

'We walk on the planet Earth' The artist as a pedestrian: the work of Stanley Brouwn

A walk usually has a destination, unless one decides to drift aimlessly. Little attention is paid to the actual steps; it all seems to happen automatically unless one is teetering on a mountain ridge, or negotiating a bog or muddy patch, or is afraid of crabs or snakes, or is exercising the muscles of the feet, or improving one's gait, or one's feet ache at each step. There are many ways of becoming aware of movements which one normally takes for granted, like the ones involved in walking. During the past sixteen years the artist Stanley Brouwn has been placing this type of locomotion in different contexts, but always in formative ones, meaning that his intention is to refer to the fact that one 'forms' as one goes. One either changes one's environment visibly by changing one's position, or one changes one's ideas by imagining a particular walk. Both the actual steps and the imagined ones influence our relation to space and time – they 'form' it. Brouwn's maxim and motto for the first half of his total output is a summary of all the advice given to him by pedestrians whenever he asked them the way: **This way Brouwn.**

Brouwn is standing somewhere in the world. He asks a random passer-by to show him on paper how to get another place in town. The next passer-by tells him the way. The 24th, the 2,000th, the 11,000th passer-by tells Brouwn the way. This way Brouwn. Every day, Brouwn makes people discover the streets they use. A farewell to the city, to the world, before taking the big jump into space, before discovering space. It is not the past but the future which has the greatest influence on our ideas and actions.

These words of Stanley Brouwn's are from an article which appeared in 1965 in Jürgen Becker's and Wolf Vostell's documentation under the title *Happenings, Fluxus*.

*Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme.*¹

Brouwn's article fitted into this artistic development in several ways: it described an 'action' which did not take place in traditional cultural institutions but on the streets, requiring the 'creative' cooperation of anonymous pedestrians and assuming its form chiefly from the idea that the pedestrian must imagine the way from A to B and project it in his own words or by scribbling something on the piece of paper Brouwn held out to him. Then you turn right, and then you go straight on. Then you go straight on. And then you turn right at that corner there. And then you turn right straight over the bridge. And you go straight on for a while. And then you get to the Jodenbreestraat, and you cross that. And then you come to the Hoogstraat, and you go straight up the Hoogstraat, across the Dam to the Post Office. Then you turn left into the Raadhuisstraat and you keep going straight on and then you cross some canals . . .

Participation, imagination and finally the description of space and time in a summarized form (words or scrawls) – these were the new bywords for modern art in the nineteen-sixties and seventies. And since Stanley Brouwn's contribution is not limited to a single work but consists of his entire output – apart from his first experiments which were scarcely exhibited at all – from 1960 up to the present, his work would indeed appear to be exemplary of the intentions and realisations of that period.

Stanley Brouwn was born in 1935 in Paramaribo, the capital of the former Dutch colony Surinam, and has been living since 1957 in Amsterdam, where he soon made contact with people like Armando, a member of the group of Dutch artists who at first worked 'informally', joining in 1960 under the name 'Nul' the European 'Zero' movement. Armando had tried to get

Brouwn into the group, but in vain, despite the members' approval of Brouwn's work. This tells us something about their common aims: their rejection of a visible, personal signature of the artist, and their bias towards reality, which in art was to assume a 'new reality'. As early as the end of the fifties, Brouwn was working on plastic constructions which embodied this principle: first in rough wood sculptures from which iron rods protruded, then in transparent polythene bags filled with all kinds of 'rubbish' and dangling from the ceiling. The work of art no longer illustrated anything on its surface but ingested the things it showed, which thus became identical with their image. Formulated briefly, this was their 'new reality'. It is chiefly French artists such as Arman and Yves Klein who became well-known in this development: 'nouveau réalisme' was founded in 1960 in Klein's house in Paris. Today hardly anybody realises that the movement was not restricted to Paris. Ever before Arman emptied his waste-paper baskets into perspex boxes and dubbed them works of art, Brouwn had filled his art-bags. However, they were aware of one another; Brouwn visited Arman in Nice. None of these early works seem to have survived: Brouwn destroyed them.

Still, this early work ought not to be quite forgotten, for what Brouwn subsequently regarded as his first work exhibits distinct links with the beginnings. This time the artist did not even make them himself. He laid sheets of paper down in the street and a random pedestrian or cyclist unwittingly created a work of art. He became Brouwn's partner in creation. The dusty traces of shoes or wheels indicate an action; they

¹ Becker, Jürgen and Vostell, Wolf (ed.)

Happenings, Fluxus, Pop Art, Nouveau Réalisme. Eine Dokumentation Reinbeck bei Hamburg 1965, p. 154.

Also in: *Manifesten en Manifestaties 1916-1966*, ed. Hugo Claus, Ivo Michiels, Harry Mulisch and Simon Vinkenoog in Randstad 11-12, Amsterdam 1966, p. 166.

halt time. It is a new process compared with the method of preserving painting actions with paint and brush (action painting), or by means of rain dripping onto a blue-painted canvas so as to record natural processes (Yves Klein's *Cosmogonies*). The shoe-prints had a ready-made character, just like the things in Brouwn's polythene bags; they were made in connection with the idea of a 'new reality'. These shoe-traces pointed the way to ideas and aspects which Brouwn pursued at various levels. There is therefore little sense in making chronological acquaintance with his work; it is better to deal with its various aspects. Large sections of his work can be summarized, for instance, under the heading of participation. This term covers one of the focal demands of the art of the nineteen-sixties.

PARTICIPATION

The anonymous pedestrian proved to be a participator in the genesis of a work of art without being particularly active. He did not do anything special, he just walked on. This kind of participation changed when Brouwn selected a pedestrian at random and asked him to draw the way to a particular place on a piece of paper. The only thing the pedestrian had in mind was to do Brouwn a favour, but what he was in fact doing was giving shape to his ideas and projecting them onto paper: unskilled drawings consisting of loops, lines, circles, dots, arrows, crosses and street-names. The well-meant scrawls have a very personal effect, but they nonetheless express a way of thinking which anyone might have. Brouwn then added his motto to the projection: **This way Brouwn**. One of the inexorable consequences is that blank sheets of paper also counted as works of art. They, too, expressed a thought process: Brouwn had asked somebody the way to a place he had already reached: no way Brouwn.

