



Disconnected / Reconnected (#1)

Edition Reijmerstok (NL): September 12 to November 11, 2020

©Jonathan Wanders, February 6, 2021

On September 12, 1944, the liberation of the Netherlands began in Mesch, South Limburg. Close to Reijmerstok. Since that day WE have been living in freedom. WE have been free for 76 years. But do WE actually live in freedom? And who are WE? If there is a WE, there is also a THEY. Do THEY also live in freedom? What is our responsibility as free (liberated) people? Is our liberation just a beautiful memory or is it a promise to future generations, anywhere in the world?

These questions and thoughts were the starting point for the art project Disconnected / Reconnected. A work that is about freedom and connection. About (re) connecting and disconnecting.

With the project Disconnected / Reconnected, artist Jonathan Wanders wants to excite and challenge people. He wants to give rise to thoughts and conversations. It's a call for an open dialogue. Disconnected / Reconnected does this by seeking confrontation with our collective recent history and shows how it is connected to our situation today, as a starting point for conducting a dialogue. In a special way, iconic events are experienced in a local setting and a different perspective is offered to a wide audience.

Freedom

The realization that peace and freedom cannot be taken for granted is passed on with this project to current and future generations in an innovative, provocative and challenging way. Our freedom to come and go wherever we want, has been severely limited by the Covid-19 measures. But as tragic as this global event is, the virus seemed to be a cure for our global indifference. For our disconnection.

The images of the art installation - a traveling exhibition - remind us of other shocking events that influenced and still affect our freedoms. The images themselves are not shocking, rather peaceful. Nevertheless, it is an ominous peace.

The art project consists of an installation of 6 provocative and confronting image boards in the public space and a publicly accessible debate evening, in which open dialogue and the (re) making of connections are central. The aim is to present the installation in several editions at various locations.

Location

The first edition takes place in Reijmerstok (NL). The installation is located on the edge of a meadow, located at the intersection of the Reijmerstokkerdorpstraat with the Provincialeweg N598, next to the public car park opposite the A Gen Ing eatery. Address: Provincialeweg 1, Reijmerstok. The installation is publicly accessible. The debate evening has not yet been able to take place due to the Covid-19 measures.

The location at Reijmerstok was not chosen at random. It is located on the road between two American Cemeteries: the American Cemetery in Margraten and the one in Henri-Chapelle, Belgium. In addition, the public car park is a central location in South Limburg. A gathering and meeting place.

Period

The installation of *Disconnected / Reconnected (#1)* can be seen from September 12 to November 11, 2020. These dates have been chosen for their symbolism: on September 12, 1944, the liberation of the Netherlands began in Mesch and on November 11, 1918, the Armistice was signed. The end of World War I. Thanks to the fleeing German Kaiser Wilhelm II the station in Eijsden was world news. Both Mesch and Eijsden are located in the municipality of Eijsden-Margraten.

Installation

Six images of iconic events have been placed in a local setting and can be seen in the public space. The images are composed of photos, taken with a smartphone in the municipalities of Maastricht, Gulpen-Wittem and Eijsden-Margraten, in combination with censoring color areas, creating a highly abstracted translation of the events.

By connecting iconic events to the local environment, the artist wants to stimulate the awareness that the world does not stop at the boundaries of their own living and residential area. The process of disconnecting to (re) connecting, from *disconnected* to *reconnected*.

From left to right the following images can be seen at the installation in Reijmerstok:

- Twin Towers, 2001 / -----, -----
- Theo van Gogh, 2004. Charlie Hebdo, 2015 / Grote Staat, Maastricht
- MH17, 2014 / Field, Wittem
- Alan Kurdi, 2015 / Day beach, Oost-Maarland
- Brussels, 2016 / Train station, Eijsden
- Christchurch. Sri Lanka, 2019 / Basilica of Saint Servatius, Maastricht

The images refer to tragic events, yet Jonathan is optimistic and sees the future positively. “The past makes who we are, but the future determines what we do and become. It is up to us to decide what we take into the future. As a society we gradually have all the means at our disposal, now it is important to use them correctly. That also means that we have to confront and seek for connections, as a starting point for conducting a dialogue.”

