

THE

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SPINOZA MONUMENT

midnightwalkers
& citysleepers

APRIL 17
TILL
MAY 2

1999

A DOCUMENT

W139
amsterdam



La philosophie théorique de Spinoza est une des tentatives les plus radicales pour constituer une ontologie pure : une seule substance absolument infinie, avec tous les attributs, les êtres n'étant que des manières d'être de cette substance. Mais pourquoi une telle ontologie s'appelle-t-elle Ethique ? Quel rapport y a-t-il entre la grande proposition spéculative et les propositions pratiques qui ont fait le scandale du spinozisme ? L'éthique est la science pratique des manières d'être. C'est une éthologie, non pas une morale. L'opposition de l'éthique avec la morale, le lien des propositions éthiques avec la proposition ontologique, sont l'objet de ce livre qui présente, de ce point de vue, un dictionnaire des principales notions de Spinoza. D'où vient la place très particulière de Spinoza, la façon dont il concerne immédiatement le non-philosophe autant que le philosophe ?

Gilles Deleuze

Why
Spinoza?

Philosophie pratique

«Denkmal-Spinoza»

THOMAS HIRSCHHORN 4.1.1999
Project «Denkmal-Spinoza»

I want to make a Denkmal (memorial/monument) at the Amsterdam St. Annen-straat-neighborhood for the exhibition "Midnight Walkers & City Sleepers." It is a non-permanent monument, about 5 meters long, 2.5 meters wide and 3 meters high! It is a resolute 24 hour public monument. It will be placed in a non-strategic, non-disturbing place, in a not-special-monument site, for example on a parking place for cars. Somewhere on the side, as garbage is placed in the morning before pick-up.

I have in mind, from memory from my trip to Amsterdam, a space along one of the gracht near and beside the prostitute's windows. But we have to decide the final location, together on the spot. The Monument will be made of cardboard covered with grey plastic, the base shaped like a rock emerging from water. On one side a human statue stands holding a book in one hand. It is Spinoza. Integrated in the base of the monument there will be a video and some copies of parts of Spinoza's Book «Ethics». The size of the statue will be a bit larger than human size, circa 2.5 meters. His name will be written out in cut-out letters. There will be two different flags that can represent passion and reason. Some flowers can also be there on the ground lying about, as when a monument is

reactualized on some yearly occasion. All around the monument, there shall be a bench, as protection, and accentuate the sculptural power and precarious aspect of the Denkmal. Like the impression of an appartement buried down with the belongings scattered on the sidewalk beneath.

born in Amsterdam, I like his purely strength, and non-moralist thoughts. I like the organization of thinking in Propositions, demonstrations, corollaries, colie in "Ethics." I like his logic. I like the strong sense of human existence and how humans can think, that I feel when reading his work. ~~It is a full-time thinking. This is the relation, with of course, the birthplace of Spinoza in Amsterdam, to the St. Annenstraat-district: 24 hours sex and money.~~

A Neonlight will be installed on the top of the monument to illuminate the sculpture like a streetlight day and night. The electricity will be provided for the lamp and the TV-Monitor by some window-prostitute place near by. To accentuate connection and dependance. I chose Spinoza for Amsterdam (as the first of a series of Denkmals) that I will do with Peter, Bataille and Gramsci ~~elsewhere~~ Spinoza.



THE SCULPTURE IN THE STUDIO

Why Spinoza?

Il y a là, nous le verrons, une confusion qui compromet l'ontologie tout entière : l'histoire d'une longue erreur où l'on confond le commandement avec quelque chose à comprendre, l'obéissance avec la connaissance elle-même, l'Etre avec un Fiat. La loi, c'est toujours l'instance transcendante qui détermine l'opposition des valeurs Bien-Mal, mais la connaissance, c'est toujours la puissance immanente qui détermine la différence qualitative des modes d'existence bon-mauvais.

Encore faut-il que la conscience elle-même ait une cause. Il arrive à Spinoza de définir le désir comme « l'appétit avec conscience de lui-même ». Mais il précise qu'il s'agit seulement d'une définition nominale du désir, et que la conscience n'ajoute rien à l'appétit (« nous ne tendons pas vers une chose parce que nous la jugeons bonne, mais au contraire nous jugeons qu'elle est bonne parce que nous tendons vers elle »). Il faut donc que nous arrivions à une définition réelle du désir, qui montre du même coup la « cause » par laquelle la conscience est comme creusée dans le processus de l'appétit.