These 'this way Brouwns' resulted in a series of rules for making a work of art. Sometimes Brouwn 'played' along, but he usually opted for the role of the person who had made the rules and let the others play, as in the case of the 'this way Brouwns'. This is what things were all about for the generation of artists at the beginning of the sixties: to activate the spectator.



Sheet of paper with notes made by passer-by, stamped **This Way Brouwn**, 1969, Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

copied from the original 1969

Visiting card, distributed in 1970

Everyone who comes across a happening joins in, wrote Jean Jacques Lebel in his essay on happenings,² there is no longer any audience, actors, exhibitionists, spectators; everyone can alter his behaviour as he pleases. Each individual is turned over to his limits and transformations. No longer is he reduced to nothing, as in the theatre. There are no longer any 'functions of the audience', and no animals behind bars as at the zoo. No stage, no poetry, no applause. The term 'happening' was at that time usually interchangeable with that of Fluxus, meaning volatile, flowing actions. Lebel made one mistake though; the participant had a function which is in no way different from that of the traditional spectator: he was supposed to be able to abstract and recognize the model character of the things he had experienced, to think about what he had helped to bring about. And, as we see today, there was indeed something resembling 'applause': for the person who had developed the idea of the game, in this case for Stanley Brouwn.

Tomas Schmitt a German Fluxus artist, made the following statement about Stanley Brouwn in the Aachen publication Prisma 5 in July 1964: Stanley Brouwn is the only person to have made real actions. This verdict was based on Schmitt's definition of an 'action', which he held to be an anonymous walk in which the observer, if present, is involved, totally unprepared. Later, Brouwn himself explained to an interviewer: 'It is the search for the awareness we have of wide space, and the discovery of the city before we discover space. With these events I am trying to make something of what is going on have an effect on the spectators in terms of an action.'

For a while things did not get any further than plans, but in 1964 in the Patio gallery in Neuisenburg there was an 'art-happening' in which Brouwn pulled a polythene bag over his head and sat down on a chair which he had placed on a pedestal in a corner of the gallery.³ Again, as one could see, there was a distinct connection with his earlier sculptures, in

the context of a 'new reality'. It is not known how visitors to the gallery reacted to this provocation. During the Bloomsday 64 exhibition at the Dorothea Loehr gallery in Frankfurt in 1964, spectators threw banana peel at a girl lying on a bed. She then ironed the peel smooth, at the same time reading aloud statistics on flies in various countries. While this was going on, Brouwn was driving around the streets of Frankfurt with 24-foot lengths of wooden planks on the roof of his car. From time to time he would swat at imaginary flies through the window.⁴ Perhaps the planks on his car were a reference to his early sculptural experience with wood and iron rods, but what is more crucial for the development of his work is the imagination of a particular quantity, in this case the number of flies, and the aspect of simultaneous events. Both aspects keep on recurring later. This fly-happening resembles another rule which, more strongly than before, is applied to the idea of an almost inconceivably great quantity:⁵

Brouwn Toy 4000 A.D.

(contents: a thousand billion toys)

INCREASE THE MICROBES
AND VIRUSES IN THIS CIRCLE
5,000,000 times



GIVE THEM TO YOUR CHILDREN
TO PLAY WITH

(do not use the BROUWNtoy before
4000 A.D.)

In that same year (1964) Brouwn formulated the participation role even more plainly than in the Bloomsday happening, this time for visitors to a Berlin gallery. He asked the guests at the opening in the Réne Block gallery to tell him the way through the streets of Berlin over a walkie-

send me a poste-restante letter

send the letter to a city of your
choice

any city on earth is o.k.

write me (see address) to which city
you did send the poste-restante letter

stanley brouwn
willem de zwiijgerlaan 60
amsterdam
holland

Rotch

MASS. INST. TECH.