Image culture and the role of the smartphone

People today probably see more images on one day than someone 100 years ago in their entire life. What does this do to us? It seems as if we are becoming indifferent and even immune to all the miserable news and the accompanying images we keep confronted with.

The photos of the installation were taken with a smartphone in the form of snapshots as posted everywhere on social media today. This form ensures more involvement of the spectators than the use of professional photos. After all, anyone could have taken the photo themselves. Since the introduction of the smartphone, everyone could be a potential photographer and reporter. Today our lives are inextricably connected with the smartphone. We follow the world with it and record our lives with it. Sometimes this seems like an addiction, something negative, also in relation to privacy. For countless refugees, however, the smartphone is extremely valuable and indispensable as a means of communication with their family or for determining a safe route. Many owe their lives to their smartphones.

The installation stimulates visitors to visit the locations themselves and to look up the iconic events with their smartphone. The smartphone as a tool in the process from disconnecting to (re)connecting.

Process

Disconnected / Reconnected is, like many of Jonathan's projects, part of a process. Just as life is a process: a fluid movement with loose and fixed connections. Disconnected / Reconnected is a follow-up to Jonathan's projects such as: Refugees (#1), the three Remembrance Road editions and Memorial Wall (#2).

Title: *Disconnected / Reconnected (#1)*

Location: Reijmerstok (NL). The installation was located on the edge of a meadow, at the intersection of the Reijmerstokkerdorpstraat with the Provincialeweg N598, next to the public car park opposite the A Gen Ing eatery. Address: Provincialeweg 1, Reijmerstok. The installation was publicly accessible. The debate evening will take place in Community House A Gen Ing. Address: Reijmerstokkerdorpsstraat 177, Reijmerstok.

Process: January 2019 to September 2020.

Period: Installation from September 12 to November 11, 2020. Date of the debate evening is not yet known.

Material: 7 dibond boards with full color print and matt protective laminate. 7 metal frames with aluminum-look coating.

Dimensions: The installation consists of 6 image boards and 1 information board. Each board is 1.2 m wide x 0.9 m high x 4 mm thick, clamped in a metal frame. The bottom of the signs is 1.1 m above ground level, the top of the signs is 2 m. Dimensions of the poles of metal frames: 50 x 50 mm. Total width of the installation is 32 m.

Initiative: Jonathan Wanders.

Financing and donors: Province of Limburg (via Voordekunst), Foundation Brand Cultuurfonds Limburg, Foundation Kanunnik Salden / Nieuwenhof, Elisabeth Strouven Fund, Municipality of Gulpen-Wittem, Foundation Art Buro Limburg, Cooperative Fund Rabobank Zuid-Limburg Oost, HeusschenCopier Landschapskracht, Foundation Fonds voor Sociale Instellingen, carlabloemen.nu and all donors of Voordekunst.

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Photos: Ralph Sluysmans.

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Installation Reijmerstok: September 12 to November 11, 2020



The six image boards of the installation *Disconnected / Reconnected* (#1) as seen in Reijmerstok in the period from September 12 to November 11, 2020.



The information board of the installation *Disconnected / Reconnected* (#1) as seen in Reijmerstok in the period from September 12 to November 11, 2020.



General explanation of images of the installation

Each image is explained on the following pages.

All images refer to tragic, iconic events from our recent history. To enhance the unpleasant experience for the viewer, without actually showing macabre details, Jonathan Wanders has given the photos a desolate, clinical and unheimlich feeling. People or human activities cannot be seen on any image. Not in a normally busy shopping street in Maastricht, not on the beach. The images show predominantly gray, not very bright shades with cloud cover. This also creates a sharp contrast with the bright color areas. These color areas are positioned in such a way that they unbalance the symmetrically photographed images. Between the censoring color areas and the viewer, the potential photographer, a tension arises between distance and proximity, attraction and repulsion. At such a distance that you can see the "victim" well enough out of a sense of curiosity. But at a safe distance, without getting involved.

