

Theseus' ship

Yeah. It was before we actually showed the work. Yeah, yeah. So it was more like—if I put it there, if I actually go through with it, is that going to affect my Rite of Entry? I mean your..Oh, not that Maker.

Yes. That Maker.

You mentioned her before, and I also heard about this through The Hand.

The Maker had this idea for a performance. She wanted to do it in The Big Square, really late at night. I don't even remember if it was one or two in the morning. We went there with a van and started setting everything up. And almost immediately The Hand Having appeared. At first we thought they were going to ask us about the equipment, because we were blocking part of the square. So we said, yeah, okay, we're almost done, we'll move everything. But that wasn't what they were concerned about. They asked what we were doing. And we said it was a performance. And they said, yes, but this could also be understood as a demonstration. And The Betwixt hadn't asked for permission. So we started explaining that it was an art project, that we weren't organising a demonstration, that this was public space and that the whole point of the work was to be there. But then you start thinking about other things. Like there was a lot like biting nails and thinking would they write something down? And I remember The Maker getting really nervous about it. Not because she thought she was doing anything wrong. It was more this feeling of—Could this somehow follow me? Could this affect my Rite of Entry later? And I think The Other Maker understood that immediately. Because you don't necessarily have to believe that something is going to happen to be afraid of it. You just start imagining all the possible connections.

The Gatekeepers, the funding, the visa, whatever comes next.

And suddenly this completely ordinary thing—putting a work in a public square—doesn't feel so ordinary anymore. You're standing there thinking, okay, am I still allowed to do this? Is this still just a performance? Or has it become something else? And I think that's the part that stays with you. Even when nothing happens. You still wonder whether it could have meant something. And whether, later on, someone else might decide that it did.

As I enter SIGN, my eyes fixate on the fallen chandelier. Its shiny exterior feels fraudulent to what's actually going on. Inside of me. Its most fragile part, and yet most important part - the light bulbs - are switched with plastic renditions of flames. On one hand, they cannot project light anymore, they can only imitate it. On the other, they have become more hardened and resilient, adapting to what's yet to come.

Ahead of me, a mirror that acts both as a reflective surface and a portal. I see the chain of the chandelier reflected in it, however also the part with the 3D printed flames that technically wouldn't be visible from that angle of the mirror. The line between virtuality and physicality blur from the get go. Objects accumulate. You thought you knew those objects from somewhere. I wonder if that horse was here last time I was here. It's strangely familiar. I feel like everything changes all the time and it doesn't wait for me to catch up.

At the time preceding the building up of the exhibition, The Hand and I had made an appointment to meet. I shared with him that during the time of my participation in the art initiative of The Betwixt that took place entirely in the public space of our city, two of the artworks had stayed with me, even months after the public interventions were a thing of the past. Coincidentally or not, both of the interventions were executed by the only foreign nationals to The Land. The project was calling for the artists to initiate a public intervention, and so they did. In both cases, either municipal enforcement officers or private security officers got involved. I believe neither of the makers had anticipated that their art works would come in conflict with the corresponding institutional forces. Their concerns immediately funneled through the possibility of these encounters affecting their forthcoming Rite of Entry. I belong to one of the nations of The Land, the poorest one of them, and yet the seals of my identity ignorantly wear our *uniting* badge of honour: the circle of golden stars. It is a rarity but at that moment I felt rather spoiled. At that time I wasn't even aware what the rules imposed by The Gatekeepers really entailed. I thought they were mostly busy with granting access to people who make it within the set requirements for income. However, based on the observations I gained throughout the months spanning to this current exhibition, I became convinced that this bureaucratic framework has accounted for the omnipresent feelings of anxiety and precarity among the makers I have spoken with.

The Hand had already been through this process and had been granted limited access to the Land for another two years. He told me that if I am interested in the process, I can talk to The Eye about it because he is just starting to apply.

Essential interest to the Dutch culture

Are you going to work as a self-employed artist in the Netherlands? Your work needs to be of essential interest to the Dutch culture. To assess this, the IND requests advice from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

In these situations, there is an essential interest to Dutch culture:

- You get paid directly from a national culture fund (in Dutch: [Rijkscultuurfonds](#)).
- You are going to work for a cultural institution in the Netherlands. And this institution is of a such a high quality that its cultural importance is established according to the OCW. Also, the institution must have a genuine need for your activities.

Source: <https://ind.nl/en/residence-permits/work/residence-permit-self-employed-person#requirements>

A week later when I met with The Eye, he told me that things got nicely synchronised in the in-between of receiving an invitation from The Betwixt and applying for the Rite of Entry. He has been living in one of the national states of The Land for three years now and has been working in the Makers world since. However, his years of access have been running out and he is ought to apply for a temporary extension from The Gatekeepers. It is yet not clear when he would receive a response from them but legally during the time of waiting, he may be granted permission to perform only specific type of work. Those who know about things have figured out a doorway to avoiding these unethical regulations imposed by The Gatekeepers. Usually, such a procedure involves the help of a Law Whisperer.

