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*Wind sets space in motion, makes time audible.*  
— Marinus Boezem

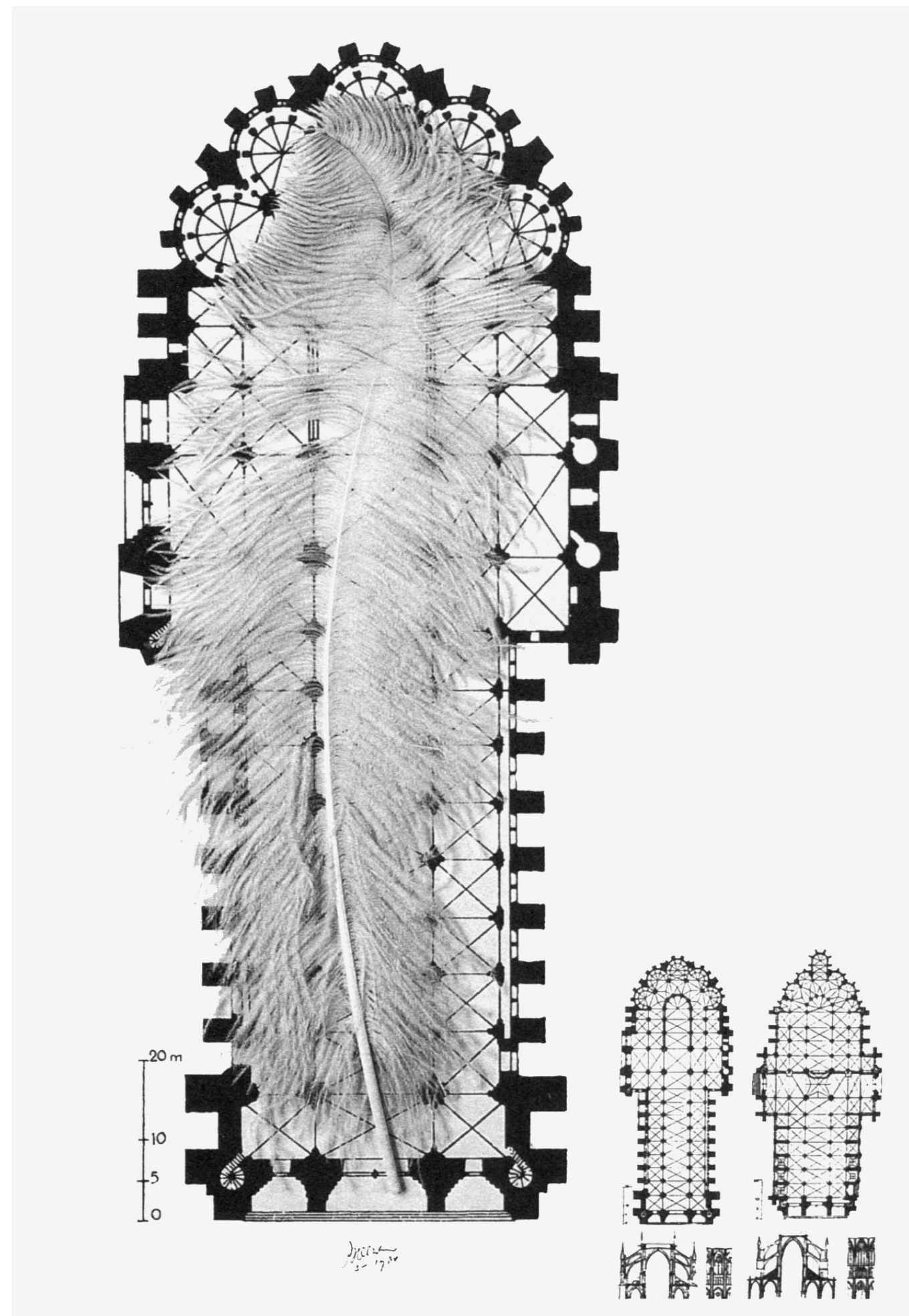
In the winter of 2016/2017, Marinus Boezem realized a major exhibition in the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam that revealed the common theme in his oeuvre.

Artist Marinus Boezem is fascinated by Gothic architecture. For one version of his **Cathedral** (1994), set on the island of Neeltje Jans in the southern Dutch province of Zeeland, he outlined the plan of Reims Cathedral using blocks of dark basalt with white connecting lines to represent the vaulting. The then Queen Beatrix commissioned him to realize another **Cathedral** (1999), a monumental work of bronze tree-trunks, at Het Loo Palace in Apeldoorn. But Boezem's most famous work is without doubt his **Gothic Growing Project** (1978–1987) in the polder landscape near Almere, which is composed of 178 Italian poplars and is popularly known as **The Green Cathedral**.

Boezem's fascination with the Gothic style is based on the notion that a cathedral plan is the hallmark of a concept, shaped by shared ideas and communal efforts. Gothic architecture has since been degraded into an icon as well as a cliché of European culture. According to Boezem this could discourage the artist—how can something new be added to such majestic heritage? How, as an artist, can you avoid such a mighty tradition?

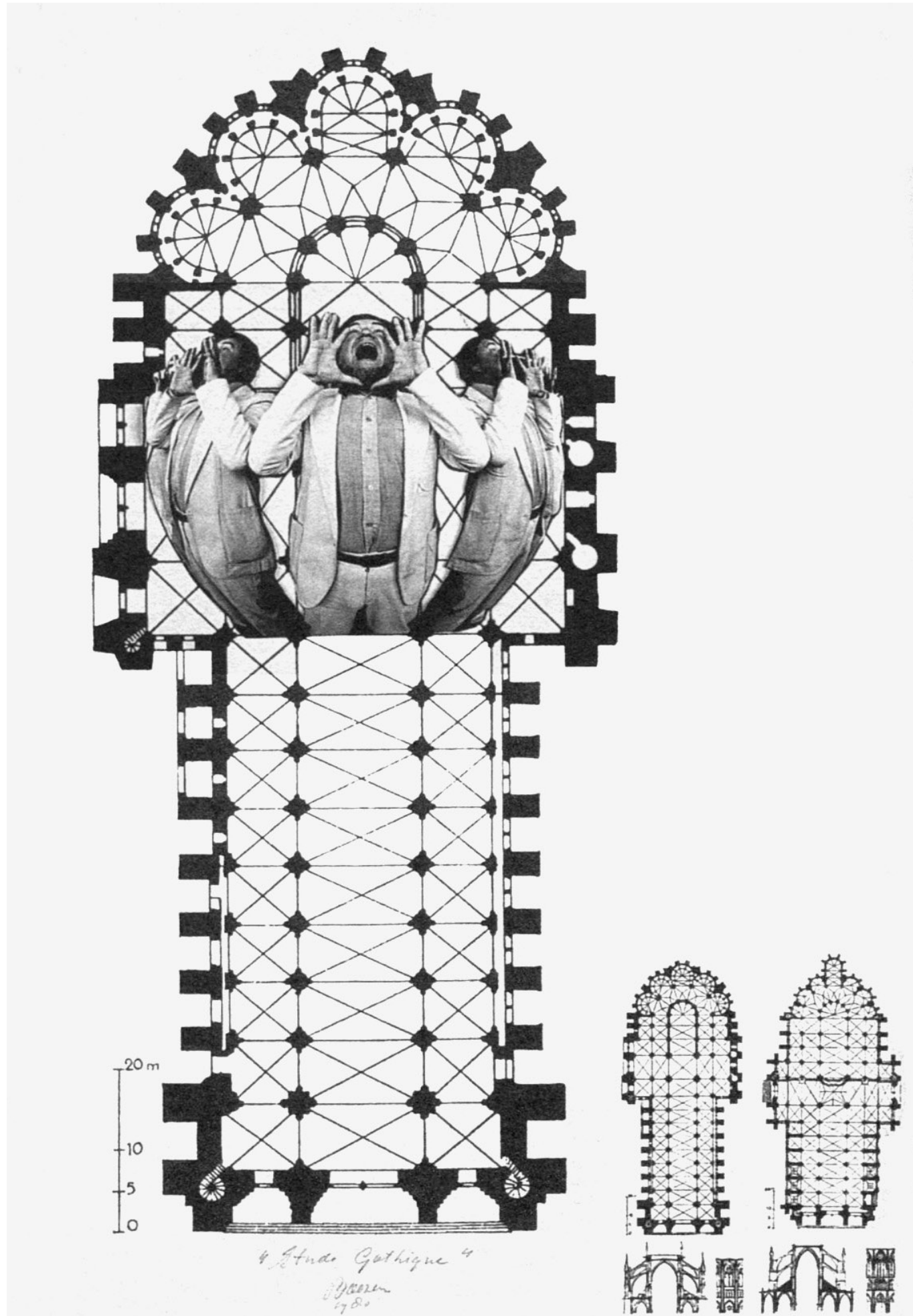
Boezem opts for the repetition of clichés, but uses surprising materials, such as wind, light or feathers. For him, with the cathedral as its literal zenith, the Gothic is a metaphor for humankind's longing for transcendence: the desire to ascend and leave behind all that is earthly.



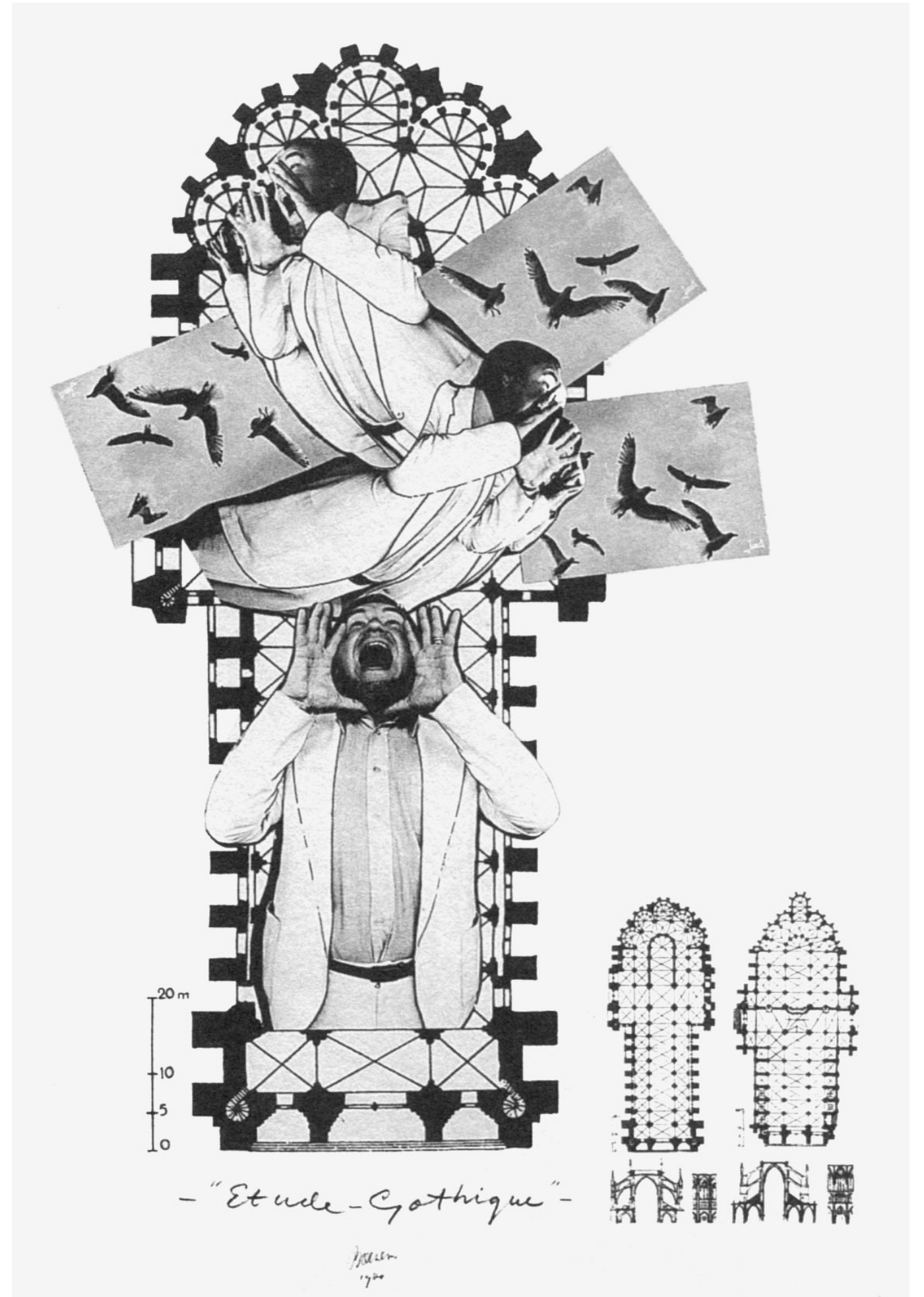


Étude gothique 1980





Étude gothique 1980



Étude gothique 1980





Étude gothique 1980



Étude gothique 1980



## A GOTHIC CATHEDRAL

Jacqueline Grandjean  
artistic director, Oude Kerk

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*A Gothic cathedral is man's ultimate representation of space. A cathedral allows you to escape everyday reality for a moment. Domes, for example, were called the mirrors of heaven in the Middle Ages.*  
— Marinus Boezem

The transparency and immaterial character of immense cathedral constructions are not only interesting to historians and architects. Gothic churches have become popular on a global scale. As a result, they are also in danger of being reduced to a cliché. The miniature replicas of Cologne Cathedral and Notre Dame de Paris that are stereotypical souvenirs sold on every street corner in these touristic hotspots bear witness to this. The shape of the church building is recurrent in the oeuvre of Marinus Boezem. To him, the floor plan of a cathedral represents a logo, a pictogram that is an abstraction of the aforementioned Gothic cliché. He sees Gothic architecture, with the cathedral as its apex, as a metaphor for the human desire for spirituality and the wish to ascend to the divine and leave Earth behind. He believes that this longing is universal and of all ages.

