate in all later monumental art (Semper 1851, 59-60).[11] Taking Semper's theory in account, Sara

10 - Semper therefore regarded the tent and not the hut as the oldest form of architecture. Semper, Der Stil, 227-231.

11 - Semper emphasized the connection and interweaving of different fibres which underlies the activity of creating a spatial surface and which relies on the principle of knotting. For Semper,

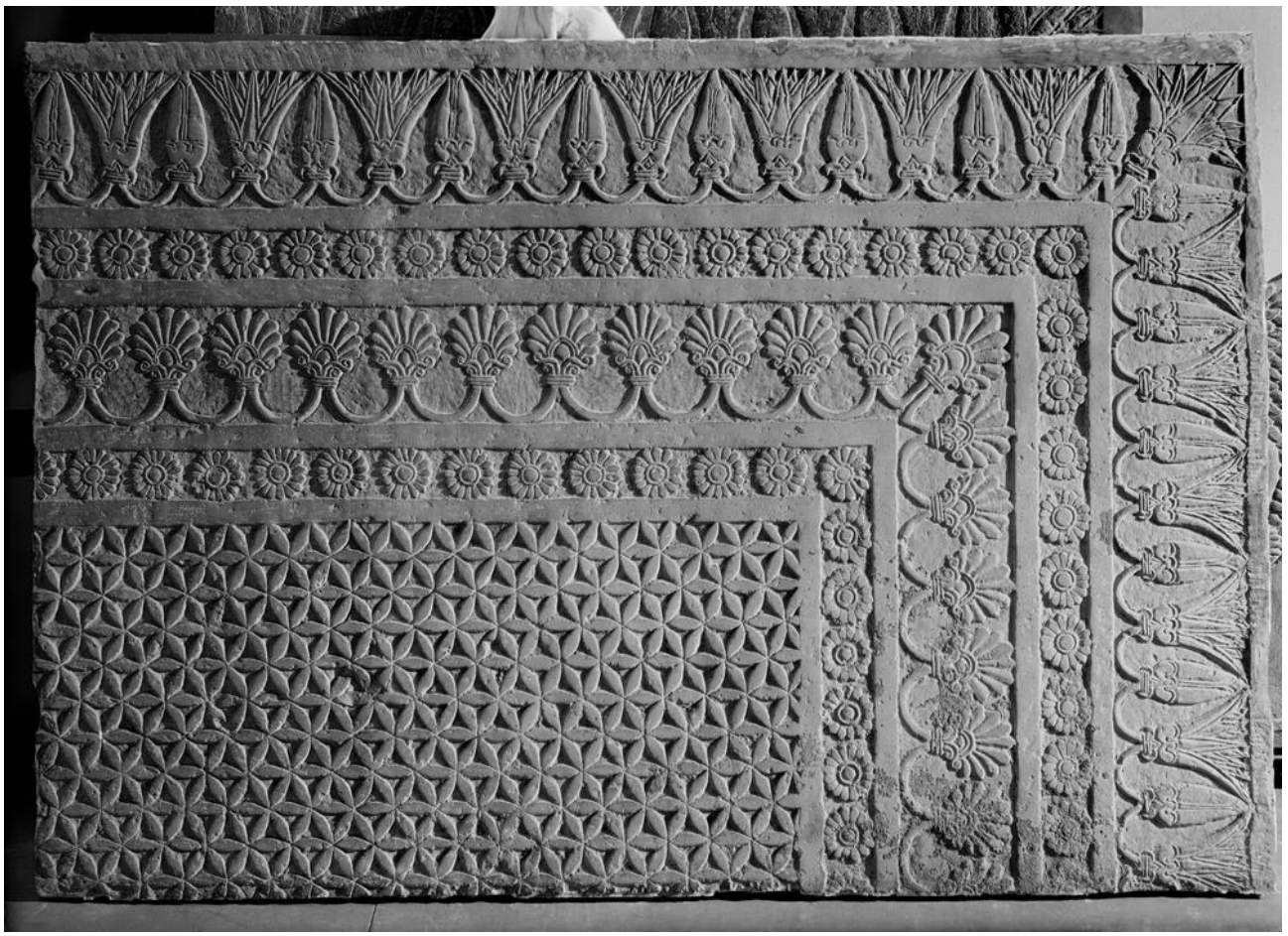

Fig.-10: Anonymous, Gypsum door sill; carved as carpet, with rosette and lotus flower designs, Neo-Assyrian, 645-635 BC, British Museum. © Trustees of the British Museum. https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>

Vrugt's installation works—in which large embroidery works are suspended—can be interpreted as providing an architectural space for the community members in which their collective effort is presented and manifested through the work's embroidered surface: a space for community members, as viewers, makers and active participants within that space and as present within the spatial and social community to which they belong

knots were the primary motives within the woven surface and as such would also gain decorative significance. See Also (Semper 1860, 180-182).

Conclusion

This article discussed that that both projects by Sara Vrugt concern the collective manufacturing of what can be regarded as an architectural space that emerges from the hanging embroidery which brings to mind the relationship

between the textile arts, architecture and narrative, a relationship that was emphasized by Semper in his nineteenth century theory on the elements of architecture. It can also be concluded that the community aspect of both projects lies mainly within the process of manufacturing and to a lesser extent in the actual imagery of the embroidery and the design of the installation, which was more or less controlled by the artist. The imagery of Look at you 05 after all concerns the artist's reflection on the representation of young women on social media. The 100.000 trees project allowed more freedom for the participant in the sense that Vrugt only prescribed the imagery to consist of trees but did not prescribe how this should be visualized by the participants other than they had to rely on their imagination. Moreover, the concern for deforesting and climate change is broadly felt and therefore has social relevance and urgency. Hence, it can also be argued that by endowing her projects with such clear content, the opportunity for the participants to bring in their own concerns has been more or less prohibited. Although both projects were designed to include participants this aspect of authorship could be regarded to also work partly as exclusive because Vrugt remains the director of the artistic process exactly.

However, the significance of both installation works must be understood form their double-facedness. They emerged partly from the individual designs and concerns of the artist herself and partly from the gathering of individual participators within a public space that becomes a place for the very literal social activity of work, that is, only when the manufacturing process of the art project is to be considered as being part of the work of art as well. In that case, the significance of Vrugt's work as socially engaged community artworks lies in the more subtle details through which it makes present the community. It is through the texture of the fabric of the actual embroidery that the collective manual labour of the community of participants is signified. Regardless of the content and the imagery, each stitch is a reference to a subject, to a body, as well as to a specific moment in time, which has been made manifest within the material qualities of a work. This manifestation has not only transformed into an architectural space but through both the spatial-temporal manufacturing of the space as well as the movement of the spectator through the space that becomes a place imagining a community and a place in which a community can be imagined.

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