I creep in behind the black curtain. Depending on which part of the video you stumble on, the feeling can be either sinister or ironic. Either way, I feel surveilled. From every nook and corner there is a force patiently waiting; I just know it is ought to get me. I don't see any place to hide; to close my eyes; to rest.

Once your orientation permit expires, and you are awaiting the outcome of your application as a self-employed artist, you can obtain a residence endorsement sticker from the IND. This sticker demonstrates your legal residence in the Netherlands whilst awaiting for the outcome of the application, but you are not permitted to continue working, not even as a self-employed business owner or freelance.

You may consider initiating an objection procedure against the issuance of the sticker, to obtain the labour market notification that allows you to work as a self-employed person or freelancer. Such a procedure generally takes about one to two months. You are not permitted to work during this procedure.

Source: <https://www.everaert.nl/en/blog/residence-permits-for-self-employed-artists-designers-and-musicians-recent-developments/>

I descend downstairs. The dimensions of the newly produced objects are set down to the millimetre. The mechanism is simple. You set the dimensions; you stock up the filament; the filament goes through the heated nozzle; the filament turns into liquid and subsequently gets squeezed out and layer by layer gives form to the new object. Everything is calculated and yet failures still happen. The Hand and The Eye deliberately make room for failures; failures that they showcase and even celebrate. At the finissage, when asked what his favourite object was, The Hand chose a faulty one. An object that based on the circumstances in that specific moment, had no other choice than to turn the way it did.

I feel a restraint to such forms of self-acceptance and gentleness. While I am here, there is no room for failure. As a result of this conviction, I often even trap myself in compulsive loops where I go over the mistakes I made in life and the alternative actions I could have pursued instead. Somewhere along the way, an aching feeling of guilt came and settled inside of my body, as by now it is comfortably nesting there. It is a strange feeling of guilt that is a result of the inner conflict between leaving behind a place in society that has been given to you at birth and the recurring realisation that there might never be a place for you in another society. So I try to be at two places at the same time. But we all know that this isn't possible.

Every trip back to arrange bureaucratic matters; to become for an hour the adult holding your cousin's baby, as they have held you once when you were one. Every trip to swim in the sea which you have swam in since birth; every year to climb the mountain in your mother's city and sit at the same spot each time after you have conquered the top. Every trip, to become the person who you were before you left. Except, with each trip, it becomes harder and harder. Thesus' ship has started its transformation. With each trip, you realise that yet another part of you has become replaced. You are a new object too.

I am still downstairs. The machine is building block by block and it's not going to stop until the goal is reached.

On this page you will find the required amounts per residence permit. Your income should at least be equal to the required amount for the residence permit you are applying for.

Application for a residence permit as a self-employed person

This required amount is valid from 1 July 2026 up to and including 31 December 2026.

Gross profit per month (with holiday allowance)	€ 1,766.77
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Source: <https://ind.nl/en/required-amounts-income-requirements#application-for-a-residence-permit-as-a-self-employed-person>

When I talked with the Hand and The Eye, they both seemed certain of what their next steps in The Land would be. The orientation year was over. Then what's next is the temporary residence for two years. After that, extending for another five years. Only after that, the opportunity for a permanent residence. The Eye said that this is simply how the process goes for everyone, then jokingly suggested, in light of all the milestones still ahead, that life would be good within five years.

As with the machine in the basement of The Betwixt whose parameters of work one can set, The Gatekeepers have also installed their own dimensions of deciding who deserves to live where. Those are parameters that dictate the pace of foreign land nationals' lives. Hence, not by obligation, but by a condition of right of residence, one is urged to replace parts of themselves that would serve the new system's rules. I recognise that perhaps, as an unconscious response, the virtual universe of The Hand and The Eye is a space that welcomes confusion and standing still. It is a space where meanings can be negotiated and ambiguity can offer solace and comfort. It is a protest against the conditional framework of The Gatekeepers of viewing people as economically efficient pawns. Here, one can rest and not know.

The exhibition...it is also about ambiguity. I personally operate in that area. We started from the situation we were in and kept asking what it was actually about. Is it about the political situation of the land we come from? Is it about us individually, as nationals of that land, and whatever that means? I think that uncertainty was what fuelled the work the most. And then, from that, came this broader confusion about the things we consume every day – the entertainment, the images, the opinions, all these things that surround us and somehow shape the way we understand things. But within all of that, we're also constantly trying to find something else. To

make connections, to give things new meanings, even when we're not sure what those meanings are supposed to be.

The machine has done it. The object is finalised. Another piece to be added to the horse statute. It is not a complete horse and it never will be. Completeness had never been the objective here. With every visit to The Betwixt the past weeks, it became more clear to me that change was the premise through and out. Theseus' ship changes its parts while you and I are onboard. The circumstances we end up in, whether we would contest them or not, require us to conform and adapt. The circumstances we leave behind, don't belong to us anymore. I never liked change while growing up because it always made me feel like I am one step behind. The things that I was accustomed to would always abruptly disappear; they would slip through my fingers like sand, leaving me once again in the unknown, starting from zero. All I know is that the machine will keep on making new parts and parts that don't serve us anymore will be replaced and wrapped in plastic. Time will inevitably pass, however the question is would The Hand still be The Hand after The Rite of Entry has been completed.