Envisioning and building a cathedral took a collective effort. During the Middle Ages, centuries would pass ere such immense structures were completed. The time, energy and money invested in them equalled the value that was attached to monuments for divine worship. The earliest citizens of Amsterdam turned an idea into a physical building that would later be known as the Oude Kerk and, much later still, be listed as a monument. To Marinus Boezem, the idea and its execution represent two different forces. With regard to his work *Op Losse Schroeven* (Stedelijk Museum, 1969), which featured bed linen hanging from the windows snapping in the wind, he even indicated that he did not want to be part of the performance and would rather leave the practical side of things to the museum staff.

Observers and their perspectives, panoramas and views are involved in the idea of the work from the outset. They are complicit in the visualization of the idea. In this sense Boezem's work, like the Gothic church, embodies both the representation of the idea and the collective effort implicit in the result.

On the principle that art ought to be for and by everyone, Boezem lectured architecture at, among other places, Delft University of Technology and he initiated the annual artist platform *Forum*, a meeting place for artists from different disciplines and their audiences. Boezem liked to create total works of art rather than single museum pieces and involved not only the public, fellow artists and other disciplines in his work, but allowed the context in as well. Rather than being an isolated object that exists independently of art and the world around it, art gains significance through its context, its history and the consideration of its audience. In this sense, the work of Marinus Boezem is by definition well-matched with the expressive space of the Oude Kerk.

His work often reveals structures that transcend human standards even though they are structures that are human-made. Boezem often takes an aerial view of the floor plan of a cathedral. In the perfor-

75–81 mance *l'Uomo Volante* (Vleeshal Middelburg, 1979) Boezem, dressed in a kind of space suit with a bird helmet, tightens a rope to balance a mirror. The moment physical endurance fails, the mirrors smashes to smithereens on the floor. In the Vleeshal the splinters were left on the floor, as silent witnesses of the act, the Gothic vault reflecting in the fragments. This was why the performance took place in the Vleeshal in the first place: Boezem deliberately selected it for its Gothic architecture because the environment represents the tradition to which the work relates. It is possible to experience the creation of something new with the awareness that numerous works have preceded it as either a great cultural heritage or as a dominant heritage, and neither can be avoided. Boezem's strategy includes both confrontation *and* teamwork.

The Gothic architecture of the Oude Kerk has a clearly organic origin and bears a close relation to the cosmos. However, Boezem does not attribute religious meaning to his fascination for Gothic buildings, but considers them a point of reference in a culture and a guideline for (collective) human action. After all, they portray the desire to defy gravity and ascend.

At a time when art is once again trying to relate to society, citizens and observers, the work of Boezem is increasingly relevant. A new generation of artists currently faces the challenge of reintroducing art in a multiform and populist Europe. Perhaps this is one of the reasons that Marinus Boezem's work is again being noticed and displayed by young artists and curators. What is certain is that they can learn from this Nestor of conceptual art, because he did not want to make unworldly, antisocial or hermetic art. In the Netherlands, he shared his views about the imagination of ideas with Ger van Elk (1941–2013), Jan Dibbets (1941) and Wim T. Schippers (1942).

What makes Marinus Boezem's work topical in 2016 is its inspiring 1960s mentality and the associated liberation, something young artists look for and build on whether they are aware of it or not. The foundation for artistic freedom was laid by conceptual or idea art in the time of Boezem. The wish to put traditions into perspective was a major motive for the conceptual artists of that day, one that was gratefully appropriated by the generations that followed. However, for the youngest generation this is no longer a matter of course; they look for tradition in concepts that were conceived in the 1960s. Artists such as Raphaël Rozendaal, Bernardo Ortiz, gerlach en koop and Saskia Noor van Imhoff (to name but a few) are the ones to now revisit these concepts.

♦

*The goal of this project is to reveal, now that the end of my life is near, the recurring theme throughout my work. I want to show what I've been looking for all my life.*  
— Marinus Boezem, 2016

The combination of space (the architecture of the Oude Kerk) and content (its heritage value) provides a fitting framework for Marinus Boezem's work.

In Boezem's case, the relationship with the Oude Kerk has a double meaning. On the one hand, the site-specific qualities of the works relate to the Oude Kerk. On the other, Boezem's leitmotif and the fact that the cathedral has been a structuring element in the artist's oeuvre for many years is also important.

The church, or rather the cathedral, has been the foundation of Boezem's work for decades and he processed it using different techniques and contexts. Its relationship with history, architecture, tradition and light are important aspects, but its relationship with the mysterious and with the collective effort that the building of such overwhelmingly monumental structures required play a part as well.

Marinus Boezem is also fascinated by the fact that the Oude Kerk keeps numerous secrets and myths that have not been revealed to this very day, such as the existence of an afterlife, a heaven and a god. From his perspective, the secret can also be seen as a metaphor for art. After all, he cannot think of a single reason why art is experienced as something inexplicable, almost mythical.

A topic that often plays a part in the work of Boezem is related to his attempt to look at the world from another angle. That is why the exhibition centred on the idea of verticality. It provided a completely new experience of the monumental spaces of the church and presented a bird's-eye view of its architecture, one in which we as visitors appeared and disappeared.

# MARINUS BOEZEM

Lorenzo Benedetti

There is something exceptional about the solo exhibition by Marinus Boezem at the Oude Kerk. Not only does it present the largest number of new works by this Dutch conceptual artist for many years, but the exhibition's location is a focal element in his oeuvre: the oldest Gothic church in Amsterdam. This unique moment allows us to take an atemporal position in our perspective on Boezem's oeuvre and reinterpret his historical works through the prism of his most recent projects. It also allows us to gain an understanding of the church as an ahistorical space where it is easy to question whether something can be considered as merely contemporary. In this context we can readily perceive Boezem's efforts to escape a simple form of the present in order to discover a larger temporal dimension. In this exhibition, the timeless character that the artist has always carried with him is underscored by a new body of work that is intended to investigate the dimensions, condition and perception of an exhibition space.

In Italian the word *tempo* has three different meanings: time as a continuum of moments, the rhythmical speed of music and a weather report. All three elements are central in the substantial oeuvre that Marinus Boezem has realized over six decades. Time is a key element in the study of the specific condition of the contemporary. For Boezem the contemporary involves an exploration of the concept of timelessness, searching for an alternative sphere in which time can be frozen in an atemporal condition, much like the interior of a Romanesque or Gothic structure.

The flow of time in natural conditions is evident in a work such as Boezem's famous **The Green Cathedral**, conceived in 1978 and planted near Almere in 1987. Here he outlined the floor plan of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame de Reims using 178 Lombardy poplar trees that continue to grow today, but could be blown over by the wind in the not-so-distant future. As a form of biological archaeology, the cathedral's symmetric form will eventually lose its definition for ever. The weather is another central element in Boezem's work, not only with reference to the Beaufort scale, which will be represented in the show, but also in the way it compels us to consider the space and its condition, which are key considerations in his work.

22–29 Boezem's **Into the Air** (2016) takes centre stage in the exhibition and involves a temporary lift that is normally found on construction sites to carry visitors to the top of the church. It is a signature piece for an artist who for decades has been searching for new perspectives on our perception of reality. There is a strong connection with the viewpoint of a painter, who often imagines an impossible perspective, an invented angle. This exercise reminds one of the sensation of standing in front of a painting by Pieter Saenredam, a genius artist of the Dutch Golden Age. His renowned depictions of churches feature small human figures in the midst of overawing architecture. In paintings by Saenredam we share in a special perspective on the space that is related to specific viewpoints: the artist's perspective reveals the architecture's majesty.

Like Saenredam, Boezem believes that buildings have a personality, a specific character. The two artists share a strong affinity with architecture, a precise relationship with spaces and the ability to translate those into a different experience.

The immediacy of Saenredam's church views are reflecting in the directness of the experience Boezem offers visitors in a particular space. A different perspective from above, as opposed to the Golden Age painter's ground-level viewpoint. But the element that conjoins them is the relationship between the space and the scale of the people within. Elevation transforms the space. There exists a strong link between this work and the numerous floor plans the artist has created in several guises. The high viewpoint allows us to grasp the building's architectural structure at once, thanks to the *prospettiva a volo d'uccello* (bird's-eye perspective), an essential part of Renaissance art's understanding of landscape and its representation.

If time is an essential factor in Boezem's oeuvre, it's probably indicated by his frequent use of performance. **Gothic Gestures** (2016) is such a work-in-progress, involving people who live in the vicinity of the Oude Kerk in embroidering the floor plan of the building. Time, craftsmanship, cooperation, popular and high culture, an everyday object and monumentality are crystallized in this work: a very simple gesture leading to ultimate magnificence.

As he looks for a translation of abstract elements into concrete forms, Boezem finds a means of incorporating a certain coherence into his artistic idiom. In **Progetto Spaziale** (1970/2016), the artist positions two monitors that convey the abstract form of the sky. Like Boezem's persistent use of the 'find' as a basic material, the white-noise effect is contemporary: a sound and a form to reveal the invisible. This endeavour is evident in the work **Windschaal** (Wind Scale) (1968) and is presented in a new way in the context of the Oude Kerk.

Sounds are always a central element in the work of Marinus Boezem, merging the surrounding space with a specific time. Apart from **Progetto Spaziale** there are two sound works in the exhibition. One is part of **Meteorieten** (Meteorites) (2016), in which the sound of breaking glass reverberates around the Oude Kerk's monumental space. Randomly, the work evokes the violence of the falling elements, broken mirrors scattered in different places on the floor of the building. The sound refers to the precise moment when the mirrors were smashed, repeating like an echo of time undefined. In this sense, Boezem's oeuvre addresses French philosopher Gilles Deleuze's definition of the atemporal dimension of art.

68–69 The second sound work **Transformation** (2016) encompasses the noise of **The Green Cathedral**, Boezem's renowned land art project. This audio recording of 178 trees that were planted in the same outline as Reims Cathedral iterates two major themes in Boezem's work: the cathedral and the wind. The sound of architecture activated by wind is one of Boezem's realms of exploration.

32–37 Time and architecture are again brought together in **Labyrinth** (2016), the adaptation of an older work

using strips of textile to create a spiral that can be entered by visitors. The semi-transparent structure helps to experience time: as you are able to see the outside and the inside, they gradually become blurred, like an image lost in time. The labyrinth thus becomes a metaphor for time and architecture, and a device to hide and reveal reality in a different way. It serves as a form to create an easy complexity, like an inherent contradiction closely aligned with artistic practice itself.



### Windschaal (Wind Scale) 1968

The Beaufort Scale (1874) is used to measure wind speeds, from 0 (windless) to 12 (hurricane force). Marinus Boezem sent this stencil print with the weather chart for 26 September 1968 to representatives of the art scene, signing it: 'Boezem, Medium ter bevordering van hernieuwde ervaringen'—'Boezem. Medium for stimulating renewed experiences.' The weather report as a work of art was something that caused a big furore. Boezem thought that the idea or concept behind his art was more important than its execution! The wind scale was shown as a component of **Weather Drawings in the Op losse schroeven / Square Pegs in Round Holes** exhibition at Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum in 1969. It presented an intangible phenomenon—the weather—as conceptual art for the first time. Here in the Oude Kerk the wind scale is a projection on the wall of the Holy Sepulchre.



## WINDSCHAAL

Gemiddelde windsnelheid op 10 m hoogte boven vlak terrein		Benaming	Indicatie
m/sec 0	km/h < 1	Stil	Stil; rook stijgt recht of bijna recht omhoog.
0 - 3	1 - 11	Zwakke wind	Windrichting goed herkenbaar aan rookpluimen, wind begint merkbaar te worden in het gelaat; bladeren beginnen te ritselen en windvanen kunnen gaan bewegen.
3 - 8	11 - 28	Matige wind	Bladeren en twijgen zijn voortdurend in beweging, kleine takken beginnen te bewegen. Stof en papier beginnen van de grond op te dwarrelen.
8 - 11	28 - 38	Vrij krachtige wind	Kleine bebladerde takken maken zwaaiende bewegingen; er vormen zich gekuifde golven op meren en kanalen.
11 - 14	38 - 50	Krachtige wind	Grote takken bewegen; men hoort de wind in de telegraafdraden fluiten; parapluies kunnen slechts met moeite worden vastgehouden.
14 - 17	50 - 61	Harde wind	Gehele bomen bewegen; de wind is hinderlijk, wanneer men er tegen in loopt.
17 - 20	61 - 72	Stormachtige wind	Twijgen breken af; het voortgaan wordt belemmerd.
20 - 24	72 - 86	Storm	Veroorzaakt lichte schade aan gebouwen (schoorsteenkappen en dakpannen worden afgerukt).
24 - 28	86 - 101	Zware storm	Ontwortelde bomen; aanzienlijke schade aan gebouwen enz. (komt op land zelden voor).
28 - 32	101 - 115	Zeer zware storm	Veroorzaakt uitgebreide schade (komt op land zeer zelden voor).
> 32	> 115	Orkaan	

*Boelen*







Bedding Out the Windows of the Stedelijk Museum 1969



### Into the Air 2016

In the Oude Kerk the construction lift is used for tasks such as dismantling the organ. The lift currently stands in the 'crossing', the square central space in the church's plan. A liftboy will accompany you to a height of 15 metres, where Marinus Boezem has left a personal message on a round mirror. The lift slowly ascends the vertical line of the Gothic church building. The people below become small and insignificant, the perspective of the interior constantly changes. Propelled by mechanical forces, you briefly seem to soar above your earthly existence. That yearning is human and of all time.

















**GOD BLESS YOU**



de rode zee, egypte

Nu strekte Moses zijn hand uit over de zee. En Jaweh wierp de zee terug door een sterke oostenwind, die de hele nacht bleef waaien. Hij maakte de zee tot droog land; want de wateren waren in tweeën gespleten.

**BOEZEM 1970**

Boezem 1971



### Labyrinth 2016

In the Lady Chapel, metres-long white swathes of cloth form a labyrinth. Step into it and disappear amid semi-transparent lengths of cloth, wafting gently in the breeze of rotating fans. These lengths of cloth are draped around one of the thickest columns in the chapel and camouflages part of the architecture, which sometimes reappears in surprising ways. In this work Boezem creates a natural passage through space and time. The lengths of cloth mean that you have no option but to end up at the column, the bearer of European culture. You could circle around it interminably, because this labyrinth is without end.