Twin Towers, 2001 / -----, -----



Notable in the row of images is the first image: a black surface with a white rectangle. This is referred to on the information board by a black horizontal bar. The original image showed a photo of the American Cemetery in Margraten, with the Memorial Tower in the middle. Jonathan also communicated this image (below) during the Disconnected / Reconnected (#1) process.



The original image with title: Twin Towers, 2001 / Netherlands American Cemetery, Margraten

This image links the attacks on the Twin Towers of September 11, 2001 with the American Cemetery in Margraten. Both the attacks and World War II are two defining iconic events in our recent history. This image is about freedom, symbolism, conflicts, the role of the Americans, about past and present, about far away and nearby. The American Cemetery in Margraten is inextricably linked to the inhabitants and identity of the South Limburg region.

However, it was not allowed to use the photo of the American Cemetery in Margraten for the art project. After months of communicating with the American organization American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), more than a week before the start of the art project, Jonathan received the brief and only statement by email that: "the art project is not aligned with ABMC's mission." The request to use the photograph of the Memorial Tower in the American Cemetery was denied. After a request for an explanation, the ABMC provided a detailed explanation. In summary, they see their mission as a sacred duty: remembering, honoring and telling the story of those buried in their locations. All requests outside the context of ABMC's mission will be rejected.