AUG 11 1980

LIBRARIES

Card, distributed in 1970

² Becker - Vostell, op.cit., p. 12-13

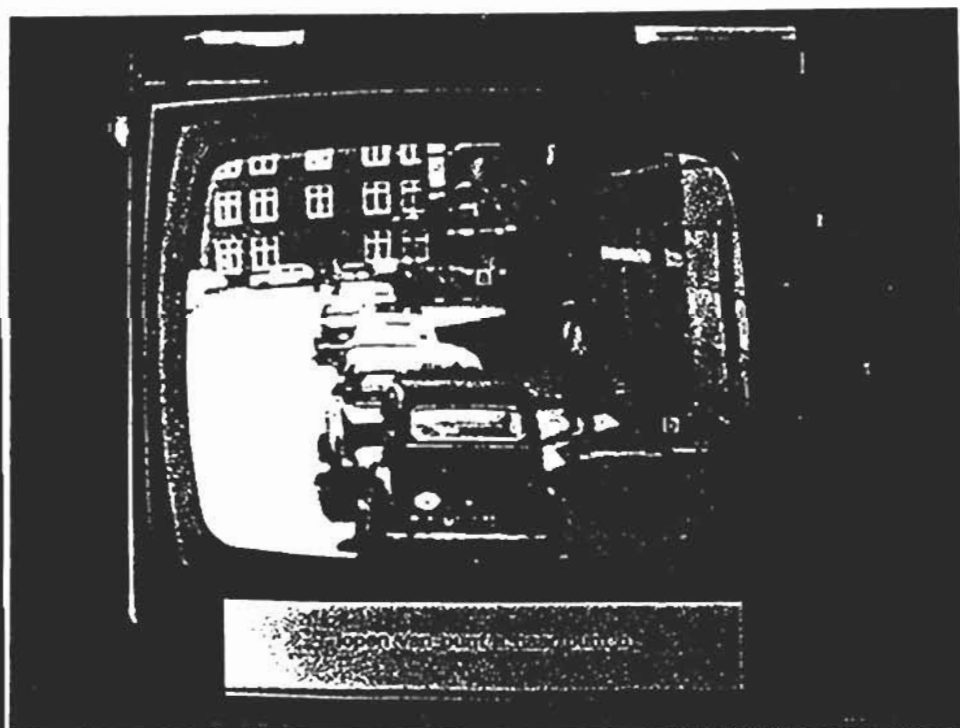
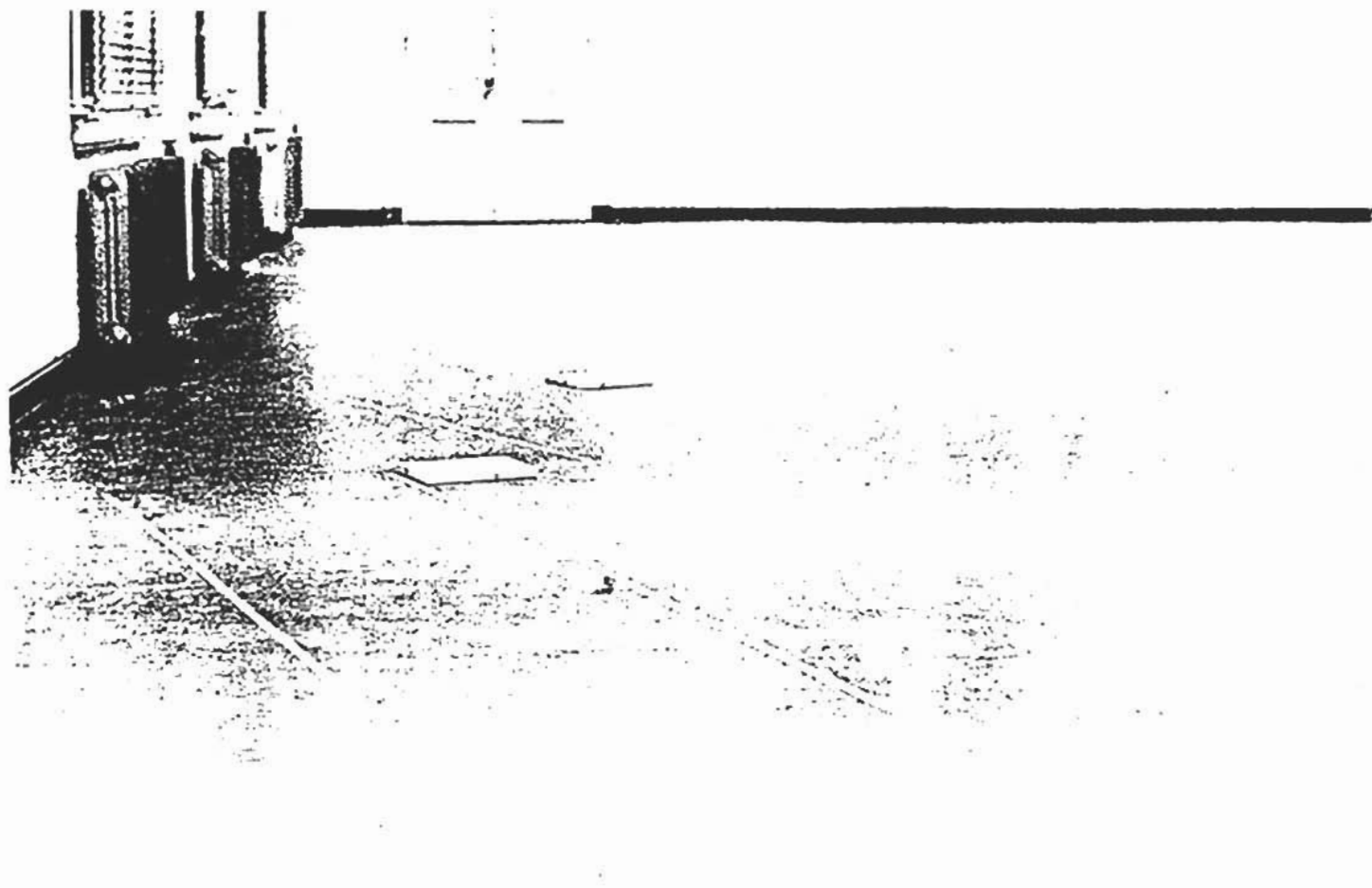
³ Bernlef, J. Schippers, K.: Een Cheque voor de Tandarts, Amsterdam, 1967.

⁴ De Tijd 30.5.1969.

⁵ Becker - Vostell, op.cit.

⁶ Bernlef J., Schippers K.: Een Cheque voor de Tandarts, op.cit., p. 171.

⁷ Becker - Vostell, op.cit., p. 153.



La Paz, exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum in Schiedam, 1970.
White lines on the floor show the way to all sorts of cities in all directions of the compass

Monitor with caption: 'lopen van punt a naar punt b' ('walk from point a to point b'). Closed TV circuit monitoring pedestrians walking on a marked traject opposite the gallery. Exhibition Art & Project. Amsterdam 1971

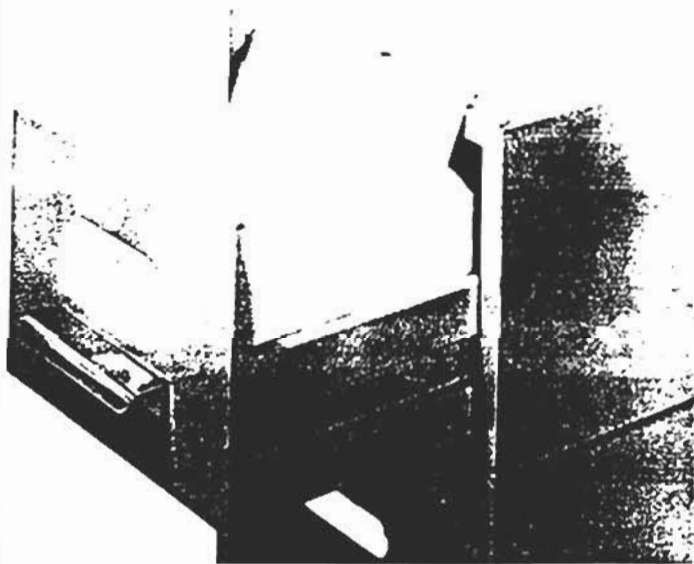
talkie. Once more the projection of the idea of space and time was involved, just as in the 'this way Brouwns', but the crucial difference was that these participants already knew that they were being involved in a work of art, this time in one which they had to create in their own minds. Brouwn, marching according to their instructions, was merely the 'projection surface'. He was a substitute for the paper on which the pedestrians once made their drawings. The game can be reversed: Brouwn approaches a passer-by and immediately starts telling him how to get to another place in town. This way public. The reversal corresponds to the traditional relationship between the artist and his public, in which the artist always knew the way. It is not known whether Brouwn ever really turned the tables in this way, but in any case, no this way Brouwn without Brouwn⁶ applies in both examples. What was (and is) more important than the artist's authoritarian action towards the spectator was the creative collaboration of any participant whose action and/or imaginative powers are supposed to complete the work. For example, in 1969 Brouwn asked visitors to the Art & Project gallery to send him telegrams telling him