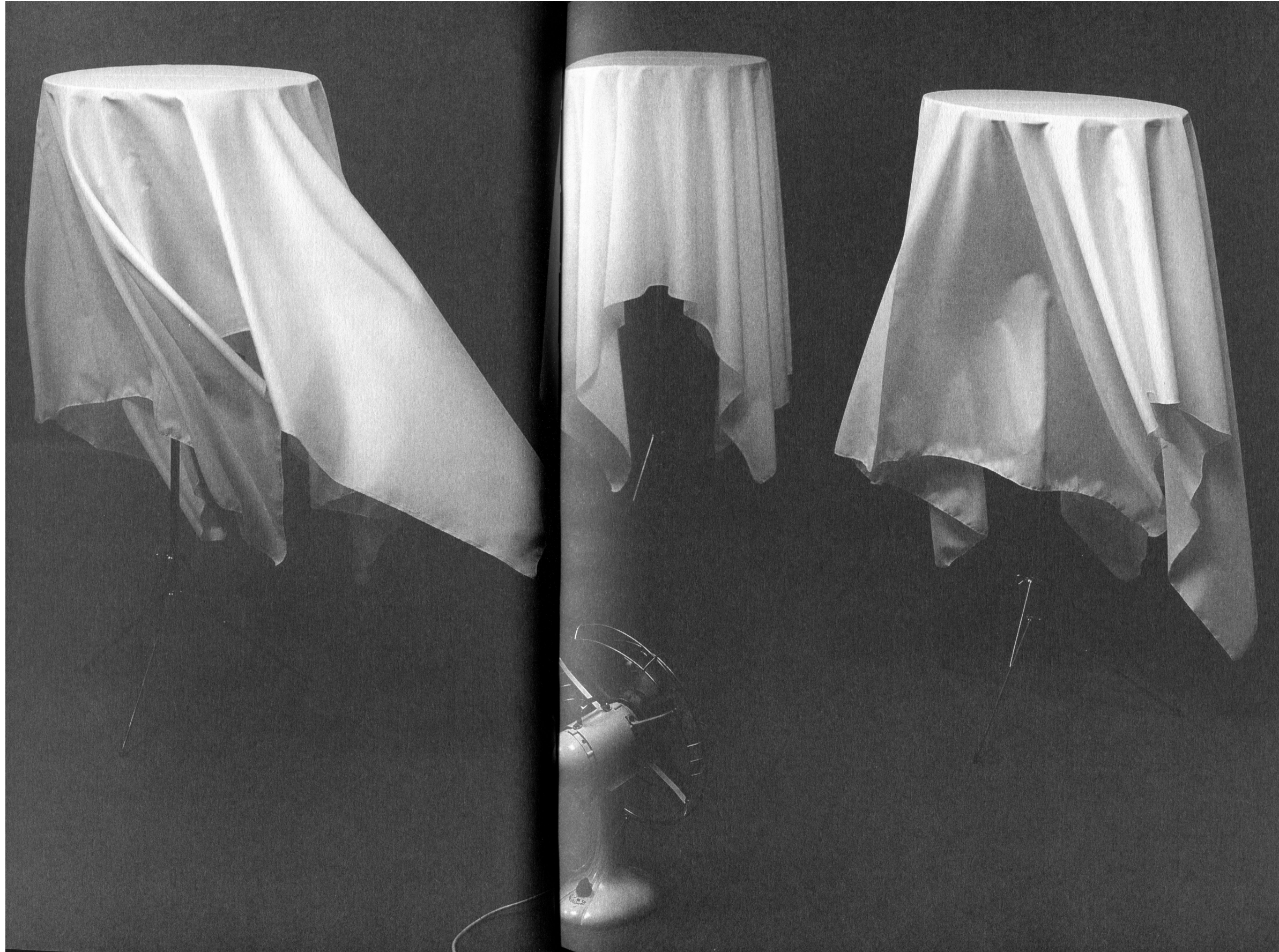












Wind-tafel 1968





Signing an Itho-Şan 1965

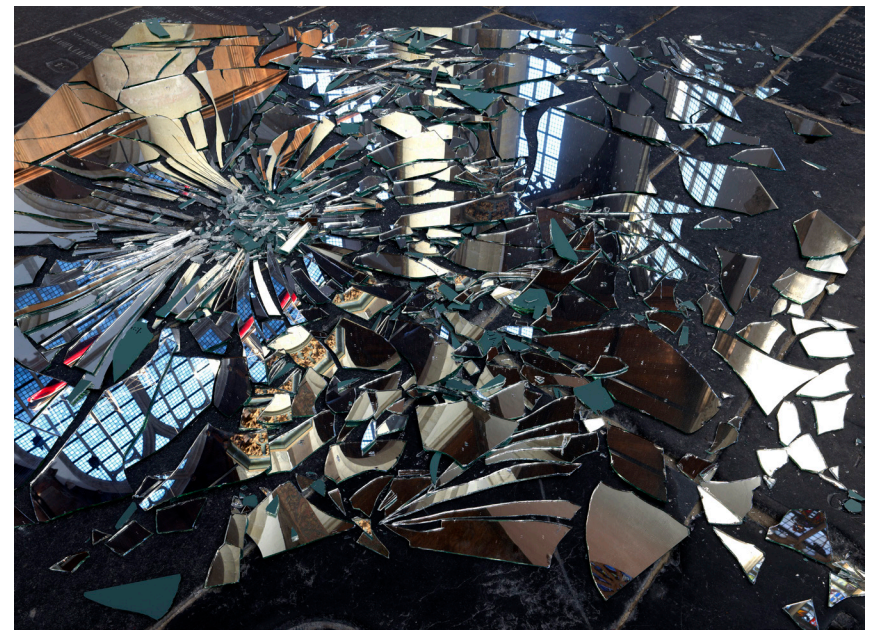
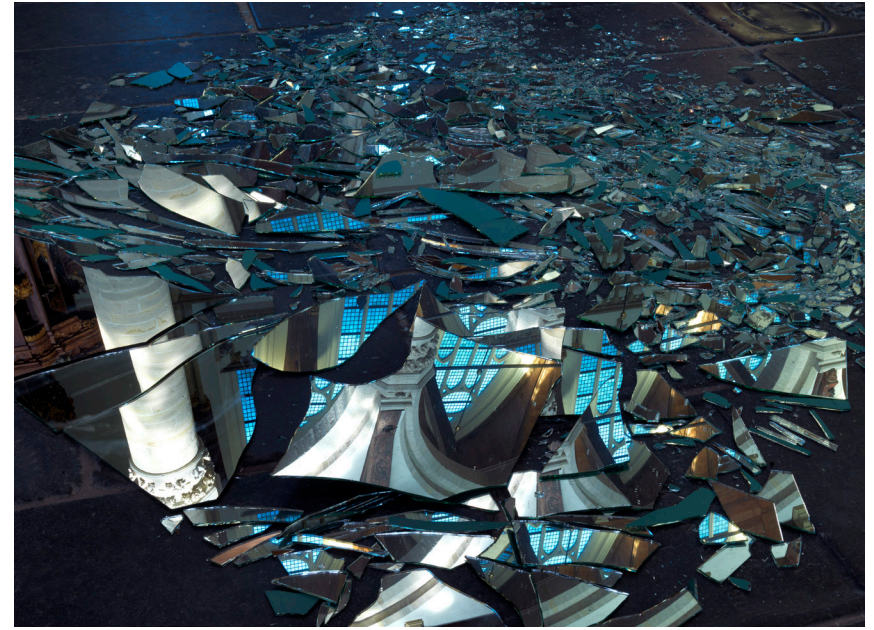
**Metorieten (Meteorites) 2016**

Like falling stars from a forgotten universe, there are broken mirrors lying at various spots in the church. Might the shards be remnants of a performance that took place here? As in Boezem's performance work *L'Uomo Volante* (The Flying Man, 1979), they reflect a Medieval vaulted ceiling, and thus indirectly reflect the fragmented history of the Oude Kerk itself. Mirrors are a recurring theme in Boezem's oeuvre, which extends over six decades. The mirror represents time and space and creates the illusion of multiplication.





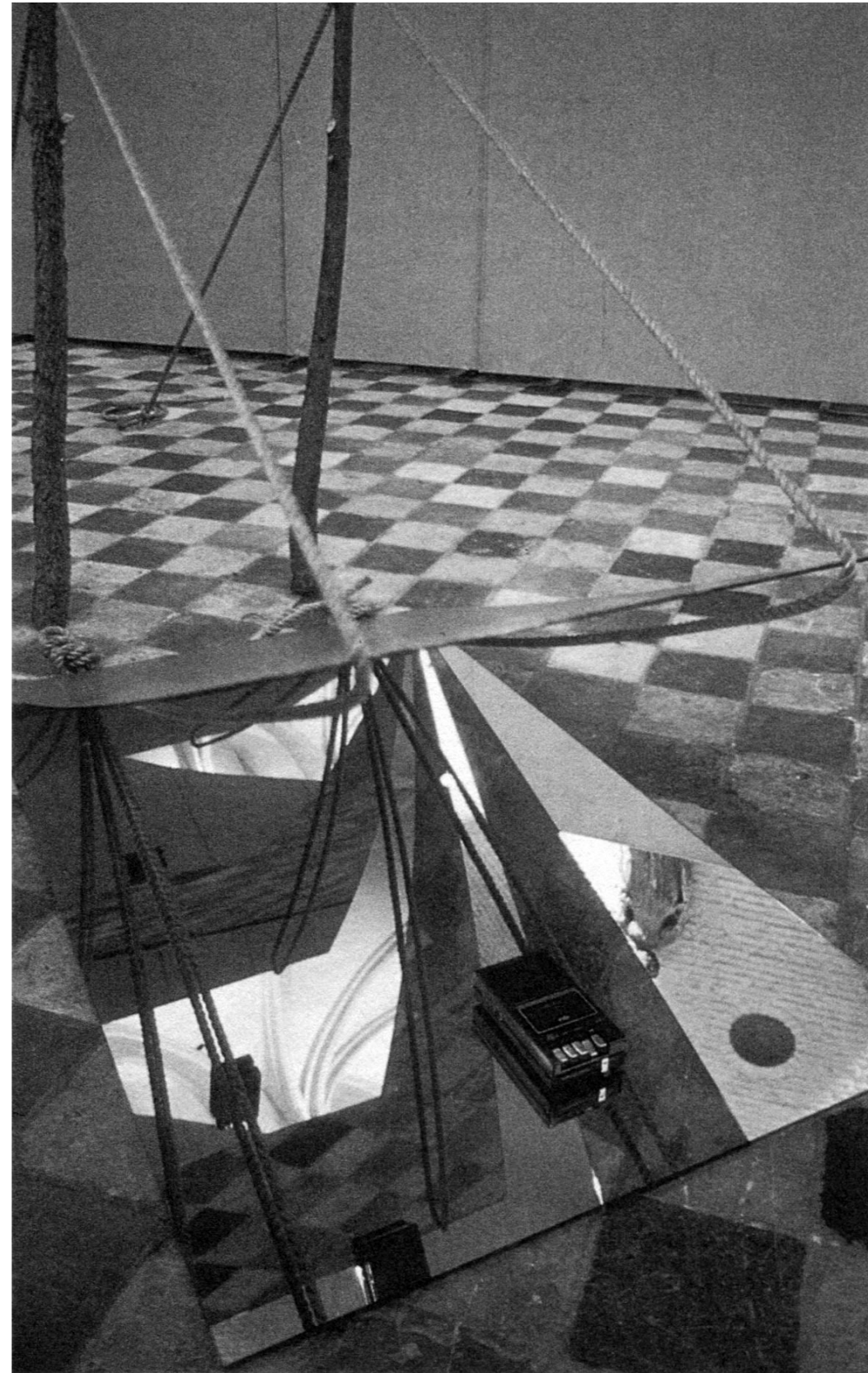
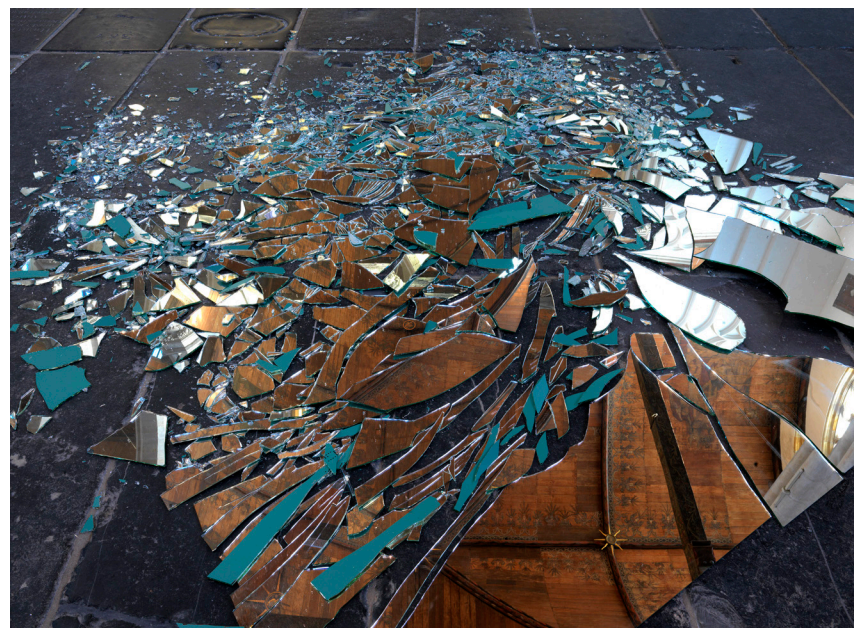
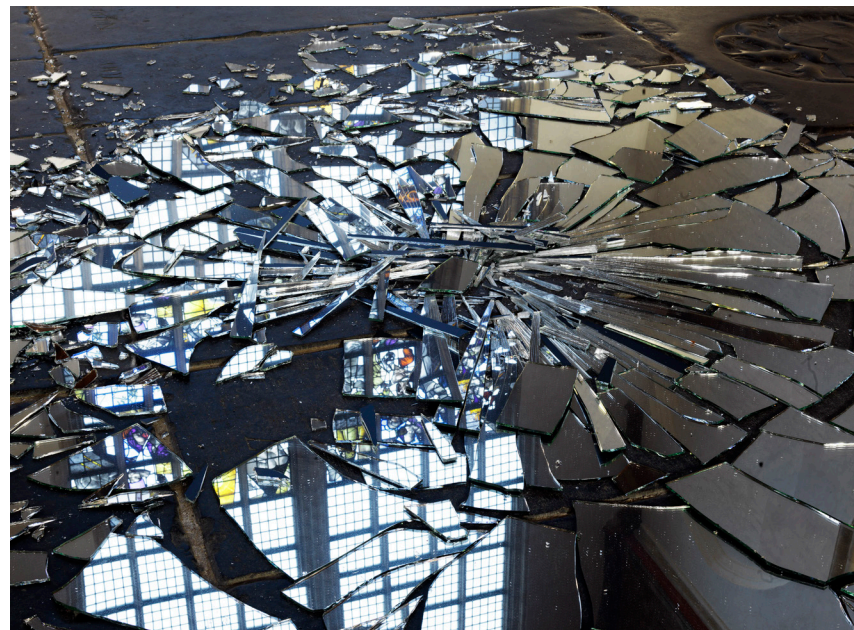












