

Human Activities Annual report 2019

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Starting point

Over the last centuries, plantations have funded the building of many European and American museums, where art provided an opportunity for shareholders to distance themselves from the violence of the plantation system. Still today, rain forests are cut down and turned into plantations. The value extracted from these plantations is partially invested in museums in New York, Dakar and Paris, generating wealth in the economy around them (gentrification), yet leaving depleted landscapes and impoverished people.

Vision and mission

Human Activities wants to prove that art can redress economic inequality, not symbolically, but in real, material terms. Art provides the inspiration and the capital to buy back land and start inclusive, ecological post-plantations.

Sister organization Le Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise (CATPC) wants to improve the living standards of plantation workers, buy back land, and start inclusive, egalitarian Postplantations, where the means are in the hands of the community and the land is restored.

1. Introduction

In 2017, with the recognition the listing in the *New York Times* 'best art of the of year' of first US solo show, we concluded the Human Activities' first five-year program *Reverse Gentrification Program*.

"This was the most challenging show of the year, and proudly "problematic," but that was the point: You need to be fearless, and run right into the swamp of possible misunderstanding, to have any hope of making a difference."

Jason Farago, The New York Times

Making a difference is as urgent as ever. To this day, large multinationals cut rainforests to develop plantations, and the profits are partly reinvested in art, with which they gain respect. Art and museums attract wealth to the surrounding areas (gentrification), but none of this wealth flows back to the plantation that financed it. In this way art, however critical it may be of climate change or economic inequality confirms and reinforces class differences, both locally and globally, leaving the plantation empty-handed. The plantation is the lens through which to see global value chains and art's role in it.

Human Activities wants to reverse this value chain. Critical art about economic inequality should resolve this inequality, not in symbolic, but in real, material terms. That's why, together with our sister organization CATPC, we brought the White Cube back to the plantation. With "The Repatriation of the White Cube" in 2017, we opened a museum, a quintessential white cube, designed by OMA, in the middle of the Congolese forest. As many other museums, it is a free haven of love, singularity and critique, for artists and visitors. The museum in Lusanga does what all museums do: it attracts capital, visibility and legitimization.

In 2017 we also started the new five-year program: the Postplantation. With the Postplantation, we want to develop an alternative to the model of enforced monoculture, an alternative that is financed and made possible by what is banned on other plantations: love, singularity and critique. For the 2019-2022 period, production budgets have been pledged for a number of large productions with CATPC. Part of the production budgets and the profits from the sale of these works are invested in the repurchase and restoration of land. Complemented by other funds, we build an inclusive, ecological model: the Postplantation, with art as a driving force.

Ultimately, we want to prove that this sustainable post-plantation generates equal, if not more revenue per hectare than monoculture. From 2022 onwards, this is the ultimate argument to be able to use the financing that development banks still provide to companies with their model of destructive monoculture that exhausts people and landscapes and redirect it to the ecological and inclusive Postplantation.

Amsterdam, 1 June 2020

Derk Sauer
Chair of the Board of Human Activities

Renzo Martens
Artistic director Human Activities

2. Activities

Landscape restoration and organization structure

To ensure that the artistic productions in the period 2019-2022 form the backbone for a sustainable growth impulse for the post plantation, the implementation of a solid and appropriate organizational structure was essential. Together with 4 Returns Partners / Commonland (experts in the field of landscape restoration and sustainable economic development), we undertook a series of sessions and studies, resulting in an agricultural plan and an organizational structure.

We finalized this trajectory with 4 Returns Partners / Commonland in 2019. As 4 Returns Partners were not able to come to DRC due to their safety policy, the workshops were carried out by René Ngongo and Renzo Martens. With CATPC they exchanged ideas with representatives of local communities and organizations, most notably Enabel (Belgian Development Agency), Ibi Village (agroforestry project), Fopakkm (regional union of farmers' organizations), Inades-Formation (organization for the development of farmers in disadvantaged areas), and Adeso (African charity and development agency working to change the way people think about and deliver aid across Africa).

Thus, a blueprint for a legal, financial and ecological architecture has been designed, which allows a maximum part of the production budgets to be paid to CATPC members, for their artistic work on these productions. CATPC invests this income in its common fund to buy back and restore land. This will be implemented in the following years.

Landscape restoration

Throughout 2019, the test garden was further developed, and a start was made with the implementation of agroforestry. The first cacao bean was harvested, and other crops started yielding their first fruits. In this initial phase, all produce was used to provide food security the local community.

Artworks as engine for the post-plantation

Simultaneously, in 2018 and part of 2019, Human Activities and CATPC carried out a capacity building program and infrastructure improvements. Human Activities and CATPC now have the tools to start artistic productions at a professional level. In 2019, we started the first of the art productions that we have been preparing for.