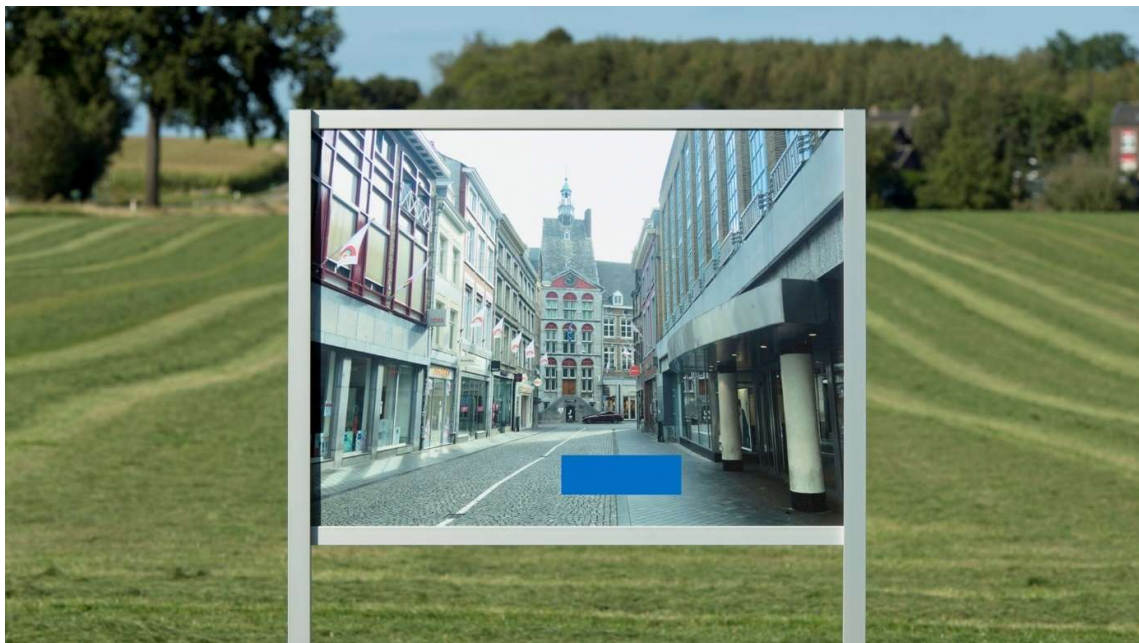
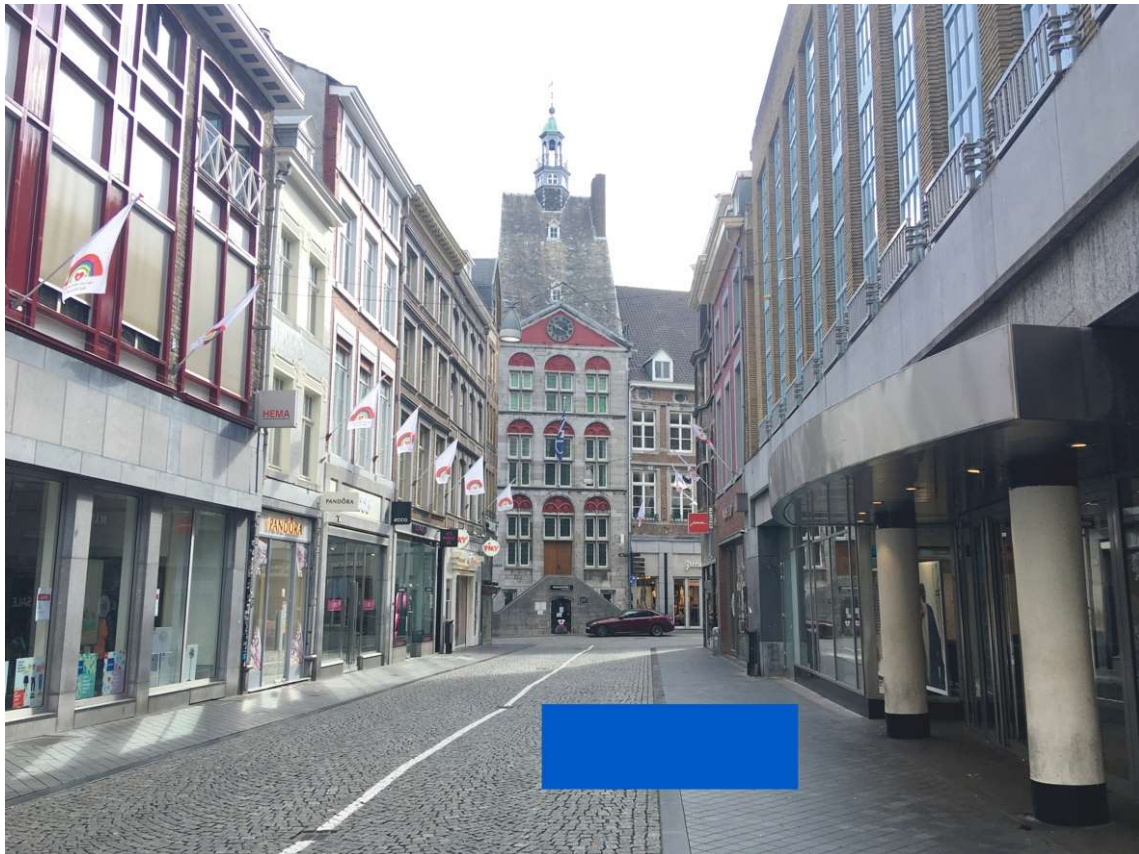


Given the good relationship of Jonathan with the cemetery in Margraten, he has adopted a grave there and still has monthly contact with the relatives, he has decided to respect the decision of ABMC. However, he disagrees with the decision. After all, the project is about freedom and maintaining an open dialogue. Out of respect for the art project, he therefore applied self-censorship by censoring the photo and the name of the cemetery by placing a black surface over it. Thanks to this artistic solution, the image remains part of the ensemble and of the dialogue. A dialogue that he also wants to continue with the ABMC, so that the original image can hopefully be seen in a future edition.

Afterwards, Jonathan decided not to censor the entire title (as seen on the information board), but only the name and location of the cemetery.

The correct title is therefore: Twin Towers, 2001 / -----, -----.