Il canto dell'allodola 1979

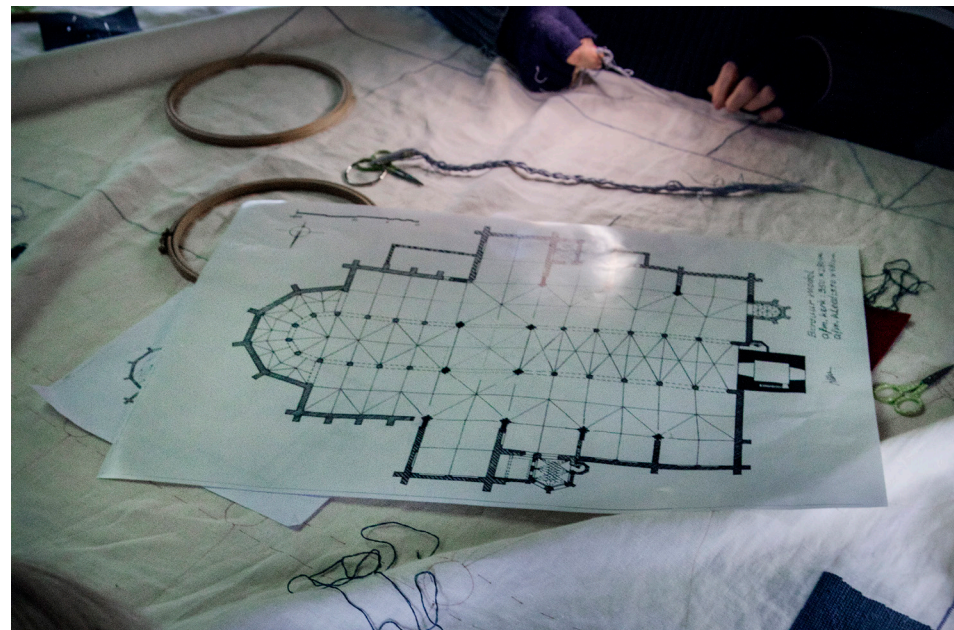


### Gothic Gestures 2016

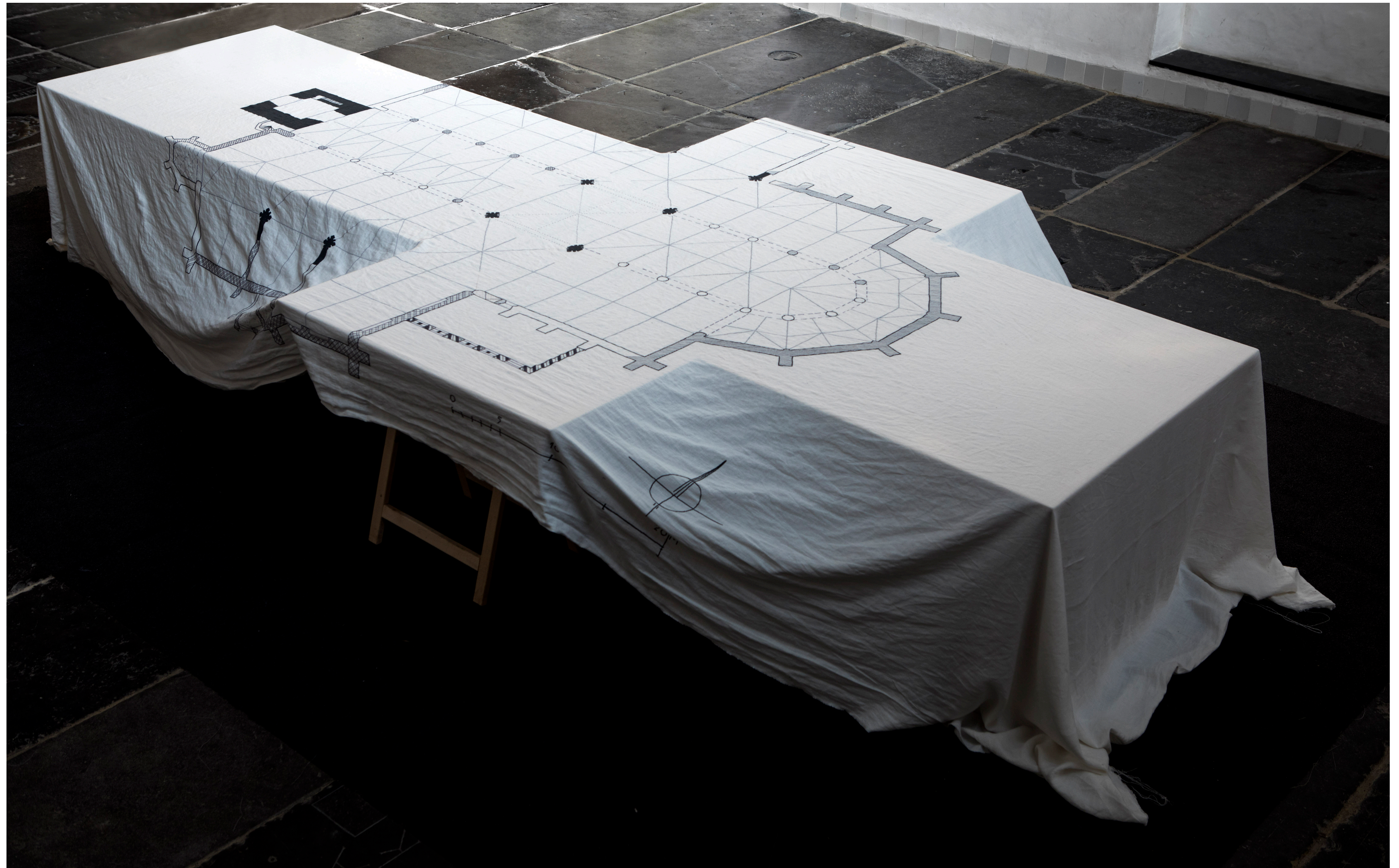
Residents and churchgoers from the Red Light District surrounding the Oude Kerk were invited to embroider the church's floor plan on cloth. Every day they work for a few hours in the St Sebastian Chapel, until their fingers stiffen from the cold. It is a collective and traditional creation process, just like the construction of the Oude Kerk in centuries past. The building's protracted evolution is reflected in the slow progress of the piece of embroidery. This establishes a relationship between history, handicraft, surroundings and the artist's conceptual practice.



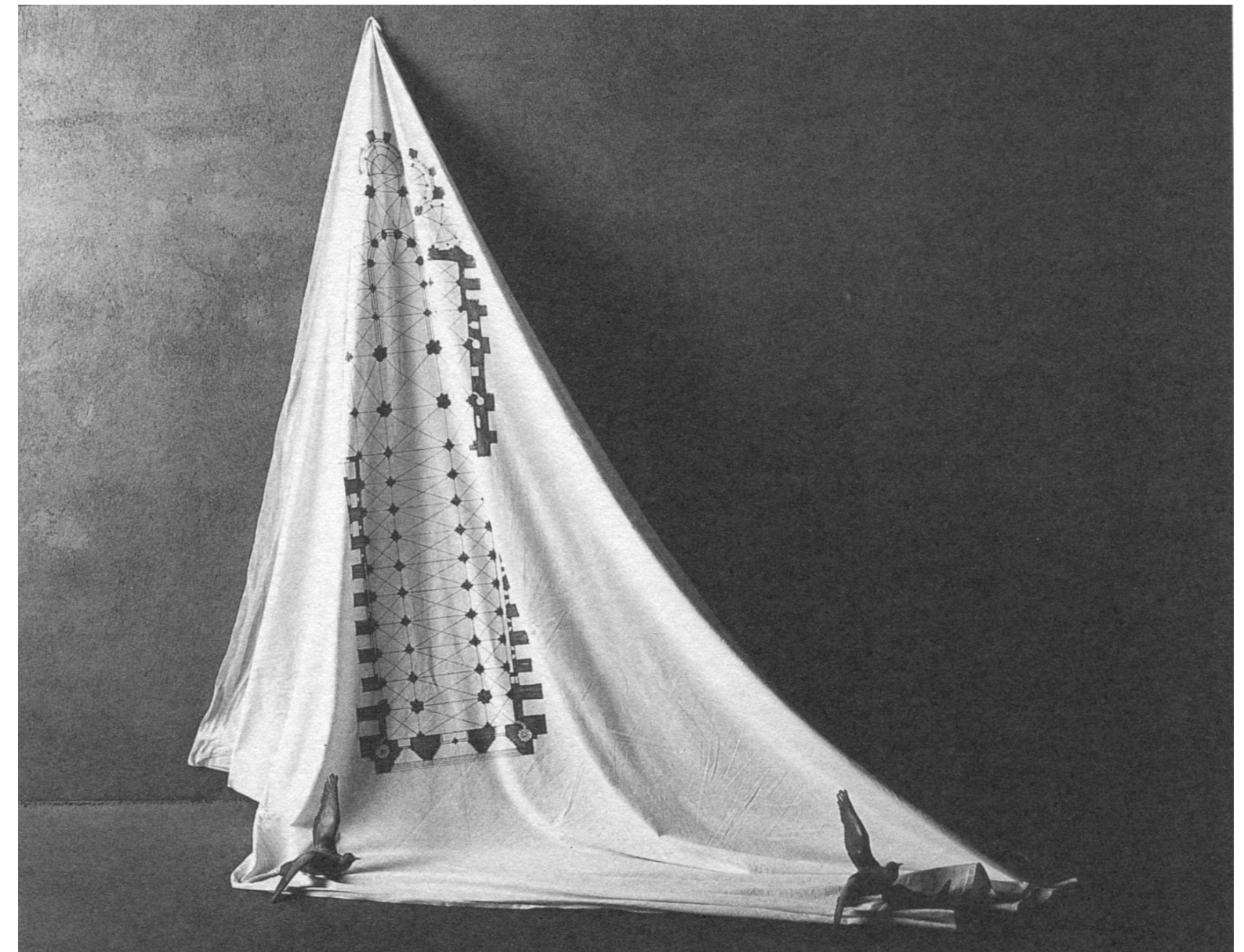
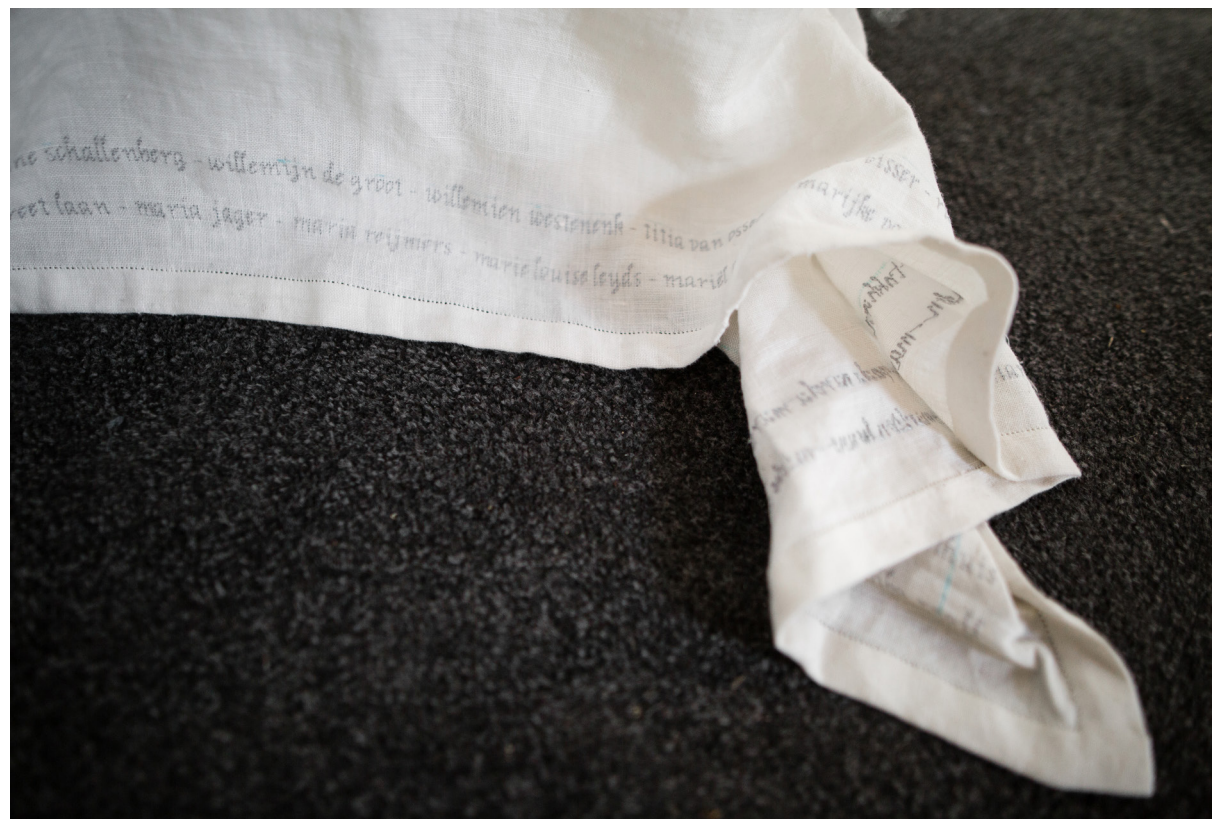










