

# ArtReview

I respect,  
respect

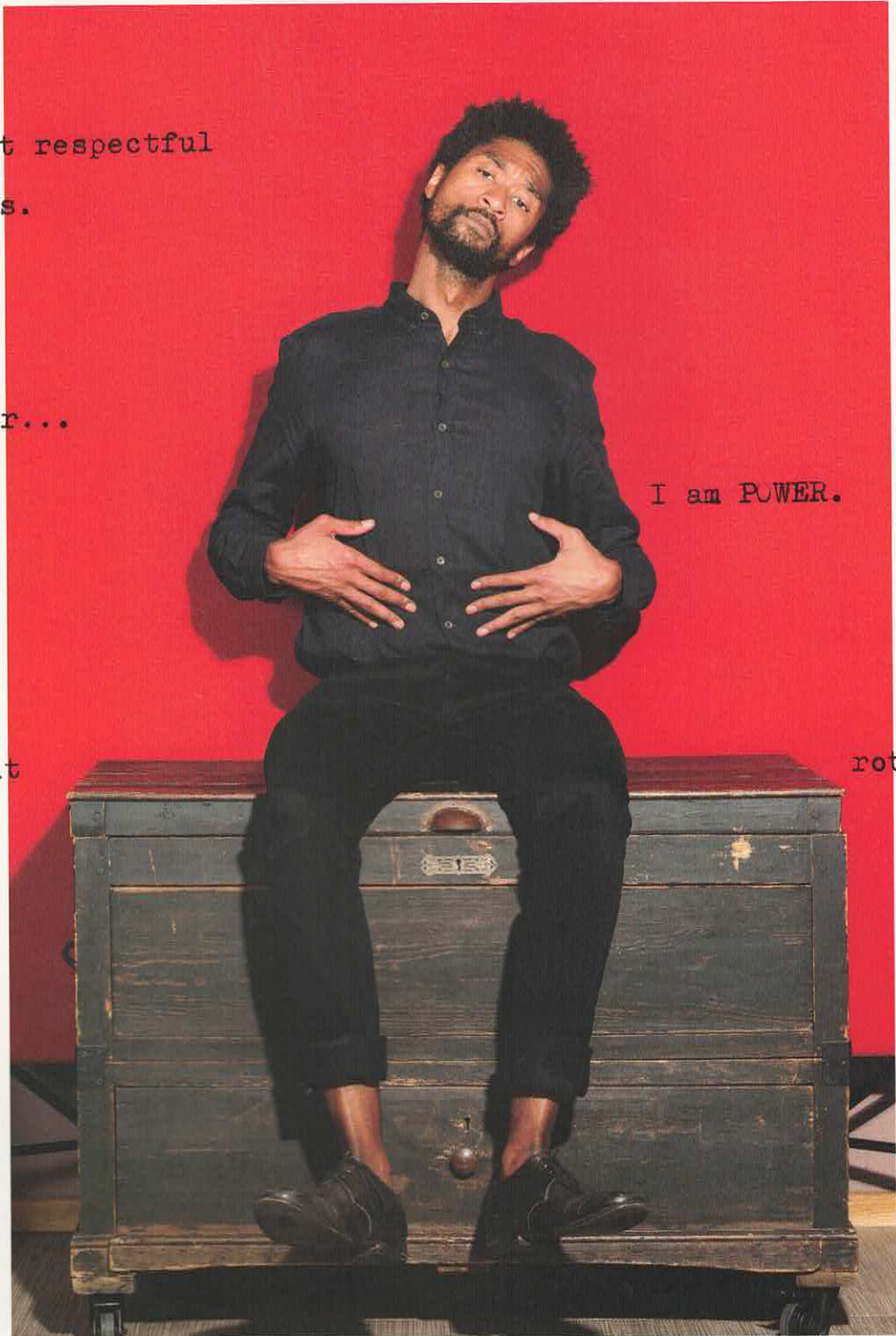
I respect not respectful  
Power aspects.

You got power...

I am POWER.

Strange fruit

rots.



I see U...

be.PURPLE

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*Sarah van Sonsbeek We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now*  
*Oude Kerk, Amsterdam 19 May – 17 September*

In one of the chapels is a steel rack with three large oxygen tanks hanging from it: one original and two replicas cast in bronze, one of these last dull, the other polished to perfection. The blue original comes from Tristan da Cunha, one of the most remote places in the world, somewhere halfway between Africa and South America. It washed up there having fallen off a lifeboat that was cast adrift from a sunken oil rig. On this sparsely populated island with no Internet access, van Sonsbeek saw the empty tank being used as a gong: when the weather was favourable, this was rung to call fishermen to the harbour to set out to sea. Van Sonsbeek's gong is rung regularly by the church's bell-ringer. He strikes it three times 37, three times in a row: 333 strikes in total, the same number as the emergency blankets (and, coincidence or not, exactly half of the Number of the Beast, as stated in the Book of Revelation). The sound is deafening, the frenzied rhythm alarming – an inescapable wakeup call that continues to reverberate for a long time afterwards.

*Dominic van den Boogerd*

*Translated from the Dutch by Emma Rauli*

much as the church itself once offered its protection, while the flimsy material has, here and there, been crumpled by visitors stepping on it, the gleaming reflection is mesmerising. The bluestone slabs of the floor have been transformed into a glistening sea that glitters in the warm sunlight flooding through the huge church windows. The folds in the emergency blankets echo the pattern of the stained glass. The rescue blankets are clearly a reference to the unfortunate migrants who, seeking to escape unbearable situations at home, set out to sea in rickety boats attempting to reach Europe. Van Sonsbeek previously used Mylar in her *Anti Drone Tent* (2013), a construction that shields users from the heat-scanning gaze of drones. In the Old Church – and the location doubtlessly plays a role in this – Mylar takes on a heavenly connotation. Its golden glow is reflected onto the tomb of Vice-Admiral Abraham van der Hulst, who died in 1666 in a naval battle against the English. The relief on the tomb monument shows the deceased hero lying on his back, eyes closed, while above him angels blow on golden trumpets. Death is marble; eternal life is golden.

Consecrated in 1306, the Oude Kerk (Old Church) in Amsterdam's red-light district is the oldest building in the city: now a museum, it was originally a port church, and has never been deconsecrated. For centuries, it faced almost directly onto the waterfront. Ships received blessings for a safe journey right in front of the church doors; fishermen could repair their nets in the vestibule, shielded from the elements, while it is here that naval heroes found their final resting place. The massive, wooden barrel-vaulted ceiling, made by ship's carpenters, evokes the hull of a capsized ship. It was the special link between this church and the sea that inspired Sarah van Sonsbeek's installation *We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now* (2017).

The floor of the church is almost entirely covered by 333 emergency blankets, each measuring 211 x 160 cm, with narrow walkways in between. The coverings are made of Mylar, a shiny, gold-coloured insulation foil, which has come to be familiar from news images of refugees on lifeboats. The emergency blankets offer shelter against cold and wind,



*We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now, 2017, golden Mylar blankets, dimensions variable. Photo: Gert Jan van Rooij. Courtesy Oude Kerk, Amsterdam*