what their respective ways from their homes to the gallery looked like. In 1971 he distributed little round self-adhesive labels to visitors in the Modern Art Agency gallery at Naples. They could not down every change of direction on the labels on their way home. A year previously he had sent visiting cards to people asking them to send him maps of their home-towns. He distributed cards in galleries on which this request was printed: **send me a poste-restante letter. send the letter to a city of your choice. any city on earth is o.k. write me (see address) to which city you sent the poste-restante letter.** Finally he sent his requests from a Danish beach in bottles. The only reply came from a man who lived on a lonely island with someone else. All these projects are based on the conviction that creativity, in terms of formative work, is latent in everybody, the artist merely having to entice it out and guide it. The happening, the Fluxus movement, and kinetic objects of the sixties as well, were on the side of this ideology. Like Brouwn, most artists have

turned away from the participation idea, which acquired a different emphasis, becoming orientated towards the spectator's active imaginative capacity. This meant that the spectator was no longer expected to abstract an action by means of his descriptions or scrawls, but the other way round: that the participant was to use his imagination to convert the abstraction back into action, for example the abstract projection of a stretch of road or a direction.

STRETCHES OF ROAD

In a nearly 'work concept' of 1962, Brouwn had already proposed on a typed card a way across a field on exactly the same straight line from a to b: every day, a whole year long. In this way a footpath would be made. The English artist Richard Long did this in Wuppertal for the collectors Mr. and Mrs. Braun – in 1969 – in a flowering meadow which he then declared to be a sculpture. What Brouwn meant and means, however, was not an executed sculpture but imagined forms: the printed one and the



Construction, filing system. Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam

one in his imagination. There are astonishing parallels here between semiology and the plastic arts. It is not necessary for Brouwn's work that his concept be carried out; things are different in the case of the American artist Bruce Naumann, who in 1968 walked around in a square for a long time until it actually became visible. The aim is not the introspection of one's body with reference to space, not the body as material for a sculpture, but the forms of projection and their formation in the mind.

For example, in 1971 Brouwn set up a monitor in his Amsterdam gallery which showed a view of the opposite side-street. It was easier to dissociate oneself mentally from the model-like character of the stretch of road covered by each pedestrian on the screen than out on the street in real life. The text under the monitor read: **Walk from point a to point b.**

For the 'this way Brouwns' the following already applied: if I make a 'this way Brouwn' from a certain route, I think out this route with the help of the very simplest thing we have:

the power of movement, movement as a source of our experience which can barely be reduced.⁹

The decisive aspect of this context is that Brouwn never leaves his spectator alone to wander around, meditating at will on an imaginary stretch of road. He marks the way with points. The concrete, 'scientific' aspect of his work is important to him. Or he supplies information as to the direction, potential starting-points, the number of steps needed, the distance, scale or time required. He deals with direction in an entire series of works.

DIRECTION

In 1970, using a wooden frame suspended from the ceiling of his Amsterdam gallery, Brouwn diverted the spectators away from the object in a different direction towards quite different forms that were not present. A notice read: **'If you go in this direction, you will be walking in the same direction as x pedestrians on the Dam Square of Amsterdam at this very moment.** A little path in a corner of the garden also indicated a

certain direction. In that same year, astonished readers of *What's On In Amsterdam* read on the title-page and inside the booklet¹⁰ that if they went straight up the Kinkerstraat they would arrive in La Paz. Brouwn's exhibition at the Schiedam Stedelijk Museum¹¹ offered visitors similar journeys: white lines on the floor pointed the way to all sorts of cities in all directions of the compass. The catalogue suggested:

Walk 95 m towards La Paz			
..	11 m	..	Rangoon
..	776 m	..	Havana
..	18 m	..	Helsinki
..	3 m	..	Georgetown
..	19 m	..	Seoul
..	65 m	..	Washington
..	2 m	..	Warsaw
..	74 m	..	Dakar
..	118 m	..	Khartoum
..	6 m	..	Tokyo
..	181 m	..	Dublin
..	233 m	..	Peking
..	16 m	..	New Delhi
..	4 m	..	Madrid
..	21 m	..	Montevideo
..	319 m	..	Berne
..	41 m	..	Brazzaville
..	20 m	..	Ottawa
..	8 m	..	Moscow
..	5 m	..	Guatemala

A text Brouwn had written six years previously reads almost like a statement on this: **The Armada of streets, squares, alleys etc. is sinking increasingly deeper into a network of 'this way Brouwns'.** All directions are being taken away from it. They no longer lead anywhere. They are trapped, caught in my work. I am the only way, the only direction. I have become direction.¹²

Texts, markings, and photographs too can 'set imagination going', to coin a phrase. For instance, a photograph can help form an idea of a particular direction. Brouwn

101

show brouwn the way from each point on a circle with x as centre and a radius of 100 angström to all other points

Pages from the booklet '100 This Way Brouwn Problems for Computer IBM 360 Model 95', no year, published by Verlag Gebr. Konig, Köln / New York