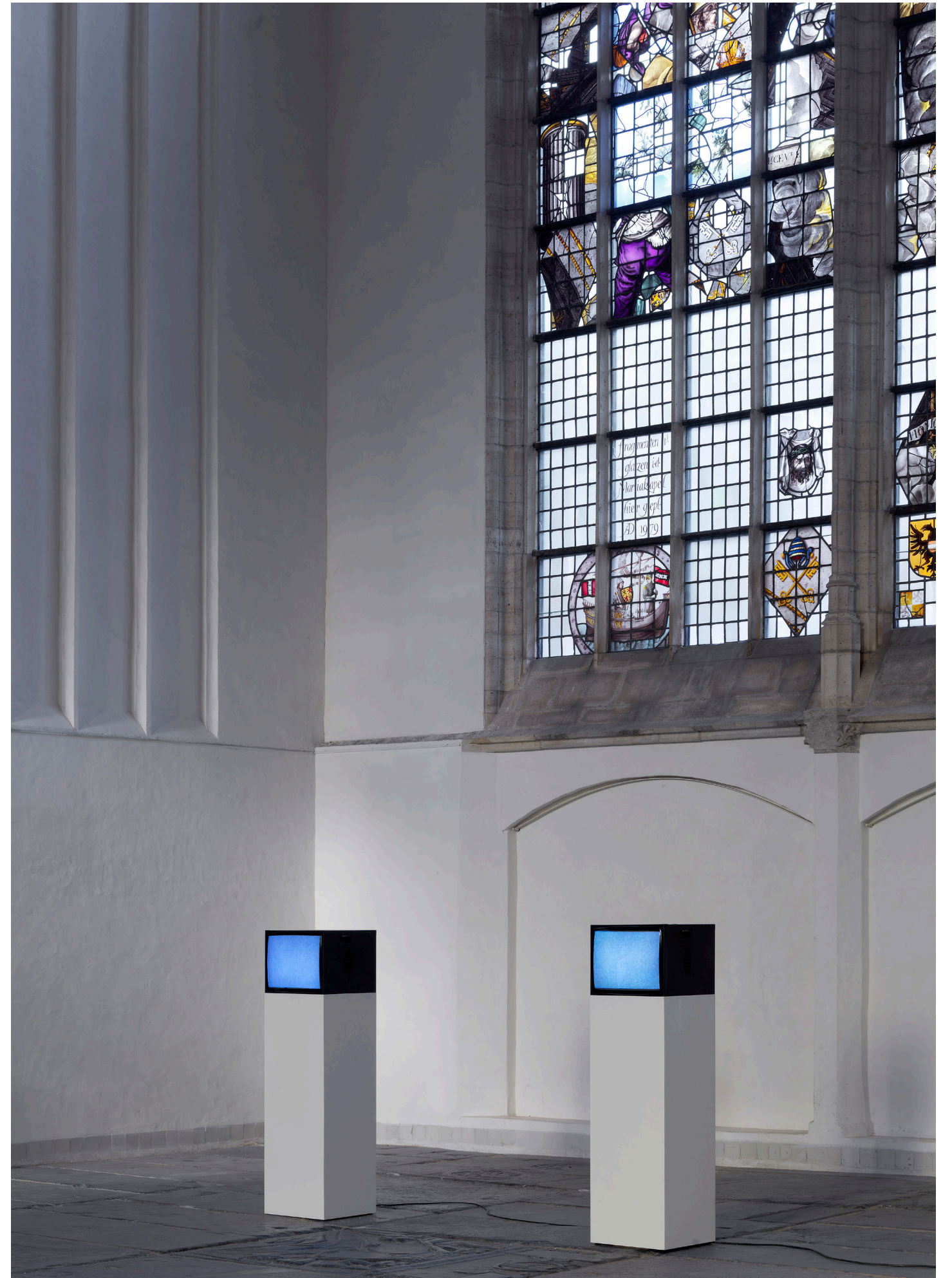


Sculpture gothique 1968



**Progetto Spaziale** 1970/2016

The two monitors in the niche beneath the window of the Hamburg Chapel emit noise. The screens visualize low radio frequencies, which results in the typical 'snow effect'. The image unites the language of the sound and the identity of the sky. This work's meaning is less prosaic than you might think. **Progetto Spaziale** (Spatial Project) is the artist's attempt to portray heaven.





*The Vanishing of the Artist* 1983/2016

Look! What can you see there on the church's zinc eaves? At first it look like two colourful birds, but through the telescope in the sacristy garden you can see a pair of shoes, the artist's shoes. Has he flown away? Or jumped? The tourist telescope down below is the artist's nod to the overcrowded Red Light District, which is threatened with ruin thanks to the 12 million visitors per year, as they avidly search for stereotypical impressions of a bygone era in and around the church.







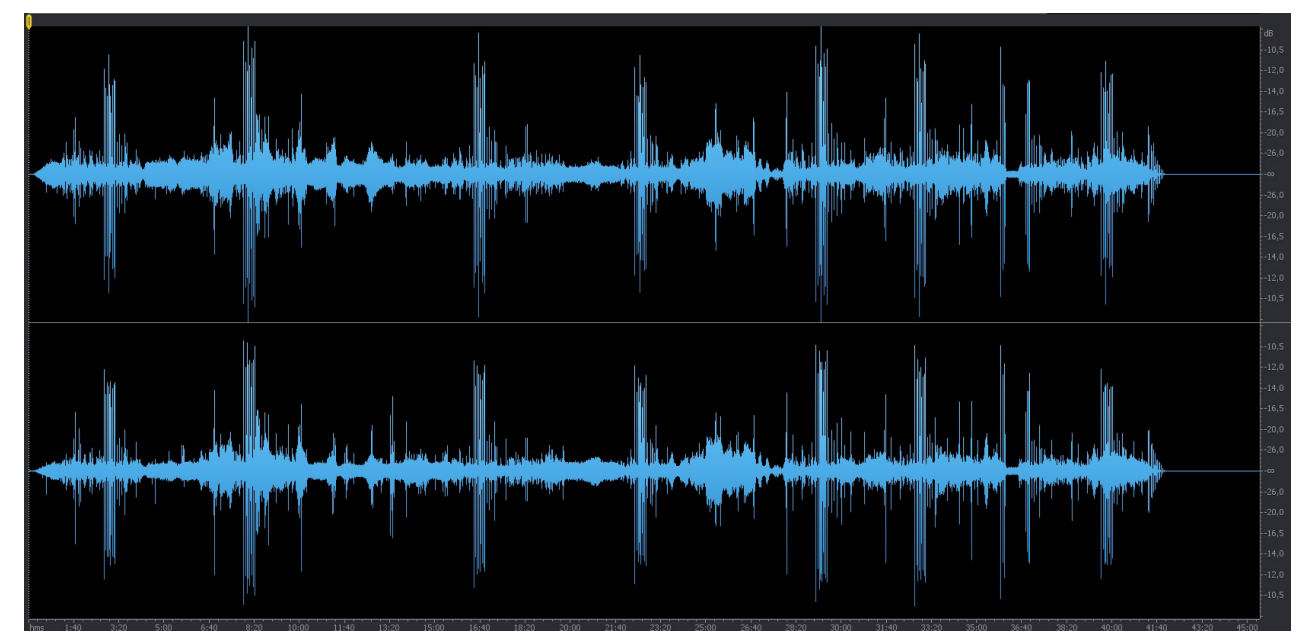
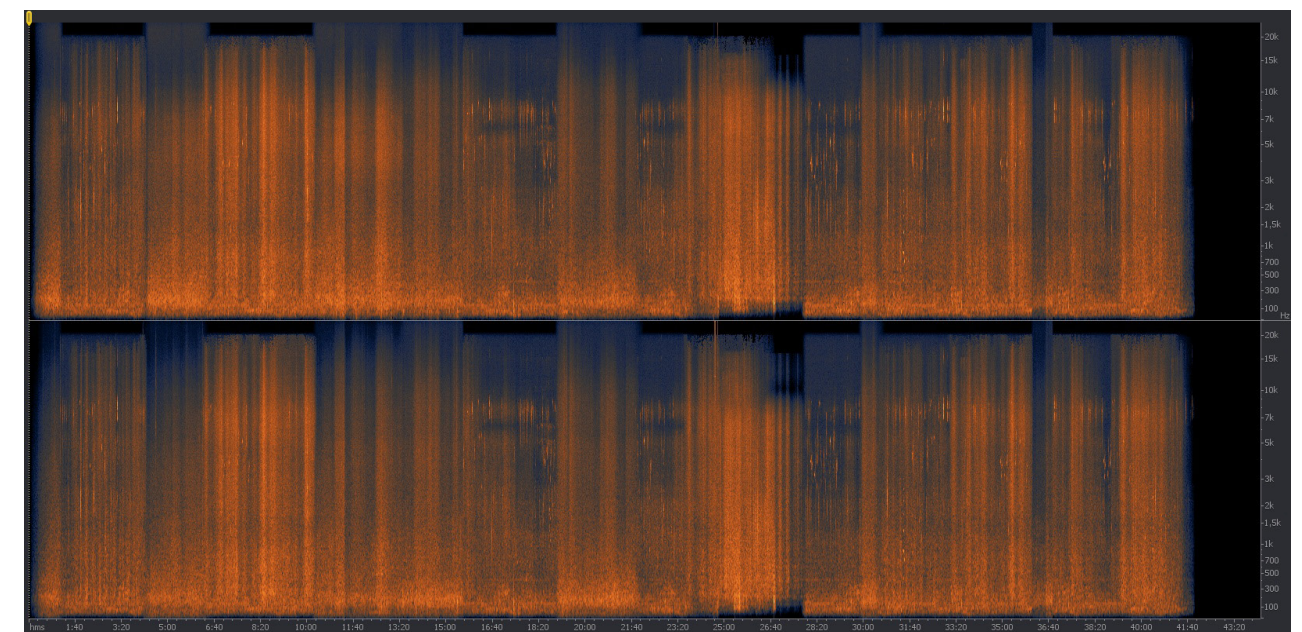
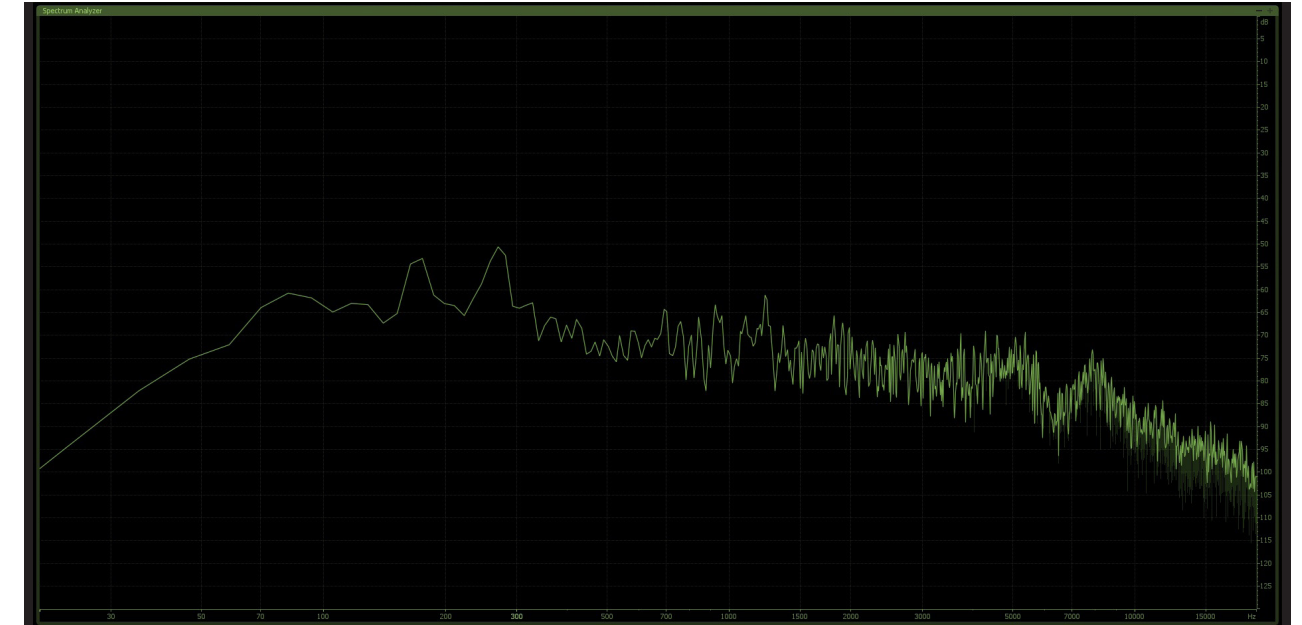






### Transformation 2016

'The sound of *The Green Cathedral* in Almere, 1978–1987'. The sound of the rustling poplars of Boezem's *Gothic Growing Project* (conceived in 1978 and planted in 1987) was recorded in 2016. The sound of *The Green Cathedral*, as the work came to be known, fills the Oude Kerk during this exhibition. Listen, and be aware of that open space far away from this church, air in motion and the passing of time.







The Green Cathedral 1985







### **l'Uomo Volante 1979**

In 1979 Boezem performed the **l'Uomo Volante** (The Flying Man) at the Vleeshal exhibition space in Middelburg. This performance will be re-enacted in January 2017 in the Oude Kerk. Dressed in something resembling an aviator's suit, via the ropes across his shoulders the artist finds himself in a precarious balance with a mirror of equal weight. When he can no longer hold the mirror's weight it falls and smashes into thousands of pieces on the stone floor. The vaulted ceiling of the Oude Kerk is then reflected in the shards. This work unites the essential concepts of Boezem, the 'artist of ideas'.