De toute manière, il y a toujours des rapports qui se composent dans leur ordre, conformément aux lois éternelles de la nature entière. Il n'y a pas de Bien ni de Mal, mais il y a du bon et du mauvais. « Par-delà le Bien et le Mal, cela du moins ne veut pas dire : par-delà le bon et le mauvais ».

D'après l'Ethique, au contraire, ce qui est action dans l'âme est aussi nécessairement action dans le corps, ce qui est passion dans le corps est aussi nécessairement

passion dans l'âme ? Nulle éminence d'une série sur l'autre. Que veut donc dire Spinoza quand il nous invite à prendre le corps pour modèle ?

THE SITE FOR THE MONUMENT IN OUDEZIJDS- CHTERBURGWAL IN AMSTERDAM

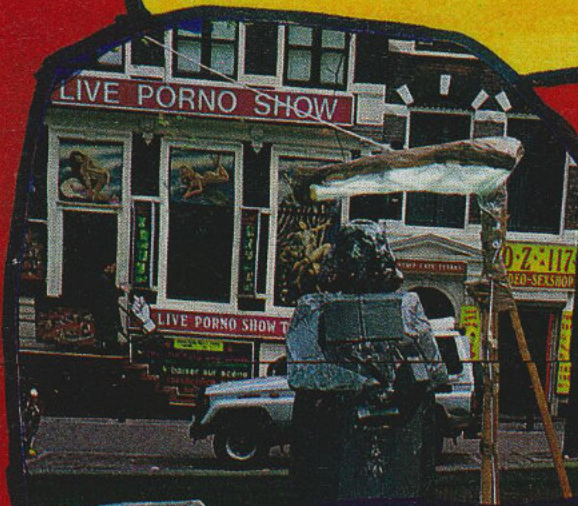


SPINOZA- MONUMENT

THOMAS HIRSCHHORN



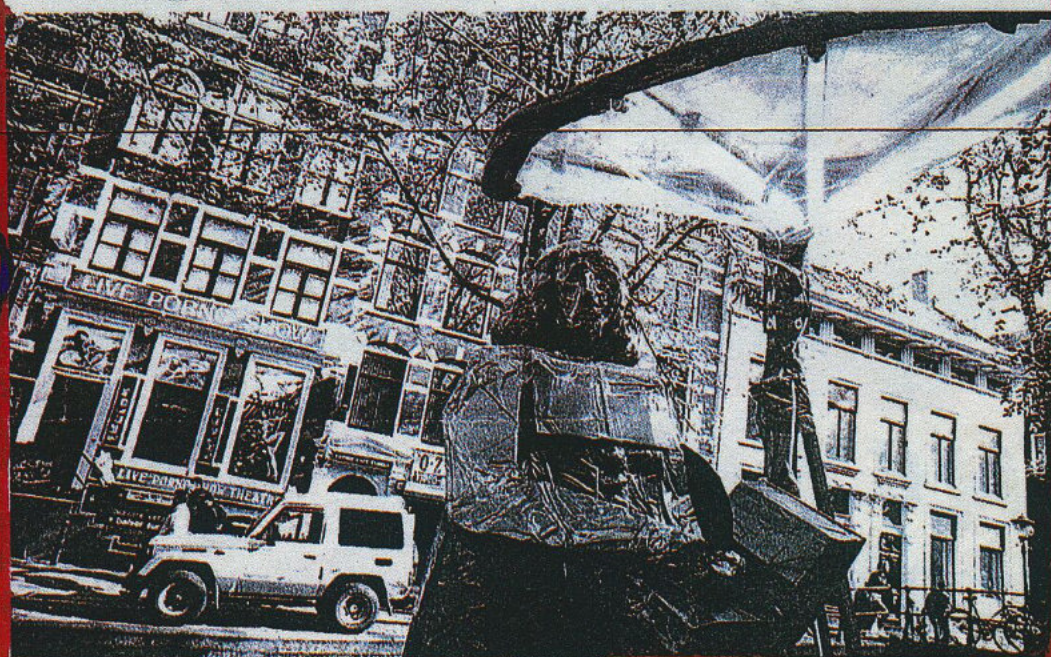
Twintig kunstenaars exposeren op en rond de Amsterdamse Wallen
Agenten spelen even voor pooier