⁹ Ibidem, p. 156, cf. NRC Handelsblad, 13.3.197

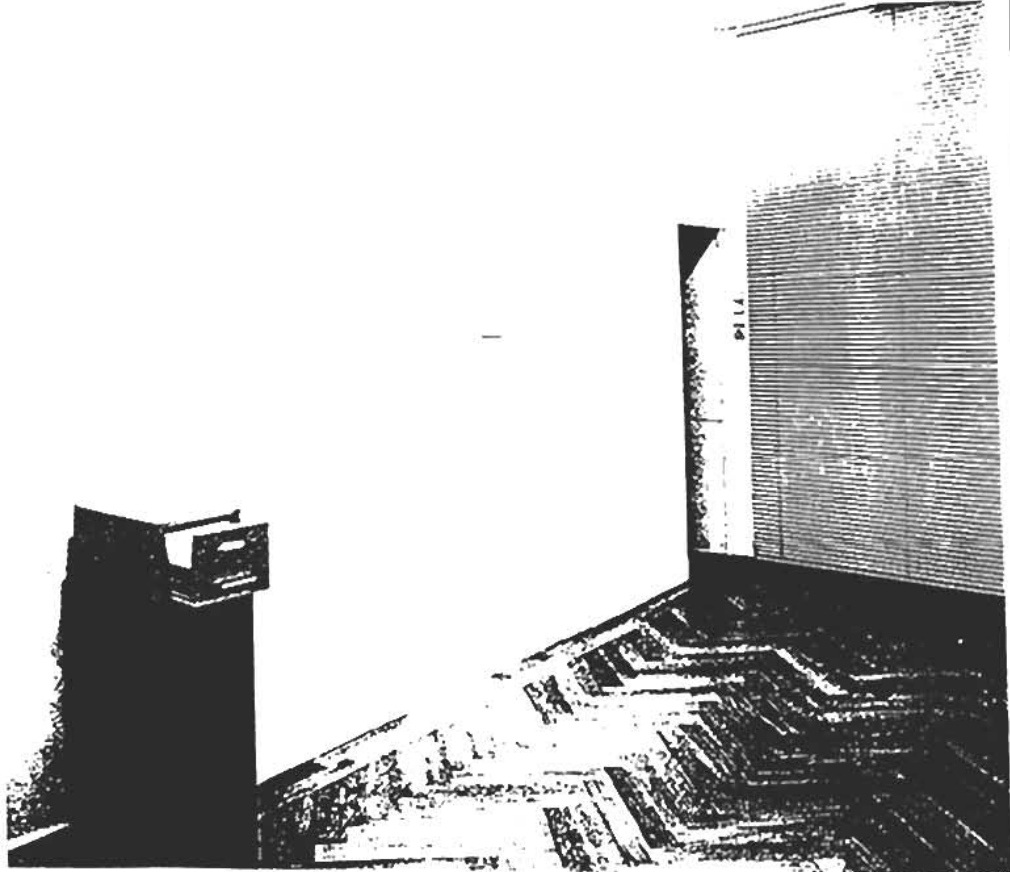
¹⁰ De Tijd, 30.5.1969

¹¹ Weekprogramma Amsterdam 3.13. December 1970 no. 15

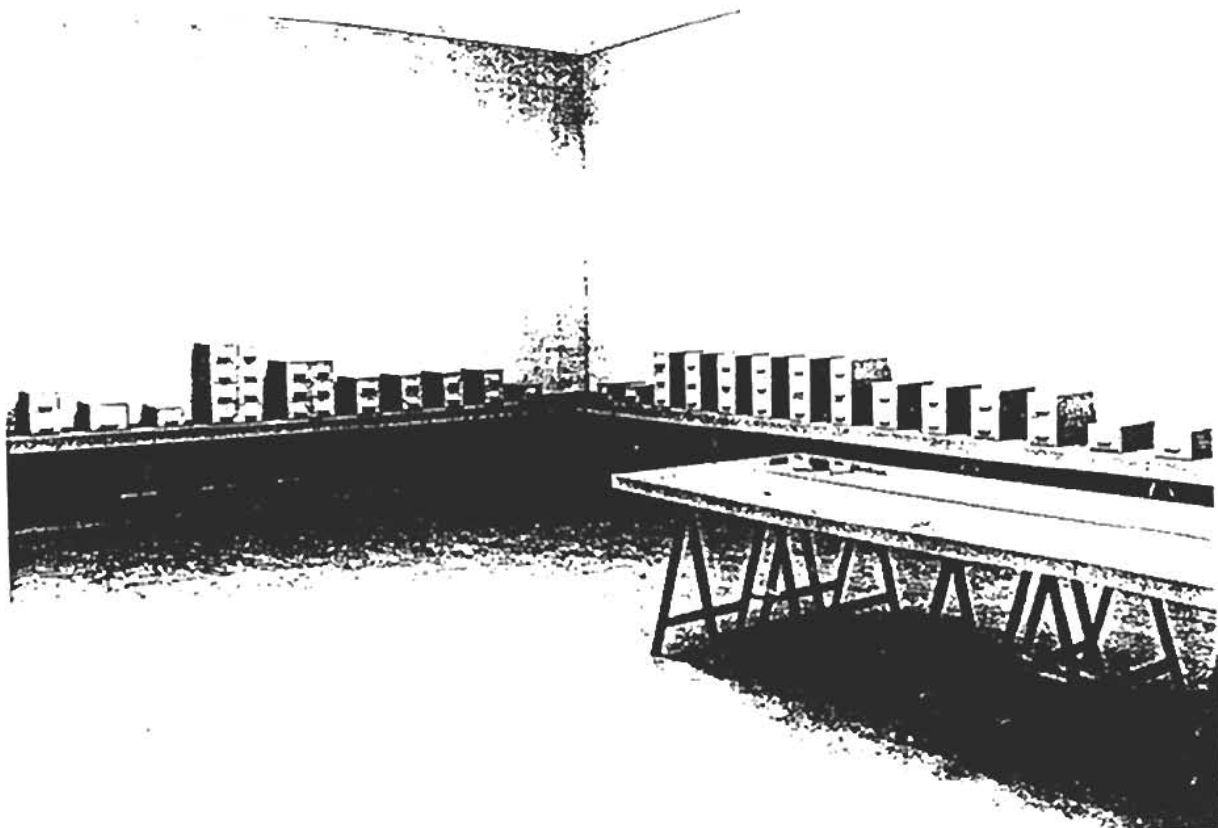
¹² Catalogue Stanley Brouwn, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, 14.2.1970