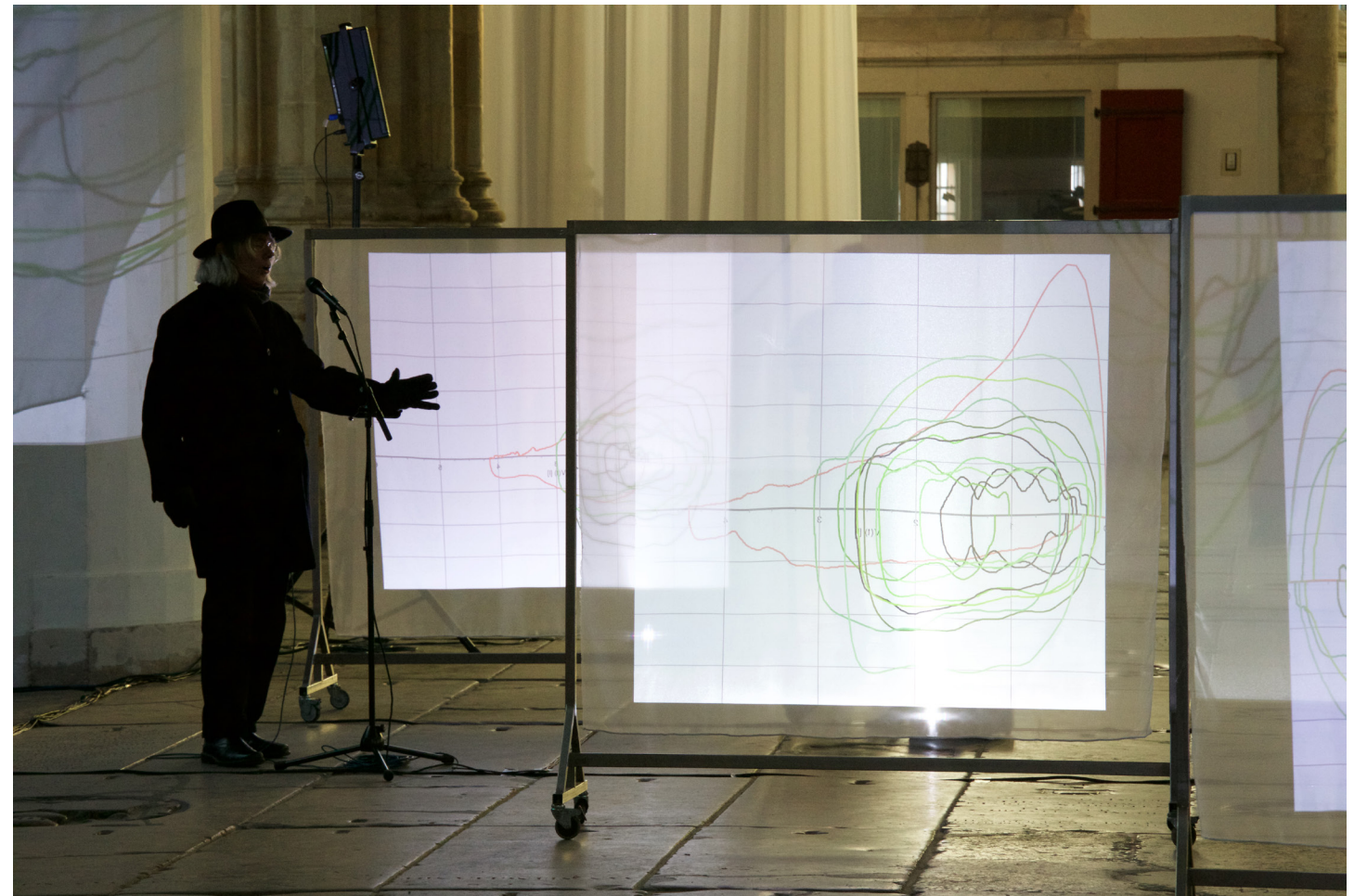
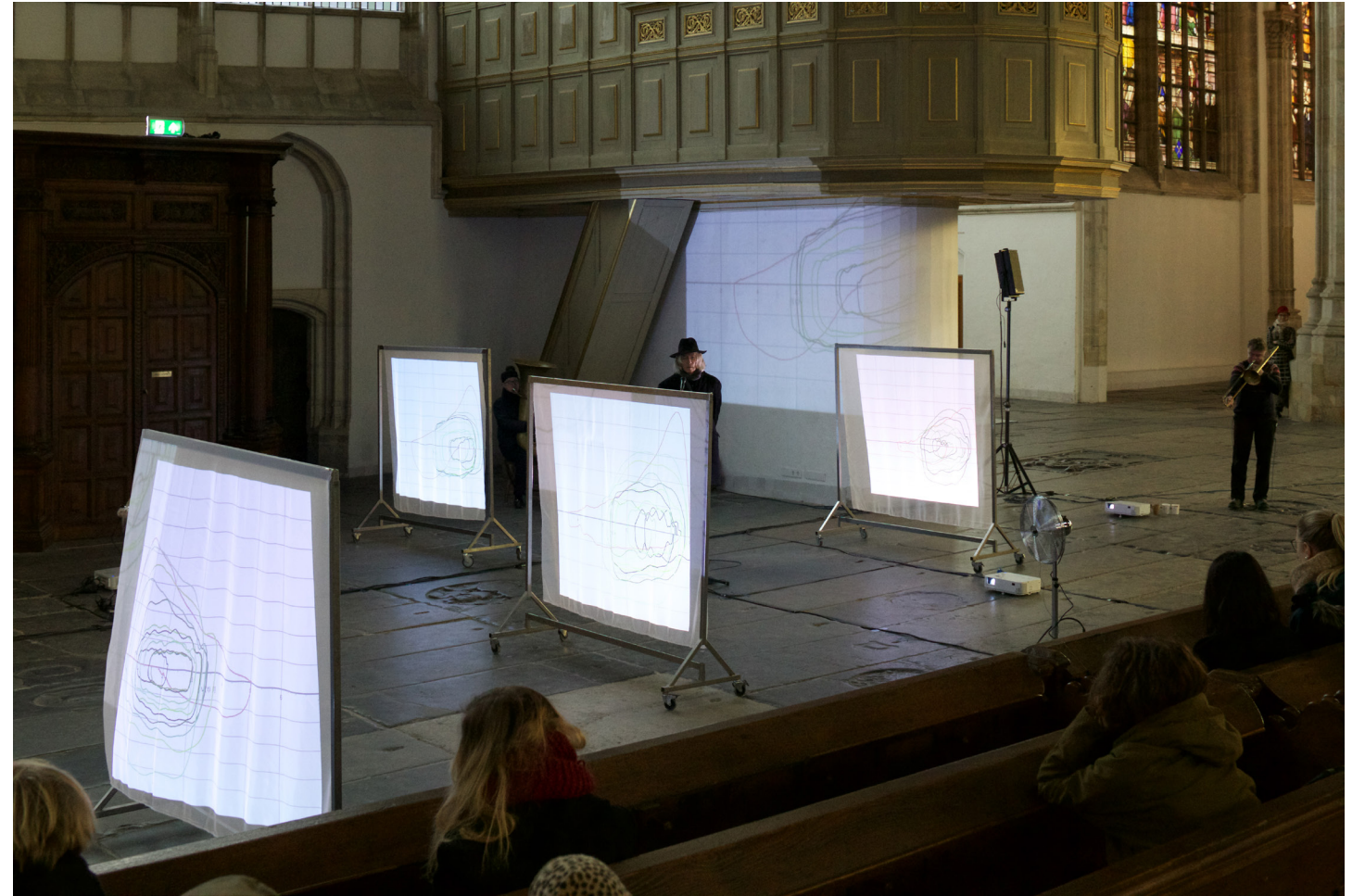