DRY

AND

NIGHT



Bijdrage van Thomas Hirschhorn aan de tentoonstelling op de Wallen in Amsterdam

Spinoza Monument

In Hirschhorn's work we regularly encounter the names of artists, writers and thinkers that he commemorates with a sculpture. In the series we read names such as Thomas Bernard, Ingeborg Bachmann, Otto Freundlich, Rudolf Haizmann. All artists whom the establishment failed to recognise and who were often seen as enemies of society. We can also see Hirschhorn's sculptures – often in the form of an altar, shrine or monument – as monuments to all those artists who dedicated their lives to art, unacknowledged. With the Spinoza Monument, Hirschhorn begins a new series. Not this time of memorials to artists but to philosophers. In other European cities he will create monuments for Gramsci, Bataille and Deleuze. Spinoza's connection with Amsterdam is widely known. Although born in Amsterdam, Spinoza was exiled because of his imputed atheism and was long considered an enemy of the religious communities.

The work of Hirschhorn is shabby to the point of being amusing but supremely effective in its surroundings. The monument looks like a mountain of refuse bags he rescued from the canals. The grey plastic reflects the lights of the surrounding brothels. For Hirschhorn, competition with the visual violence of Amsterdam's sex nightlife presents a challenge. He is striving to make art visible 24 hours a day. Hirschhorn strongly upholds the autonomy of the artwork in which lies the attraction to the power of Spinoza's thought. That an independent system is formed which, when consistently thought through, should logically result in the freedom of the individual.

Text of Catalogue



STATEMENT : « Monuments »

I try to make a new kind of monument. A precarious monument. A monument for a limited time. I make monuments for philosophers because they have something to say today. Philosophers can give the courage to think, the pleasure to reflect. I like the strong sense in philosophical writings, the questions about human existence and how humans can think. I like full-time thinking. I like philosophy, even when I don't understand the third part of their reflexion. I'm interested in non-moralist, logical, political thinking. I'm interested in ethical questions. That's why I chose philosophers to make Monuments. But the monuments for these philosophers are conceived as community commitments in contrast to the altars which are personal commitments. Something beautiful that humans beings are capable of, is thinking, is reflection, the ability to make brains work. Spinoza, Deleuze, Gramsci and Bataille are examples of thinkers who instill confidence in the reflective capacities. They give forces to think. They give forces to get active. I think that reading their books continues to make sense, to give questions, to reflect, to keep beauty vital. The monuments have two parts or even more. The « classical-part », a form, they reproduce the thinker with his features, head or body. This part of the monument is a statue. Then, there is another part of the monument : books, video tapes, statements, biographical documents are there to be consulted. This is a new part of that monument. It is the « information-part ». The « information-part » with his materials respond to « why ». The « classical » statue part responds to « who ». The information part of the monument is a physical place to isolate oneself, to sit down, in a little construction (like in the kiosk project) and to study and get informed about the philosophers work 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This construction with the documentation about the philosophers is a proposition to bring public access to everyone : for those who have never been in contact with philosophy, but also for those who are « professionals », specialists, philosophers or amateurs. I want to give equal access to both. I want to give the possibility to first be in contact with the informations, to read about the work, the philosophy, and then afterwards to see the statue. I want to give a diverse access to the monument. Thus, the monument is not just standing there, but wants to offer the possibility to be informed about its' meaning and furthermore about the thinking of those philosophers. There is an active and a passive part. The plastic aspect of the monument is precarious : cardboard, wood, tape, garbage bag covering, neons. It means : the monument will not stay here for eternity. This monument does not come from above. It will not intimidate. It is made through admiration, it comes from below. In this way, it shows its' precariousness and its' limitation in time. It is enforcing the precarious aspect of the monument. It conveys the idea that the monument will disappear, but what shall remain are the thoughts and reflections. What will stay is the activity of reflection.