¹³ Stanley Brouwn, *This Way Brouwn*, 25.2.196 Zeichnungen I, 26.2.1961, ed. Gebrüder König, Köln, New York

The photograph shows a filling system
['Construction', on each card is the
text: step = 852 mm), and a sheet of
paper (on which 3 distances are added
together: 31477849405555632148 + /
20491124567 + 99234128900055)



View of exhibition at the Van Abbe
Museum, Eindhoven, 1976, showing
various filling systems and publications
by Brouwn in showcases



travelled to Tatwan in Turkey and aimed his camera along diverging railway lines...¹³ Imagination is always concerned only with what is possible, e.g. with future actions. Brouwn clarified potential as an element of his art by referring to potential this way Brouwns.

POTENTIAL STARTING-POINTS

Any city on earth: a little piece of the earth's surface is crisscrossed by potential this way Brouwns. The streets, alleys and squares (the brain of the universe) crisscross our brain. Every point is a trap. The way can begin anywhere. There is no way out. The ways smash us, explained Brouwn in 1964.¹⁴

Potential starting-points can be anywhere as long as there is a chance of being able to walk at all and to run away. In the Kargadoor youth centre in Delft in 1969, Brouwn indicated on a TV screen with a light-arrow where he suspected starting-points to be. At the time films on space travel and a football match were being shown. That same year a photographic certificate was on sale at his one-man show in his Amsterdam gallery, showing a square section of the street in front of the gallery: a potential starting-point for a conscious departure from the gallery. In our society we usually let computers decide all potential matters. Although Brouwn does not permit this, he did formulate 101 questions for the computer on 101 pages of a book, rounding them off to the nearest number in the title: 100 this way Brouwn problems for computer IBM 360 model 95 (Köln, New York). Problem 101 is: show Brouwn the way from each point on a circle with x as centre and a radius of 100 angström to all other points.

A 'this way Brouwn' can begin anywhere – anywhere there can be:

POTENTIAL PLACES

Stanley Brouwn's list of exhibitions begins in 1960 with an invitation card to an exhibition of all the shoe-shops in Amsterdam. If we relate this invitation to a broad context in art, we could classify it as Dada, new realism, the happening, Fluxus, pop art and – since it is merely a text with a formal idea – even as conceptual art. Brouwn has both feet firmly in the middle

of the general reform of concepts in art. However, such categories do not bring us very far, although a discussion on the qualification of classification into styles would be most interesting in the case of Stanley Brouwn. Not because it would be easier to understand his work, but because it would be easier to disentangle the definitions of art movements. Such a discussion would however take us beyond the scope of this article.

A little later, Brouwn started his 'this way Brouwns', and wrote about them: A 'this way Brouwn' is a portrait of a tiny bit of earth. Fixed by the memory of the city: the pedestrian.¹⁵ An early statement, already plainly showing that even then Brouwn was primarily concerned with ways of imagining things. He soon proceeded actually to collect tiny pieces of earth. Somewhere in a city he would buy a square yard of land, or let someone give it to him as a gift. Things should not be taken too literally, however. Perhaps they are registered in the land registry office, perhaps not, but why bother about trifles when imagination is involved? Brouwn called this project *Mother Earth*, of which after all he does own a few scraps: one square yard in Driebergen, Holland, another bit on a farmyard in Denmark (for which he paid ten Danish crowns), another somewhere in France, one on a farm near New York (price one dollar and a bottle of Dutch gin) and other square-yard sites in Japan, Belgium, Sweden and even in the ocean.¹⁶ This makes Brouwn a world mini-landowner – ownership for the imagination. The sites are not fenced in but, wherever possible, their boundaries are marked by posts. From each piece of land, Brouwn can refer to others, can at all times evoke the shape of a particular place in space, and so can his 'spectators'.

Besides the distance, direction and possible starting-points or places, intersections of two imaginary stretches of road can also indicate a fixed form for the imagination:

CROSSINGS

In his Amsterdam one-man show in 1969, a little notice in the front window referred to a short post in the front garden: it was supposed to be the intersection of X and Y streets in an imaginary city. Such a link between object and illusion is typical of abstract art in the 20th century: Kandinsky

referred in his paintings to tensions and dissonances of a musical or psychic character. Mondrian referred in his pictures composed of lines and planes to a spiritual harmony. Malewitsch with a black square on a white background to 'Nothing' and 'Something', and Brancusi with a pillar of serial rhombuses to the infinity of time and space. The conceptual art of the early nineteen-sixties also belongs, in accordance with its nature, to abstract art, but the visual projections have been transformed in the meantime: Stanley Brouwn requested visitors to his 1970 exhibition in Mönchen Gladbach (Germany) to cross intentionally the cosmic rays in the rooms of the museum. Compared with the illusion of something imaginary, everything that is present is likewise concrete, regardless of whether a picture of geometric shapes, of figurative objects or a text consisting of comprehensible terms is involved. Perhaps the most important and primarily concrete unit for an imaginary journey is the step, because we relate it to concrete physical experience. By means of steps we experience changing space and time in ourselves.

STEPS

I count my steps in the context of a particular project, Brouwn explained to a fellow-walker,¹⁷ and I count my steps in countries, cities and villages where I have never been... What everyone finds quite commonplace becomes special when the number is stated. Brouwn works as a kind of catalyst. The way he counts his steps is expressed in very different forms. In 1972, for example, he printed on a card: 18,947 steps, the number of steps counted in one day.¹⁸

¹³ Several works from this series exist: for example, Brouwn filmed the diverging railway lines from the train and later projected this film from a Volkswagen bus in motion onto the streets of Munich. His film remained as a document. At an exhibition in the Aktionsraum I in Munich there was a book entitled Stanley Brouwn x - Tatwan (Aktionsraum I, München 1970).

¹⁴ Beintel J. Schippers K. Een Cheque voor de Tandarts, op cit. p. 174.