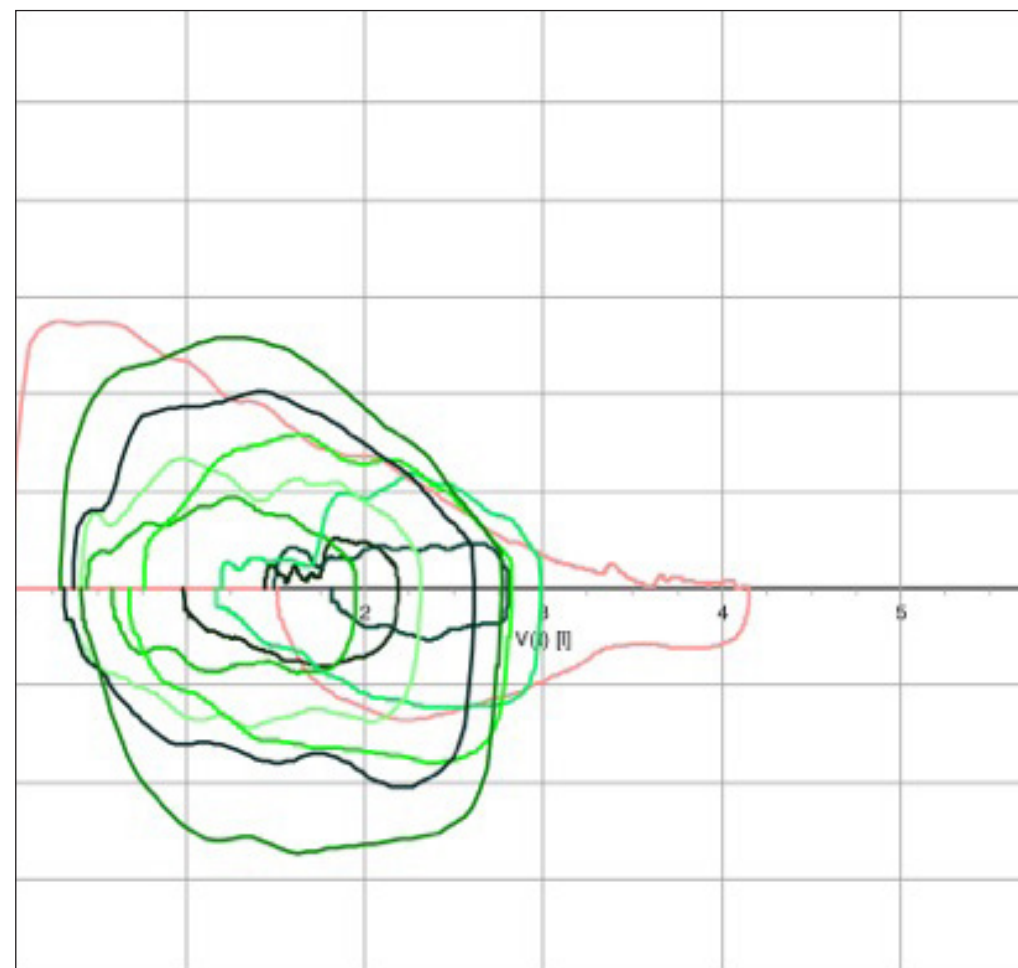
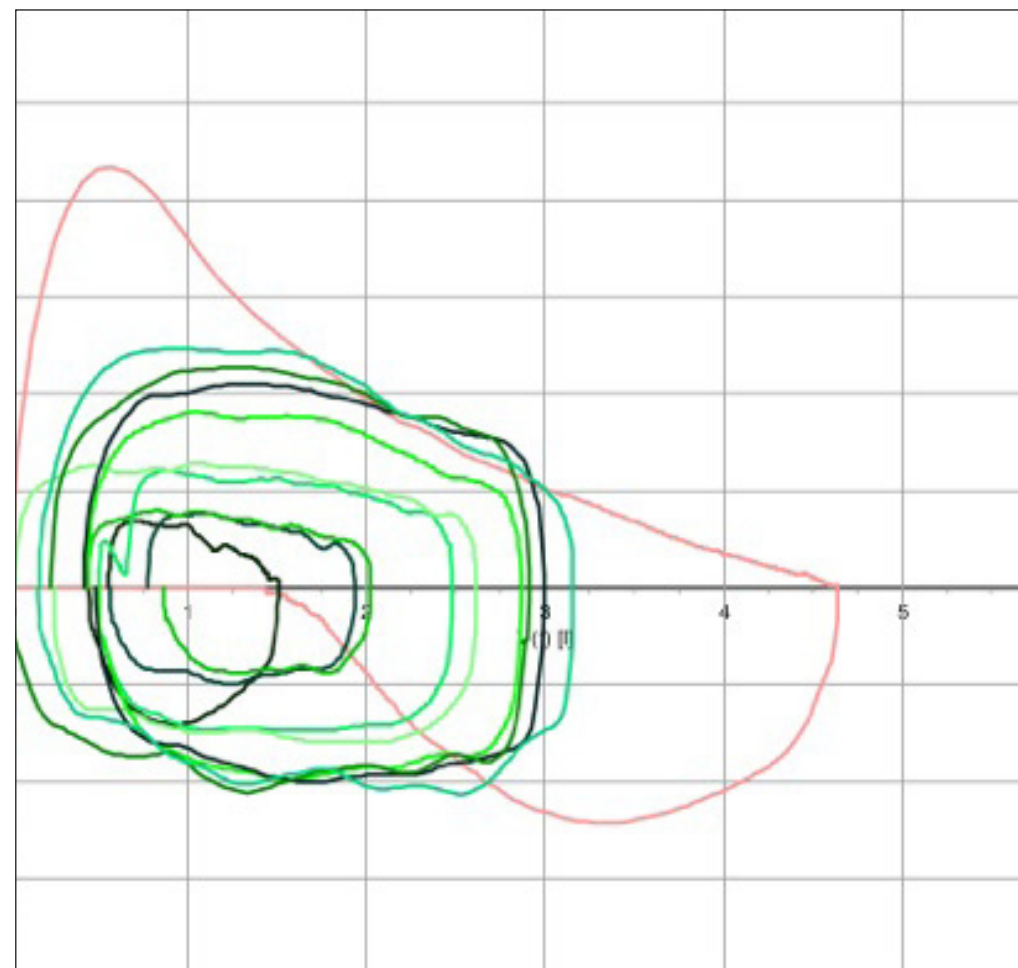
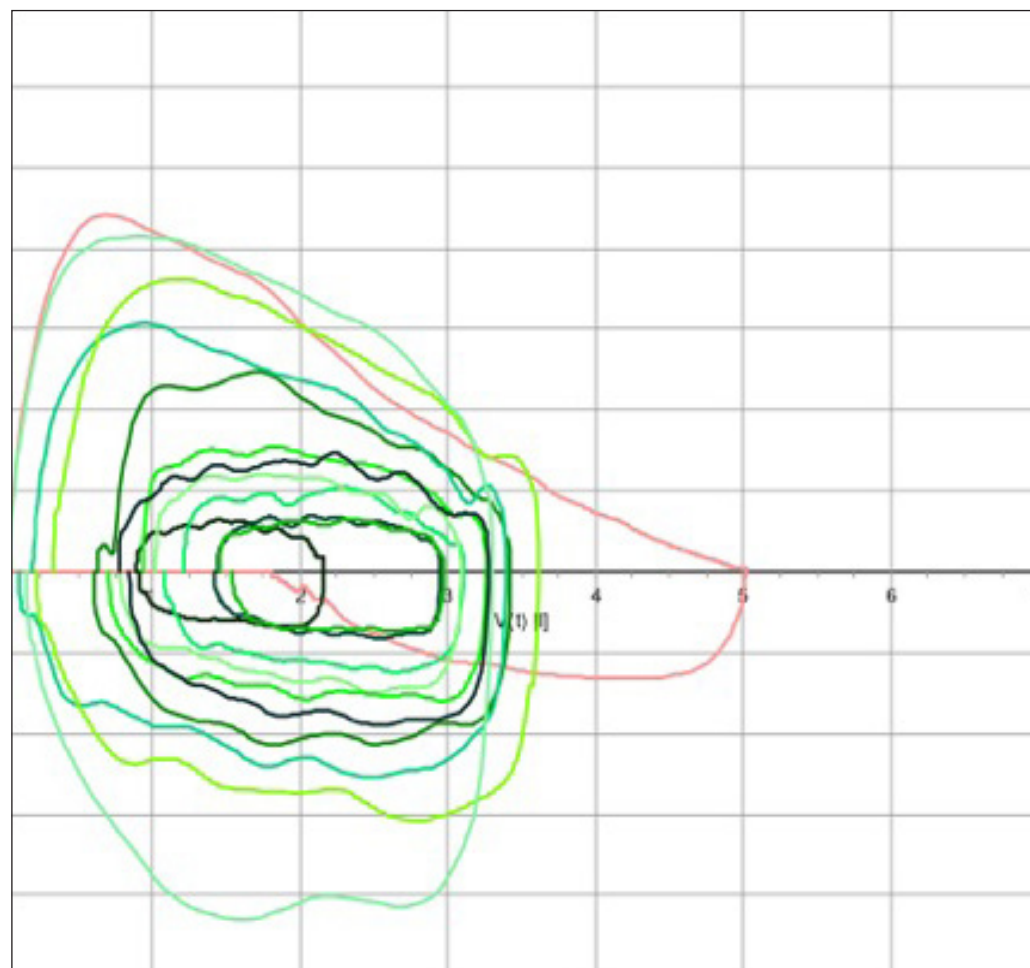
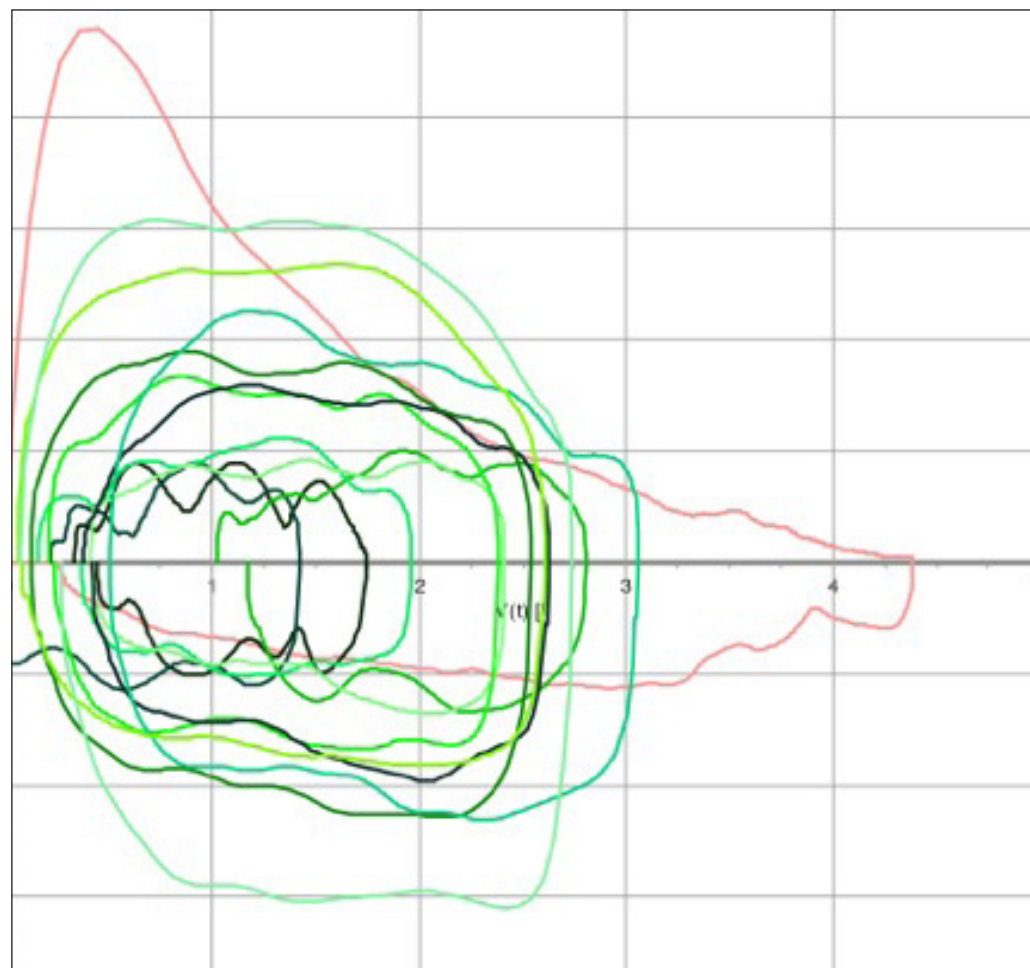
Silence 2 2016  
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Silence 3 2016  
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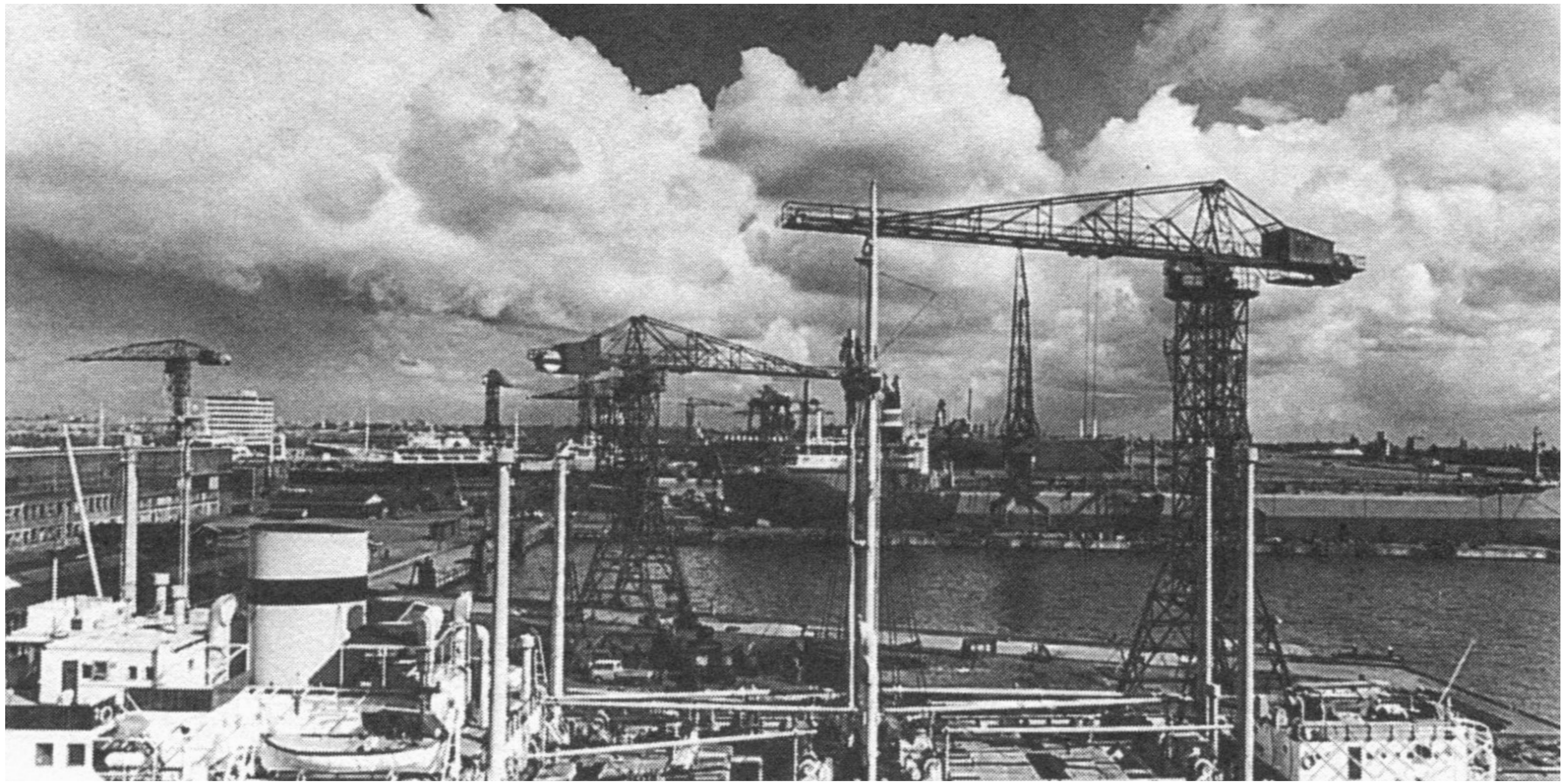


Signing the Sky Above the Port of Amsterdam by an Aeroplane 1969

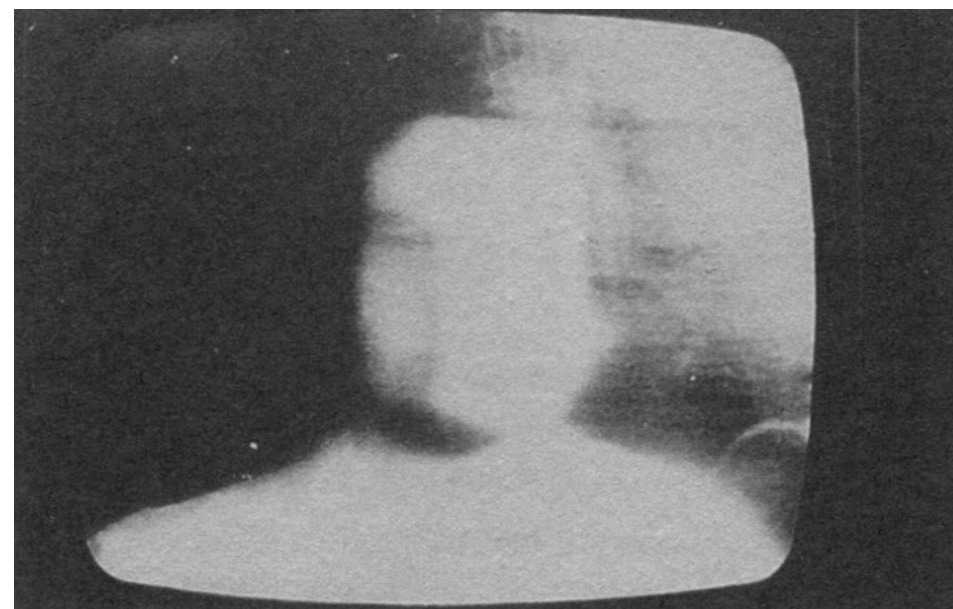
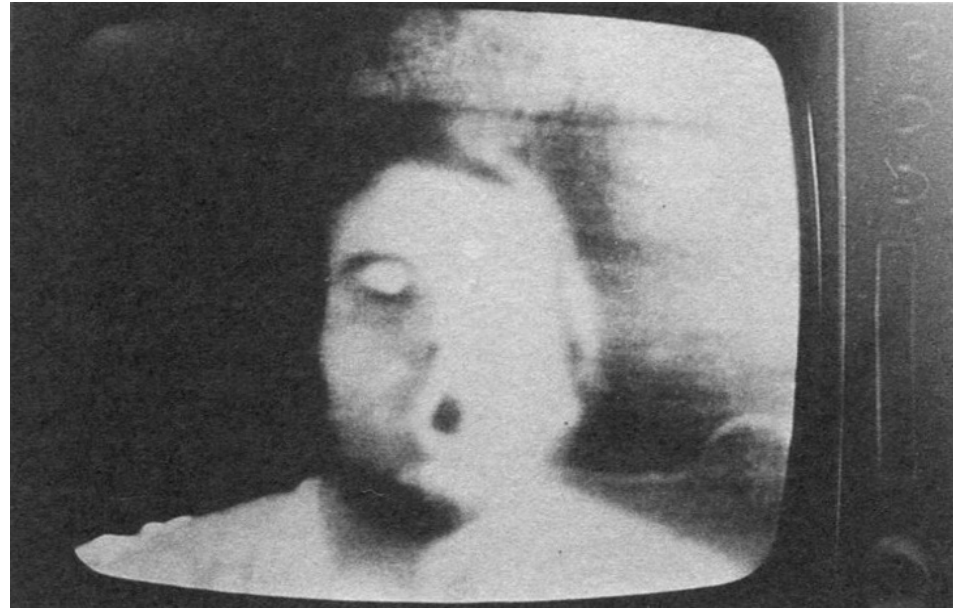












Breathing on the Picture Tube 1971



# MARINUS BOEZEM: AN ARTIST'S ATTITUDE

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Throughout his entire artistic career, the work of Marinus Boezem (b. Leerdam, 1934) has always remained remarkably consistent. He employs diverse media and materials, but there are certain themes that recur time and again within his oeuvre, such as weather and wind, as well as the Gothic cathedral, but also the societal context in which art is presented. 'Art does not necessarily have to manifest itself as a painting at an exhibition. I believe there are a vast number of ways for an artist to participate in society,' Boezem said in an interview with Dutch newspaper *de Volkskrant* in 1975.<sup>1</sup> This statement conveys the motto of the art of the late 1960s, in which the paradigms of autonomous art were disposed of and the formerly fixed structures of the production, distribution and reception of fine art to a large extent reformulated.