T.H.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

The concept for *Midnight Walkers and City Sleepers* was born when, wandering through the Red Light District with artist Aldert Mantje I was struck by the district's charge and dynamism. We remembered when the Winston Hotel in the Warmoesstraat was famous as Amsterdam's place of entertainment for its artistic community – as a place where artists, whores, drug dealers, police and locals could mix freely. Which only illustrates just how unique the character of this part of the city really is. Local and international at the same time, a multi-ethnic, heterogeneous neighbourhood where individuals of all social layers work and live. In its complex social structure, this hybrid system in the Red Light District where economic interests in sex, the drugs industry, living, tolerance and moral issues interweave, has parallels with the world of contemporary art.

In conversations with artists, these aspects proved a challenging and exciting inspiration for dialogues and interventions. The Red Light District represents society in microcosm. Everything that manifests itself globally is present here within a few square miles. Which is why this part of Amsterdam not only exerts magnetism nationally but internationally, too. Another aspect typical of the social climate in a moral sense is the politics of tolerance: a liberal attitude that accepts things prohibited by law.

The exhibition *Midnight Walkers and City Sleepers* was realised by the efforts of three curators: Maria Hlavajova, Director of Soros Center for Contemporary Arts in Bratislava, Theo Tegelaers (ex director of W139) and myself, both freelance curators in Amsterdam. Our collaboration was particularly fruitful in the selection of artists: we combined three different networks. Together we defined the process in which the artists would have a great deal of freedom in the approach, in the choice of specific location and the creation of a context for further investigation. We didn't primarily choose artists who work on the basis of process and intervention strategies but concentrated also on those capable of sharing their social relational scope with the outside world.

From the outset, we determined that *Midnight Walkers and City Sleepers* would definitely not be an 'art route' but an urban laboratory in which artists act as intermediary between the public, the urban space and the social context. In collaboration with the participating artists, who all stayed in the area for varying durations, we chose angles of approach, made contacts, analysed the structures of the neighbourhood and examined various options before a realisable project was actually able to gain shape. People like Joep de Groot (police officer in the Warmoesstraat station) and Frans Verlinden (owner of the Winston Hotel) were indispensable in helping us create the local support we needed.

We aimed to bring about a degree of interaction between the artists and residents and hoped that this communication – however minimal – would generate connections and kinship by eliminating restrictive borders and distances. When artists can act as intermediaries between the conflicting values and norms on the one hand and the poetry manifest in this neighbourhood on the other, the project will have contributed to the area's social equilibrium.

The question is how the public, the random passers-by and the tourists who visit this area in droves, will react to the artworks. Their attention will probably be drawn to things they wouldn't otherwise be confronted with. Perhaps it will give them food for thought – making them think twice. In this sense, the project can be seen as a large-scale experiment in the hope of showing visitors another artistic reality where the emphasis lies on the process of the work and its interactive character. The viewer is compelled to adopt a standpoint, to become involved, to be swept away.

Midnight Walkers and City Sleepers is at its best at night, when it bursts into life beneath the gaze of the thousands trawling the Red Light District.

