

*a question for Rizq Naherta*

Michiel Teeuw: In your gathering process for this research, how do you navigate different on- and offline environments, and how is the way that you find and search things influenced by different structures of coloniality? How do you categorize and classify the found materials, and what is their international context?

Rizq Naherta: I first stumbled upon mostly online materials, because most of the archives are situated in online organizations. I contacted them about this project, and asked to form a sort of collaboration and relationship. The historical context of gathering materials and sources, specifically in anthropology and sociology, has this form of coloniality/modernity. With project like this, there's the importance of sustaining a form of relation towards the organizations and people which you are gathering materials from.

From the start of this project, I've had the mindset of being considerate about this form of extractions, because I realized that this form of extraction is very prominent in lot of art and cultural fields. I maneuver that by having this attitude of relationality, not only through the materials or the organizations, but also through the people who come across the space. From the start of this project, I wanted to have all of the materials to be presented mundanely, rather than romanticized. I want people to feel and experience the space, I don't want to make it to be this sterilized white cube.

I started online: looking at online data, emailing, contacting people through Zoom and other online platforms. But through time, as the project finalizes and materializes itself, and has a chance to connect with people through community organizing and workshops, the project is stepping out into a more offline kind of zone. The digital materials are materialized physically through publication and the people get a chance to look through them. In the workshops, with some of my friends I present the history behind these magazines. It has moments of online presence, but also offline presence. I managed to get a lot of contacts of queer diaspora, which have relationships with queer and more general activism in Indonesia, closely connected to a lot of grassroots communities and organizations. I also got the chance to see them in person as well, in Yogyakarta ██████████ and places in the Netherlands as well.

I try to detach myself as much as possible with Western forms of classification and categorization. Of course, I can't detach 100%, but I try to place everything, as if it is interconnected with each other. The magazine correlates with the space, the space correlates with the films and the films correlate with people conversing about it: a lot of identities and lived experiences are intersecting. But also, some of the translations, presentations and manifestations have their own opacity. I don't want to over-explain myself to certain people, and the space is definitely catered for queer people. On top of that, it will be a much more welcoming space for queer people of color, because these spaces are really present in a lot of places in the Global South, like Colombia in Abya Yala or India in South Asia. The similarities and interconnections are very important with this sort of project. I primarily focus on South-East Asia, because I want to connect with other South-East Asian places and collaborate with other Southeast Asian people. And with that, I hope it sort of interconnects with other places in the global South.



Michiel Teeuw: How does the work you're doing, and the material you're gathering, relate to the kind of lived and ecological sites of these materials, and the different life forms that live there?

G.C. Heemskerk: We're a 100% percent vegan collective. We will never use animal products because non-human animals are individuals. We don't want to use them as a commodity or object. And we don't want to cause them any harm, because they deserve a good life, as much as I do or you do. And they also deserve a place on this planet, so we will never kill them or use them. So that's a very big point for us. For instance, when I'm drawing, I will never use a brush with pig hairs. When I buy material or collect stuff, it's always plant-based.

And then there's of course an interesting question; in critical plant studies, there has been more and more scientific information about the intelligence, stress and communication of plants. And that is also something that's very important to us, because we want to contribute to the ontological shift that we perceive plants, also as individuals, and as beings that deserve respect and well-being. But plants are autotrophs, which means that they are the life-givers on earth, and they're the only ones on the planet who can make the immaterial into the material by photosynthesis, who can make organic material from inorganic material.

So you have to eat plants to be alive. They are the source of life on this planet. In modern agriculture, plants are used in a very violent way. Not being able to autonomously reproduce, not choosing the place where they want to grow. A lot of animals only pick what they need and the plant can grow further. This is very utopic, but many animals are already doing this, and I think they can be our teacher in this.

In the collective, we try to keep things in mind as much as possible, but it's very hard to do so in a capitalist, anthropocentric world. Of course we make mistakes too, but I think it's nice to work towards something: to have a specific way of looking at things and trying to be as just as possible.

Our main goal is to perceive non-human beings as potential artists, and try to collaborate with them or be a facilitator. So that human art appreciators can see for maybe the first time that humans are not the only ones capable of making, reading and enjoying art.

When we made a smell zine in front of SIGN, we had to go to the city center. Two of the members of our Collective (Wiske and Doris, who are former strays) have been neglected and abused and find it very, very stressful to go to the city center. We brought them somewhere where they don't necessarily want to be, and we tried to keep it short, but I noticed that they were very stressed while we were making the smell zine. When you are in a collective, you want to take care of each other. So you don't like it when you see one of your friends is stressed out.

Our dogs get stressed when they're not in their safe space. Therefore, we work a lot from home. The rest of the time that we were in Groningen, we mostly worked on this campsite in a more natural area. The dogs felt better and safer, and then the humans also felt better and safer. Because yeah, when your friends are happy, you are happy.