Boezem's name was at that time often mentioned in the same breath as artists such as Jan Dibbets and Ger van Elk, with whom he regularly exhibited in the Netherlands and abroad, as in Wim Beeren's *Op losse schroeven / Square Pegs in Round Holes* at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam and in Harald Szeemann's *Live In Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form* at the Kunsthalle Bern, both in 1969. But whereas Dibbets and Van Elk made their breakthroughs onto the international art scene in the 1980s, Boezem actually withdrew from the professional art circuit and started concentrating on work in sociocultural education (*vormingswerk*) and the realization of art in public space. In retrospect, the interchange with the public is perhaps the most important aspect of his artistic calling. With reference to the title of Szeemann's renowned exhibition, in 2016 Boezem stated: 'For me it is never about that one definitive image. It's about the whole oeuvre I create and who I am. It's about an attitude .... It actually resides in your own mind. *You* make the work of art, not the artist.'<sup>2</sup>

The attitude that Boezem adopts as artist, and the way in which he conveys that to his audience, first took shape in 1960. At the age of 26 and having only recently graduated as a painter and draughtsman from the academy of art in The Hague, he realized a work that could only exist in direct dialogue with an audience. The visitors to an exhibition in Asperen were asked to take a seat on folding chairs that were arranged along a dike. The view across the dike landscape of the Betuwe region that the artist offered could be experienced in a personal way by every individual visitor, and thus according to Boezem the work contained an openness of interpretations.<sup>3</sup> The open attitude towards the beholder is also evident from the *Shows* that Boezem devised between 1964 and 1969. These were proposals for exhibitions, later designated as installations, that museums and art institutions could realize to order. The designs were drawn on A4 paper and copied with typed instructions for their execution in editions of 50 to 100. They were then distributed to the art scene by post. The artist also visited important art institutions in person, neatly dressed in a business suit and bearing his copies in a briefcase, to sell his ideas.

Initially these *Shows* were barely understood; it was not until the late 1970s that they were described

as 'an early indication of a particular artist's attitude', by the then director of the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven, Jean Leering.<sup>4</sup> The non-artistic, conceptual character that typified Boezem's early *Shows* was not actually labelled explicitly until applied to the works of Conceptual Artists from the USA. The working methods of Boezem and several artists of his generation does, however, indicate that similar trends were being pursued in the Netherlands.

In the design for *Show V, Immateriële plastiek* (*Show V—Immaterial Sculpture*, 1965), various air locks are used to cause sensations of heat, cold and wind within a neutral exhibition space. The work is highly reminiscent of Art & Language's *Airconditioning Show*, which was conceived in 1966 and first appeared as an article in *Arts Magazine* the following year.<sup>5</sup> Michael Baldwin's text, which starts with a description of how a volume of air shifts through an empty, neutral white space (air-conditioned), was intended to question the very essence of art and the relationship with its context, in a discursive as well as an institutional sense. The work's material or visual execution was less important than its power to predispose the public to reflect. In 1972, Joseph Kosuth organized an exhibition based on Baldwin's text at the Visual Arts Gallery in New York, billing it as 'The first presentation in America of this early important exhibition by two of the founders of Conceptual Art.'<sup>6</sup>

Such megalomaniac language was alien to the Dutch artists of this generation, but their more modest position reveals a similar intention. Boezem developed his *Shows* in reaction to the overproduction of paintings that he saw around him. They were less discursive than the projects by Art & Language, and playful in approach, so they were possibly also taken less seriously. Only a few of these early Conceptual works were actually realized. *Show IV, Zandfontein* (*Show IV—Sand Fountain*, 1964–1965), for example, was submitted by Boezem for his participation in the Tokyo Biennale in 1970 (with Dibbets and Van Elk), an important event where Japanese, American and European artists showcased their work. The sand-spewing mound of sand was not realized for this occasion, but it was produced in 1969 as a recording for the first broadcast of Gerry Shum's famous *Fernsehgalerie* or Television Gallery, which featured footage of other Land Art works, such as Dibbets' *12 Hours Tide Object with Correction of Perspective* on the Maasvlakte (an erstwhile sandbank, now reclaimed as part of Rotterdam's portscape), Walter De Maria's *Two Lines Three Circles on the Desert in California's Mojave Desert*, and Robert Smithson's *Fossil Quarry Mirror with Four Mirror Displacements* in the Cayuga Lake Region, New York.<sup>7</sup>

*Show IX, Gordijnkamer / Show IX—The Curtain Room* (1965) is a square space draped with long, white nylon curtains with fans creating a flow of air so they flutter gently, and has been executed several times. Its first iteration was at an overview exhibition of Dutch sculpture at the Centraal Museum in Utrecht in 1969. The work was subsequently restaged for the exhibition *Vroege werken* (1965–75)—Early works (1965–75)—at the Kröller-

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Müller Museum in Otterlo in 1999, as part of a triptych on the occasion of the artist's 65th birthday.<sup>8</sup> It was most recently recreated for Boezem's contribution to the *Unlimited* presentation at Art Basel in 2016, where he was represented by the Amsterdam-based Borzo Gallery.

All but one of the original drawings have survived and are now in the collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. This means that the works can in principle still be realized in a physical space.

In recent years there has been growing interest in the re-enactment of projects as well as exhibitions of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the highlight thus far being the remade *When Attitudes Become Form* exhibition, curated by Germano Celant with Rem Koolhaas and Thomas Demand for Fondazione Prada in Venice in 2013.<sup>9</sup> Here Boezem showed his work *Window* (1968), a window-frame with pillows and sheets draped down from it that was initially presented in 1968 in an exhibition at Riekje Swart's gallery in Amsterdam, where he staged 'situations' together with Dibbets and Van Elk. He created a similar work for the *Op losse schroeven / Square Pegs in Round Holes* exhibition, literally hanging the bed-linen from the windows of the Stedelijk Museum's upper floors. Another work he showed at this exhibition was *Weather Drawings* (1969), projections of hand-coloured weather charts for each day of the show, complemented by an audio recording of that particular day's weather forecast being read aloud.

*Weather Drawings* was acquired in 2012 by the Stedelijk Museum, which called it 'a key work in Boezem's rich oeuvre' and an 'important reference point in the development of the exhibition for curator Beeren'.<sup>10</sup> The acquisition of this work 43 years after its creation indicates how museums attached little importance to the inclusion of these developments in their collections back then. The positioning of the Conceptual Artists, who branded museums as 'art graveyards', certainly contributed to this; the intention was to take art beyond the museum's walls, to give it a place in society. Many of this generation now accept that these artists ultimately failed to achieve this. In 1981, Boezem himself was critical of how the legacy of the 1960s can only exist as an object in the museum. Despite his finding it important that the acceptance of conceptual art is therefore a fact, he has stated: 'Somewhere I have an idealistic idea that artistry also exists as behaviour, that there must be something like a consummate work that does not simply materialize itself within the familiar art environment.'<sup>11</sup>

The revived interest in art that still seemed unmarketable in the 1960s and 1970s has prompted various newer galleries to represent artists of the 1960–1970 generation. It therefore seems as if artists like Boezem have made a comeback after an extended period of inactivity, but it actually concerns artistic practices that in the past drew interest from just a small circle of interested parties and have now become part of the official art circuit because of (commercial) re-evaluation. For Boezem this was never terribly important. In the late 1970s through to the 1990s he realized various major art projects



that were not picked up by the art market, simply because—in line with the motto of Conceptual Art—he no longer wanted to produce saleable objects, but wanted his work to be part of societal debate. The artist has endeavoured to achieve this in diverse projects. For example, as guest curator of a collection presentation at the Van Abbe Museum under Jean Leering in 1971 he questioned the social value of museum collections, rendering underlying motivations and decisions transparent for the public. It was not just the works he selected for this exhibition, which included Duchamp, Moholy-Nagy and Picasso, that were important, but also how he presented them to the public. Besides the usual information such as title, year of production and creator, Boezem added the purchase price of the works, as well as press documentation of the (public) discussions that these sums provoked at the time.

A remarkable turn in Boezem's career was that in 1976 he started to teach as a youth worker at a centre for art training, where he tried to break through conventional rules of social behaviour by means of performative projects and role-play scenarios. Unlike an artist such as Joseph Beuys, who also took up a post as a teacher and explicitly deployed his mediation between artistic thought and the public as an artistic attitude, Boezem's sociocultural work with delinquents always took place away from the public gaze. There are no extant recordings or instructions that could be conveyed to an audience as an artist's attitude. That makes such work no less important, but it is less visible as part of his artistry.

At least as remarkable yet invisible as his attitude was his appointment to an endowed professorship at Delft University of Technology (TU Delft, in those days a College of Technology, or Technische Hogeschool), where he taught trainee architects from 1979 to 1985. This appointment ran parallel with his growing intercourse with architecture and plans in his work, in which his use of the plan of the Gothic cathedral of Reims is a recurring motif.

The most famous and also the largest project that Boezem realized using Reims Cathedral is his **Green Cathedral** in the polders of Flevoland near Almere, where he represented its plan at actual scale with the planting of 178 poplars in 1987. As he was unable to find the requisite parcel of land immediately, it was almost a decade before the work's execution could begin and another decade before the work became visible to the public. Now that the trees have reached the end of their lifespan, the work will also gradually disappear, as in a life cycle, leaving behind nothing but the memory of the work. It produces a well-nigh transcendental sculpture with which he wanted to imbue the newly established city of Almere with history ('once a cathedral stood here').

The exhibition that Boezem created at the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam in 2016 was once again reminiscent of his **Green Cathedral** and included various new works that proceeded from previously conceived or realized projects. For example, he recreated his 1965 work **Sordijkamer / The Curtain Room** in the guise of a 'vertical labyrinth' that directed the public's attention to the church ceiling (**Labyrinth**, 2016).<sup>12</sup> He had the floor plan of the church embroi-

dered onto a large canvas by a group of volunteers over the course of the exhibition (**Gothic Gestures**, 2016). In the middle of the church stood a hydraulic lift, on which visitors were accompanied heavenward by a lift attendant, which not only offered them a wonderful view of the actual layout of the church but also a look into a mirror inscribed with the text 'Wait until you hear from me' (**Into the Air**, 2016). As if intended to interconnect heaven and earth, the work **Meteorieten / Meteorites** (2016) consisted of smashed mirrors lying on the floor, reflecting the light from the stained-glass windows into the space. The sound of warbling birds amid the rustling trees of Boezem's **Green Cathedral**, which resonated at the rear of the church near the organ, represented the yearning for spiritualization and thus completed the spiritual experience (**Transformation**, 2016).

This ensemble could be regarded as an overview of Boezem's work, but with minimal interventions he simultaneously presented the church as a **Gesamtkunstwerk**. The engagement of this gesture reveals the disposition/attitude of the artist. 'The artist as ...' (businessperson, accountant, philosopher, youth worker, pastor ...) was one of the principles that made the art of the late 1960s so topical, placed it right in the midst of society. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Boezem has never thrown this principle overboard and has continued to implement his artistic vision in society in diverse capacities. This attitude is precisely what makes Boezem's work so special, and deserves to be delineated more clearly within reflections upon his oeuvre.

## Notes

1. Martin Ruyter, 'n Kunstenaar die werkende jongeren strijdbaar maakt', *de Volkskrant*, 11 January 1975, 29.

2. Kees Keijer, 'Op weg naar de hemel', *Museumtijdschrift*, vol. 29 no. 8 (Dec. 2016/Jan. 2017), 54–59.

3. See Lucette ter Borg, 'Op zoek naar schoonheid tussen hemel en aarde', *NRC Next*, 23 November 2016.

4. See Philip Peters, 'Interview: Marinus Boezem', *Haagse Post*, 30 May 1981, 70.

5. See Mathieu Copeland et al. (eds.), *Voids: A Retrospective* (Zurich: JRP-Ringier, 2009), 63.

6. Michael Baldwin and Terry Atkinson, poster for **The Air-Conditioning Show**, Visual Arts Gallery New York, 31 January–28 February 1972. Published in *ibid.*, 62.

7. Gerry Shum (Cologne 1934–Düsseldorf 1972) was a German cameraman, film- and video-maker. From 1967 to 1970 he developed the concept for a Fernseh-galerie for the transmission of works of art via television, so that a wider audience could be reached than in a museum. A total of four programmes were broadcast in association with various networks.

8. This was accompanied by the publication of a catalogue of Boezem's oeuvre: Edna van Duijn (ed.), *Boezem: Catalogue raisonnée* (Bussum: Uitgeverij Thoth, 1999). In 1999, Boezem was also made a Knight of the Order of the Netherlands Lion.

9. Germano Celant et al. (eds.), *When Attitudes Become Form*: Bern 1969 / Venice 2013, exhib. cat., Fondazione Prada, Venice, 2013.

10. See the Stedelijk Museum website: [www.stedelijk.nl/nieuwsberichten/nieuwe-aanwinst-marinus-boezem](http://www.stedelijk.nl/nieuwsberichten/nieuwe-aanwinst-marinus-boezem) [6 July 2017].

11. Peters op. cit. (note 4), 70.

12. Press release **Marinus Boezem**, Oude Kerk website: [oudekerk.nl/programma/marinus-boezem-vanaf-24-november-in-de-oude-kerk/](http://oudekerk.nl/programma/marinus-boezem-vanaf-24-november-in-de-oude-kerk/) (accessed 4 October 2017).



## List of Works

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