Hedwig Fijen



THE DETAILS

©6



The electricity was given by the Sexshop in front of the Monument

Flags



Light



Sculpture

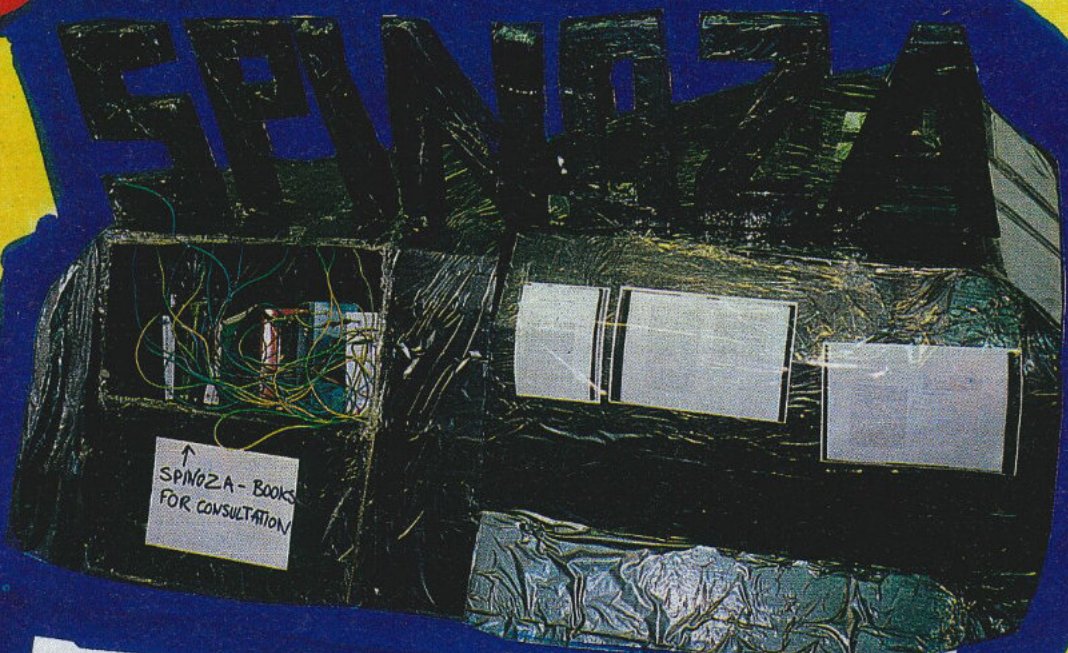
Flowers



DEFINITIONS OF THE EMOTIONS¹²⁷
I. Desire (*cupiditas*) is the very essence of man in so far as it is conceived as determined to do something by some given modification of itself.
II. Pleasure (*letitia*) is man's transition from a less state of perfection to a greater.

Texts

Name



Books by and about Spinoza

Texts

ABHANDLUNG ÜBER DIE VERBESSERUNG DES VERSTANDES

1. Das Ziel der Untersuchung

THANK YOU!

TO SPINOZA



Integrated video

Paris, 23.4.1999

Zurück aus Amsterdam wo ich das «Spinoza-Monument» gemacht habe hier ein kurzer Bericht darüber: Ich habe dieses Ausstellungsprojekt akzeptiert aus drei Gründen: 1. Die Organisatoren sind Personen die tatsächlich in diesem Quartier [dem Red Light-District] arbeiten und Wohnen und die also wirklich wollten, dass die Künstler sich mit diesem Umfeld und ~~dem~~ öffentlichen Raum beschäftigen. 2. Amsterdam ist eine der sehr wenigen Europäischen Städte, wo es noch ein wirklich lebendiges Zentrum gibt, im Zentrum der Stadt. Das heisst wo das Stadtzentrum noch kein Shoppingzentrum geworden ist. (Der Red Light-District ist ein Quartier wo Personen wohnen arbeiten wo es Hotels, Bars, Restaurants hat, wo es Fussgänger und Autos hat. 3. Ich wollte bewusst auch an diese Ausstellungen teilnehmen obwohl es nicht nur „grosse Fische“ dabei hat, ich meine, ich möchte auch weiterhin an Ausstellungen teilnehmen wo auch jüngere und unbekanntere Künstler dabei sind. Wo nicht nur „Namedropping“ gemacht wird! Diese drei Gründe waren für mich ausschlaggebend weshalb ich mit Freude und Energie ein neues Projekt entwickelt habe, aus dem vielleicht eine kleine Serie wird. (Spinoza, Gramsci, Deleuze Bataille oder andere und in Frieden)