¹⁵ Ibidem p. 175.

¹⁶ Haagse Post, 10.9.1969.

¹⁷ NRC Handelsblad, 13.3.1971.

¹⁸ Catalogue Stanley Brouwn Van Abbe Museum Eindhoven 1976, no. 100.

The reader can convert the number in his mind back into a chain of steps. Steps or numbers are the serial elements in Brouwn's work, just as others make use of circles or squares. The precise number of steps is not always stated. The spectator is supposed to imagine the potential number. It has even been put on exhibition: in 1971 in Françoise Lambert's gallery in Milan: **My Steps in Milan**, and shortly afterwards in the MTL gallery in Brussels: **My Steps in Brussels**

At the 1972 Dokumenta 5 in Kassel, Brouwn showed for the first time grey filing cabinets, each filled with a certain number of white cards. One of the cabinets contained 1,000 cards, the construction of a walk consisting of 3,000 steps, the length of the strides being between 840 and 890 millimetres. What could be seen were the definitely sobering filing cabinets. However, on leafing through the cards, the spectator embarked on a foot-journey in his mind through an undefined space with a predetermined number of steps. Once, in front of 1,000,000 spectators, Brouwn concentrated on just one step. For a series of artists' films entitled 'Identifications' produced by the television gallery of Gerry schum and transmitted on Baden-Baden 1 in 1970 and later in the Netherlands,¹⁹ Brouwn filmed the view from the square in front of the Hotel Americain in Amsterdam towards the theatre of that city, the Stadsschouwburg,

holding the camera quite still. Then the picture wobbled. Brouwn had taken a step forwards. The picture had come one step closer to the viewer.

Indications as to time, space and quantity are units of measurement for Brouwn's work on paper and in our imagination. Both comparisons are valid. A straight line on paper can mean the projection of several steps on top of one another, in the mind the compressed form is converted back into action. A little strip of paper on the table is then the standard for a much larger step, and three similar drawings each with ten vertical lines one centimetre apart become 'dissimilar' because of Brouwn's captions: under two of them he writes 2 m and under the third 1 m. The observer may decide which of the two forms he wants to keep to. Other examples of deformation can be seen in two works from 1974: Brouwn drew lines forming borders on three sheets of paper, each line denoting the length of a step. When the pictures are hung close together, a continuous movement can be imagined. The border-line indicates this movement. As soon as the border-lines in a second work are one metre long, they no longer refer to steps but to the ideal measurement of distances. They need no longer represent a continuous movement. When the pictures are hung in a disconnected fashion, the measurement indication and the form in which they now hang deforms an originally

conceived idea into another one.

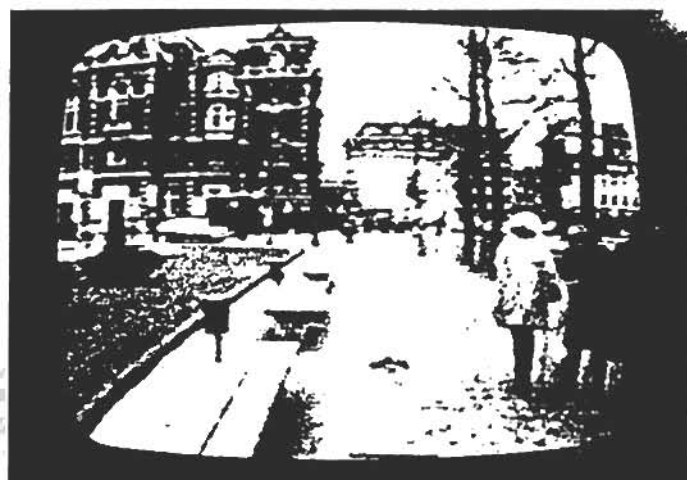
At a first glance, then, Brouwn's work appears to be very concrete, even self-evident. Only at a second glance does it become clear that he relativates concepts and representations, ironifies them and thus deforms them.

An artist who, like Brouwn, decides to accept the collaboration of anonymous 'creators' and not that of trained apprentices as did earlier masters in their studios, must take chance into the bargain.

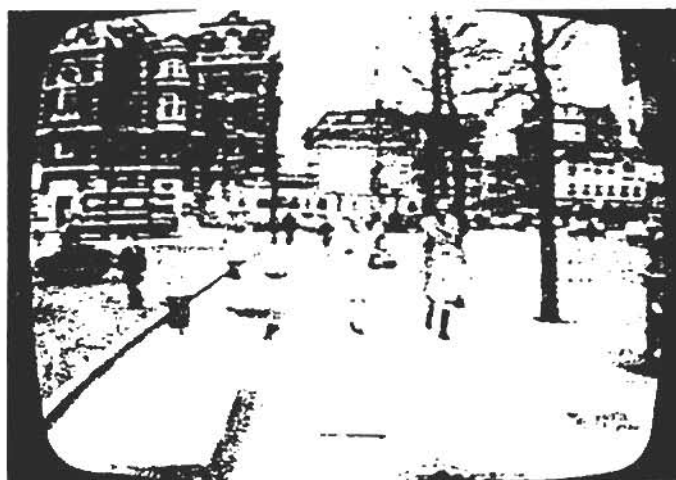
CHANCE AND RANDOMNESS

His 'this way Brouwns' were not the first impulse towards 'laissez-faire'. The Dutch writer K. Schippers owns an early Brouwn from before 1960: a duster divided into sections.²⁰ Brouwn placed price labels in each section. What other meaning could these labels have than that the dust should gradually 'form' a different picture in each section? It was not the first time that an artist had worked with dust. Marcel Duchamp 'painted' the funnel of his Large Glass (1923) with dust instead of paint, but Duchamp did not emphasize the random character of settling dust as conceptually as Brouwn did.

Brouwn realised later on that the size of his steps was also a random quantity. Of course he could make an effort to keep them of as equal length as possible, but that would result in boringly similar forms. In 1972 he published a book called



Stills from the TV film 'A Step', broadcast in a programme called 'Artists make Television' produced by Openbaar Kunstbezit, 1971. In the film



Brouwn took one step holding the film camera quite still

Construction in which he noted the extremely varying size of his steps: 857 mm 877 mm etc.²¹ Each page of the book looks like a different serial picture made of rows and columns of step-lengths. Just as the 'homogenous' surface of the picture summarizes steps that were once continuously executed on the pages of a book, time is similarly compressed: in one instant one can see what actually happened successively in time.