Preparations for a Global CATPC show

Throughout 2019, there were four lengthy sessions in the new atelier of the White Cube, where CATPC members conceived new sculptures. In February, May, Aug/Sep and December. The workshops were accompanied by Eleonore Hellio (Kongo Astronauts). In August/September, Ghanaian artist Ibrahim Mahama visited the White Cube, to collaborate with CATPC on a sculpture session. They discussed their work and the new sculptures of the artists. The collaboration will be continued by an exhibition of the work of Ibrahim Mahama in the White Cube in 2020.

Until 2019, the original clay sculptures of CATPC were digitally scanned and reproduced in chocolate. Besides its attractive sides - the smell, its deep organic appearance - the material has some disadvantages, most notably its brittleness and its proneness to collapse with temperature change.

We developed a new material by adding refined palm oil to the cacao. It makes the sculptures more rigid, more heat resilient and less inclined to fracture. Also, by replacing cacao fats with palm oil derivatives, we have managed to save over 65% off our direct materials cost. In addition we have eased manufacturing processes.

Furthermore, we worked with a totally different material: gold. A gold-plated version of the sculpture 'How My Grandfather' survived was featured in KOW's exhibition at Art Basel.

Filming and editing

Throughout the year, much time has been invested in the film *White Cube* (editing and filming), as well as in the preparation for the educational program (the digital platform *whitecube.online*, and the webdocs series 'the Plantation and the Museum'). Several shoots were done on location in Lusanga. These works will all be presented in 2020. A lot of time and attention has been invested in the edit of the film *White Cube*.

Publication

With editor Anthony Downey, we finalized the book *Critique in Practice: Renzo Martens' Episode III (Enjoy Poverty)*, a volume of essays about the legacy of the film *Enjoy Poverty*. Contributors explore the work's legacy and how it relates to the politics of representation. Using a range of approaches, the volume reconsiders that portrayal and how the film's reception led Martens to found a long-term program, Human Activities.

The book is launched in 2020.

Visibility: Exhibitions, lectures, press and travel

Residency Europe by CATPC members

In September/October CATPC members Ced'art Tamasala and Matthieu Kasiama visited various European countries in the lengthy residency "the post plantation starts in Amsterdam" that Human Activities organized for them. In Berlin, they presented the work of CATPC and the concept of the Post plantation at a conference organized by KunstWerke Berlin. In the former Stasi building, the STATISTA conference focused on artistic prototypes for civil society. Also the visit to Berlin marked the formal collaboration between our Berlin based gallery KOW and CATPC: where KOW will be representing CATPC directly. CATPC now figures on the KOW list of artists.

In Amsterdam, Ced'art and Matthieu studied the link between museums and plantations. They visited the cacao harbor, the Stedelijk and the Van Abbemuseum (both museums where founded with money extracted from plantations) and met with and discussed with director Charles Esche. They also visited the Rijksmuseum, did a Black Heritage tour, and met and discussed programs with Renny Ramakers (DROOG design), Jacqueline Grandjean (the Oude Kerk), Eveline Raymans (co-founder of Tony Chocolonely), and Pieter van Huystee of Pieter van Huystee Film & TV. A drawing session in Amsterdam Noord's gentrifying garden Tolhuistuin topped of the Amsterdam leg of the residency.

The European residency was concluded by an internship with Swiss film and theatre director Milo Rau, at his film shoot in Matera, Italy. They learned about film production, to prepare for the new film 'The Gospel According to Matthew'. Set on the plantation, Mathieu Kasiama will interpret the role of Jesus, while with a part of production budget, CATPC will buy back land. They will thus reverse the famous quote by Desmond Tutu: "When the missionaries came to Africa, they had the Bible and we had the land. They said 'Let us pray. ... When we opened them, we had the Bible and they had the land'". The internship ended with a performance in the Teatro Argentina, Rome, where Ced'art and Matthieu presented their plan to make a Gospel film and use its profits to buy back land, and Matthieu was in of

baptized, in front of an audience of 500 visitors, as the new Jesus. This event was filmed and formed a key component in the successful application with the film fund for the production of this film in 2021.

National Geographic

During the workshops in February, the White Cube site was visited by U.S. journalist Jocelyn Zuckerman. She wrote an article published by the [National Geographic](#) 'See the Congolese artists igniting a modern arts movement'.

Exhibitions

In 2019, work of CATPC has been shown in the following exhibitions.

- Catastrophe and the Power of Art, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, featuring work of Ai Wei Wei, alongside the work of CATPC member Ced'art Tamasala – October 6, 2018 – January 20, 2019, including a conference, organized by Oxford University with Renzo Martens and Ced'art Tamasala
- Murray Art Museum Albury – February 15 – April 14, 2019
- Errata, Fundació Antoni Tàpies (group exhibition) — October 11, 2019 – January 12, 2020
- KOW (2.1 L1), Art Basel, Switzerland (group exhibition) — June 11 – 16, 2019

3. Organization and finance

Result and financial position.