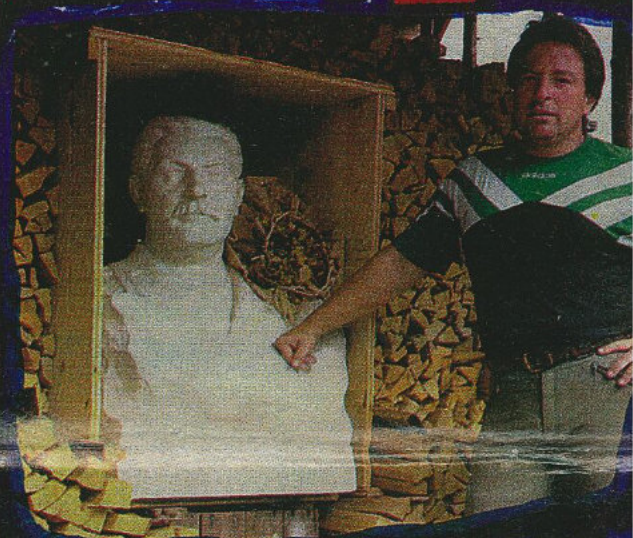
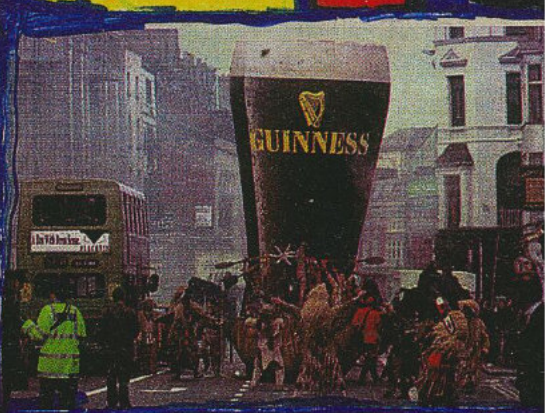
Ich bin nun auch einverstanden ~~mit~~ mit meiner Arbeit, da ich denke, dass sie ~~bestehen~~ bestehen kann. Ich war überrascht von der Einfachheit der Umsetzung meines Projekts, einmal am Ort. Von der kooperativen Zusammenarbeit mit dem Sexshop-Betreiber der mir die Elektrizität geliehen hat. Ich konnte während der 2-tägigen Aufbauphase ~~mir~~ einen, zwar aus kritischer Distanz kommenden Respekt der dort auf und an der Strasse arbeitenden Personen spüren. Ich meine damit nicht etwa enthusiastische Reaktion, vielmehr begleitendes,

vielleicht auch kopfschüttelndes Begleiten. Ich war überrascht wie bekannt doch Spinoza ist. Die Wahl dieser Philosophen, obwohl Fragen aufwerfend, war ~~klar~~ und transparent für die Betrachter. Ich diskutierte mit der Polizei, mit Martin von den „Hells Angels“ und mit einigen Anwohnern. Ich denke das ist O.K. so und gehört dazu und ist normal wenn man als Künstler eine Arbeit im öffentlichen Raum macht. Ich denke das ist, wenn auch nicht immer sehr angenehm, bei Vorbeikommen, sprücheklopfenden Männergruppen zum Beispiel das was zur Arbeit gehört und was es auszuhalten gilt, wenn man als Künstler davon ausgeht dass man zuerst ~~etwas~~ etwas geben muss. Ich will das, ich kann das, ich denke das ist ein künstlerisches Engagement.



Was mich an der Veranstaltung «Midnight Walkers & City Sleepers»
~~aber~~ wirklich ~~enttäuscht~~ ^(von insgesamt 20) enttäuscht hat war, dass abgesehen
 von vielleicht 2, vielleicht 3 Arbeiten die ich bezüglich ihrer
 Konzeption und Mitteilung aber auch ihrer Bezugnehmung zum
 öffentlichen Raum und zum spezifischen Quartier sehr gut fand,
 das Ausgestellte entweder ohne Interesse ~~war~~ war oder
 dann ihre Konfrontation mit dem Quartier so kläglich und
 minimal ausgefallen ist, dass ich nur stöhnen konnte! Wenn
 es darum geht, dass öffentlicher Raum, ein Zimmer ist in einem
 Hotel ~~mit~~ im Quartier wo dann auch noch die Künstler wohnen,
 wenn öffentlicher Raum ~~aufgehängt~~ Plakate im Quartier
 an Aussenmauern aufzukleben oder Photos in Läden des Quartiers
 an die Scheibe zu hängen, dann denke ich mangelt es sehr
 an Auseinandersetzung mit ~~der~~ Problematik und schliesslich
 Wird ein Eigengol gesossen denn wenn ich ~~in die Strasse~~
~~gehen will~~ ~~was~~ ~~ich~~ ~~will~~ wirklich will dass Kunst sich einer-
 seits an die Interessierten und Informierten richtet und richten muss
 Und gleichzeitig an die Nicht-interessierten und Nicht-informierten
 so können solche halbherzigen und schwachen Projekte
 nur ~~Ausschliessen~~, statt Einbeziehen, sie implodieren ^{anstatt}
 zu explodieren. Thomas Hirschhorn

OTHER MONUMENTS



A PUBLIC INTERVENTION