TIME-MOMENTS

The duration of the creation of a 'this way Brouwn' is precisely limited, in contrast to what was previously generally done in art. There is no adjusting, no measuring, no rounding-off or embellishment of the result. The time Brouwn really needs to walk from A to B is compressed in the explanation-time of the passer-by in the street.²² Brouwn defines this explanation-time more closely: At the moment of explanation the situation is still in the future. He (the pedestrian, *author's remark*) makes a jump in time and space.²³

Years later Brouwn added two more time-themes to that of compressed time with which he had been occupied earlier. He applied them particularly in works executed after 1969:

SIMULTANEITY AND INFINITY

In Bulletin 11 of the Art & Project gallery he advised the reader: walk very consciously in a certain direction for a few moments, and simultaneously an infinite number of living creatures in the universe are moving in an infinite number of directions.²⁴ At the Dusseldorf exhibition Prospect 69 Brouwn showed circles, providing them with printed captions such as: Walk very consciously in a certain direction for a few moments; simultaneously a certain number of microbes in the circle are moving in a certain number of directions.

Later, in 1974 for the first time, he no longer regarded infinity as a number, but as an infinite distance in space and time. One of his card-concepts read:²⁵ a: distance 1:∞; b: 1 m 1:1°/a distance defined as (a) distance 1:∞ and (b) 1 m 1:1°

Brouwn 'simultaneously' compares what is ordered with what is unimaginable, and consequently what is not ordered, what is actual, with what is imaginary. This comparison results in a relativation or even deformation of possible individual positions. The scope is wide: the extremes meet in Brouwn's work, the least valid and the infinite. All references are nonetheless logical and very easy to understand, because they are interdependent. 'It is not impossible', Stanley Brouwn wrote for the television announcer's introduction to his film 'A Step', 'it is even very probable that I shall be able to summarize all the projects I shall ever carry out in my life under one title, which would be: 'We Walk on the Planet Earth'.

The film was released with the title 'A Step' in the Foundation Openbaar Kunstbezit on 20 February 1970. A year before it was broadcast, the announcer explained that at the same moment that the step was being broadcast Stanley Brouwn would repeat the step five at the same time, the same place and in the same direction.

²⁰ Algemeen Handelsblad, 11.10.1969.

²¹ Stanley Brouwn, Construction, 1972, Art & Project, Amsterdam.

²² Bertel J. Schippers K. Een Cheque voor de Tandarts, op cit. p. 173, no. 6.

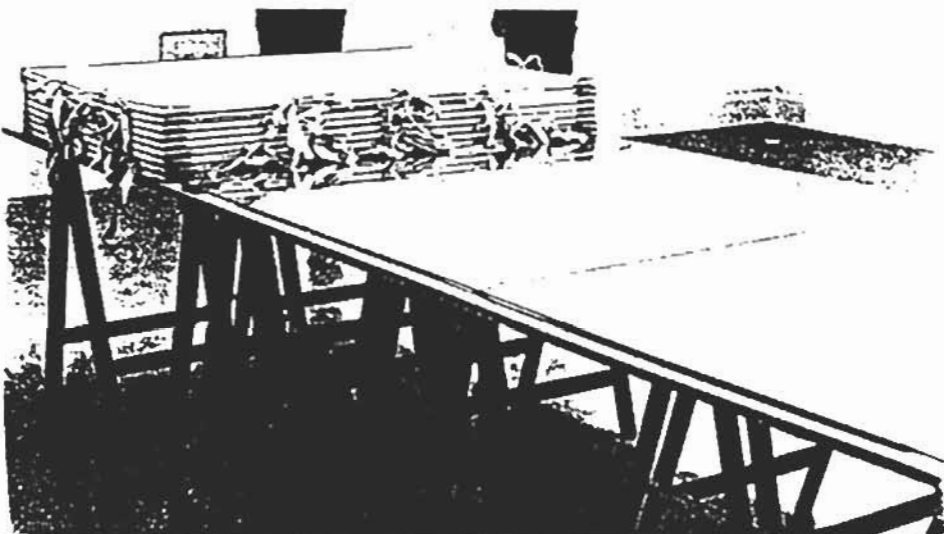
²³ Ibidem, p. 174, no. 8.

²⁴ Stanley Brouwn, Bulletin 11, Galerie Art & Project, Amsterdam, 30.9 - 12.10.1969.

BOOKLETS BY BROUWN

Zeichnungen, 1961
Verlag Gebr. König, Keulen/New York
La Paz, 1970
Stedelijk Museum, Schiedam
Tatvan, 1970
Galerie Aktionsraum, München
100 this way brouwn problems for computer IBM model 95, 2, 1
Verlag Gebr. König, Keulen/New York
One step 1X-100X, 1971
Galerie MTL, Brussel
Zambia Afghanistan, 1971
Galerie Gegenverkehr, Aken
Steps, 1971
Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam
Construction, 1972
Galerie Art & Project, Amsterdam
1 step - 100000 steps, 1972
Utrechtse Kring, Utrecht/Galerie Art & Project, Amsterdam

Later, in 1974, Stanley Brouwn, Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, 1974, p. 25. It is interesting to note that in 1970 Stanley Brouwn proposed a plan for an eternal film to one of the organizers of the Sonsbeek 71 exhibition Frans Mals. The camera was to film events in a street without a break, from day to day, from year to year etc. This film should only be shown to one spectator and was supposed to make the room in which it was shown into an environment in which the film was to be projected from the ceiling onto the floor. The spectator would not have to watch the film continuously, but it would be crucial for him to regard the filmed street situation for his own. Brouwn even went so far as to suggest that his spectator be 'exhibited' while watching the film.



Portfolios, each containing 100 sheets with 100 distances of 1 m (each portfolio 10 km), exhibition at the Van Abbe Museum, Eindhoven, 1976