In 2019 the result was €1.297, with an equity of €4.687 on January 1, and a closing balance of €5.984 on December 31, 2019.

Risk management and strategy for downfall in income

For the benefit of the management board and accountant, the most important measures that Human Activities takes in the field of risk management have been laid down in a separate document. Below are the primary measures:

Regarding risk management: Human Activities has the necessary statutory insurances, including board liability insurance, business liability insurance and travel insurance. The built environment in Lusanga is not insured. We do not have an insurance for absenteeism due to illness. With only temporary and freelance agreements, it has been estimated that such insurance is currently not desirable.

The budget and expenses are monitored by the business manager. Part of the budget has been divided into project budgets that are managed by project leaders, which are also monitored by the business manager.

Regarding risk of downfall in income: Human Activities Foundation is almost entirely dependent on external funding. The diversity of the program, the international impact, the network and status of Human Activities' artistic director, and the innovativeness and challenging aspect of the work, have allowed for a continuous stream of income since 2012, both nationally and internationally, and both publicly and privately. On the other hand, the program's perceived provocative character, the – again – perceived risks and the fact that DRC is on the sanctions list are limiting factors in this. Human Activities has very limited equity. A temporary discontinuity in financing may therefore occur. In this case, Human Activities can switch back to a minimal organization with minimal overhead on very short notice. Any downscaling will, however, be at the expense of activities and continuity. The built environment in Lusanga has minimal maintenance costs, but if there is no income at all, payment for agricultural

activities will stop, at the expense of the investments made. The agricultural activities can be maintained at minimal level at very low expense.

Organization

Renzo Martens — Artistic director

Janke Brands – Business manager

Laurens Otto — Associate curator

Anthony Downey — Editor and curatorial advisor

David van den Berg – Research and development (from September 1, 2019)

Board

- Derk Sauer, chair, from May 1, 2019
- Jacqueline Gerritsma, member, chair until May 1, 2019
- Jan Theo Krol, treasurer
- Boris Hilberdink, member
- Guido van Staveren van Dijk, member
- Remco Polman, member
- Delya Allakhverdova, member from June 1, 2019

Governance Code Culture

Human Activities is in a transition towards a professional organization that is more in line with the scope and impact of Human Activities' work. Where previously the work was largely project-based, the construction of the White Cube in Lusanga and the surrounding land and agriculture have resulted in a continuous operation, requiring a continuous organization.

The board is developing accordingly, and in 2018 the first steps towards the implementation of the Culture Governance Code were taken. The implementation will be completed in 2020. The current governance model is therefore being evaluated and the first self-evaluation will take place. We are developing profiles and a schedule of resignation. Human Activities has an ANBI status since 2017. In 2019, the board met four times.

Human Activities also has a semi dormant advisory board. The board members give advice in their field of expertise in binary contacts. The expertise covers the fields of international fundraising, art, ecology, film, etc. etc.

Advisory Board

- Pierre Bismuth — Artist, Oscar winner of best original screenplay for *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, Brussels
- Charles Esche — Co-founder and co-editor of *Afterall Journal*, co-curator of the 9th International Biennial of Istanbul, co-curator of the 31st Biennial of São Paulo, Executive Director of the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven
- Serge Kakudji — Countertenor, winner of the Prix Jacques Dôme 2008
- Joris Luyendijk — Author, journalist, writer, Amsterdam
- Katrien Pype — Anthropologist, professor at the Department of African Studies and Anthropology at the Leuven University, and co-founder of the Congo Research Network, Brussels
- Theo van Rompay — Deputy Director P.A.R.T.S., Brussels
- Yakubu Yahaya — Policy entrepreneur, team leader at the Facility for Oil Sector Transparency and Reform in Nigeria, Abudja.

4. Partners and stakeholders

Partners

- Cercle d'Art Travailleurs Plantation Congolaise (CATPC)
- Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA)
- Commonland and 4 Returns Partners
- KASK Hogeschool Gent
- Van Abbemuseum
- Barry Callebaut
- Topkapi Film
- Pieter van Huystee Film
- Intifilms
- VPRO
- Galery Fons Welters
- Galery KOW (Berlijn)
- KunstWerke (Berlin)
- NT Gent
- Prins Bernhard Culture Fund
- Sternberg Press
- MIT Press

Funders & Donors

- Mondriaan Fund
- KASK – School of Arts in Gent
- AFK – Amsterdam Fonds voor de Kunst
- Stichting Educatie en Cultuur
- VLIR-UOS
- Stichting DOEN
- Vlaams Ministerie voor Cultuur
- Dutch Film Fund
- ABN Amro Foundation
- Tony Chocolonely Foundation
- Triodos Foundation
- Brave New Works
- Turing Foundation (commitment for 2020)
- Stichting Educatie en Cultuur
- A.M.A. Groot