Theo van Gogh, 2004. Charlie Hebdo, 2015 / Grote Staat, Maastricht



This image refers to two tragic, iconic events where freedom of expression is central: the murder of Theo van Gogh on November 2, 2004 and the attack on Charlie Hebdo on January 7, 2015. Attacks that took place (partly) in the street. The blue color area refers to the French cop who was shot in cold blood in the street. The gruesome images of this have left an indelible impression on Jonathan. Both the first photo of the murdered Theo van Gogh and the video of the murdered cop were taken with mobile phones.

The photo was taken in one of the most famous shopping streets in the Netherlands: Grote Staat, Maastricht. A busy shopping street where people come to consume, relax, unburden and maintain social contacts. Linking the tragic events to such a public place reveals a reality that we want to escape while shopping. The unheimlich feeling is reinforced by the absence of people in a normally busy place, the car in the background and the gray colors.

The Dinghuis (with turret) adds an extra layer to the image. This was a medieval courthouse. Prison cells were located in the cellars, and later elsewhere in the building.

That the photo was taken during the Covid-19 period can be deduced from the white flags (with rainbow) and the white stripe on the street. A period in which we again experience that freedom cannot be taken for granted.

MH17, 2014 / Field, Wittem





A field in Wittem with in the background the striking row of Italian poplars on the border with Eys. These trees give the landscape its special Tuscan appearance. A recurring image in many tourist expressions to promote this region. A well-known tourist region where people come to relax and enjoy a carefree holiday.

Holiday flight MH17 was on its way from Schiphol to Kuala Lumpur when the Boeing 777 was shot down by a missile over the war zone of eastern Ukraine on 17 July 2014. All 298 occupants are killed, including 196 Dutch. Photos of the consequences of this disaster show wreckage, victims and their belongings scattered over a landscape similar to that in South Limburg.

The colored areas symbolize the victims of the MH17. The red and blue color refer to the colors of Malaysia Airlines, which were seen on the wreckage, and the flag of Russia.

On November 25, 1944, close to this spot, behind Monastery Wittem, the 20-year-old American pilot James W. Jeter crashed with his plane. He was killed because his parachute did not open. Jeter accompanied bombers that would attack oil installations in Germany. On September 13, 2020, a war memorial was unveiled for him at the intersection of Wittem, opposite the gas station.

Alan Kurdi, 2015 / Day beach, Oost-Maarland



This image refers to the death of the Syrian boy Alan Kurdi. On September 2, 2015, he washed up dead on the Turkish beach. Drowned in an attempt to flee in search of safety and a better life in Europe. A dream that ended in a nightmare. The whole family had died. Only the father survived.

This event most affected Jonathan. Children stand for innocence, for the future. He himself has a young son.

The rectangle refers to the red T-shirt that Alan was wearing. The photo was taken at the day beach of Oost-Maarland. A place for recreation and relaxation. Just 1 kilometer from this place, dozens of refugees jumped from a truck on the A2 highway, near Gronsveld and Eijsden, in both April and August 2019. A number of refugees were arrested, some remained without a trace. There were also minors.

More info (in Dutch):

https://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dmf20190411_00100806/calais-bij-gronsveld and
https://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dmf20190807_00117604/zeker-niet-de-eerste-verstekelingen-die-in-limburg-uit-eeen-truck-klimmen

Update (October 30, 2020)

These news articles (in Dutch) from October 2020 are relevant in relation to the above theme and context:

- Stowaways jump from truck on parking lot A2 (28 October 2020):
https://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dmf20201028_94493480 +
<https://www.burgernet.nl/burgernet/3178643>
- Arab boy (10) shows up without family at gas station: "He came alone from Syria " (28 October 2020): https://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dmf20201028_94919058
- Reconstruction: migrant Tran Ngoc Hieu suffocated in a refrigerated truck of death after he left Cadier en Keer shelter (October 18, 2020):
https://www.limburger.nl/cnt/dmf20201018_92739693

Brussels, 2016 / Train station, Eijsden



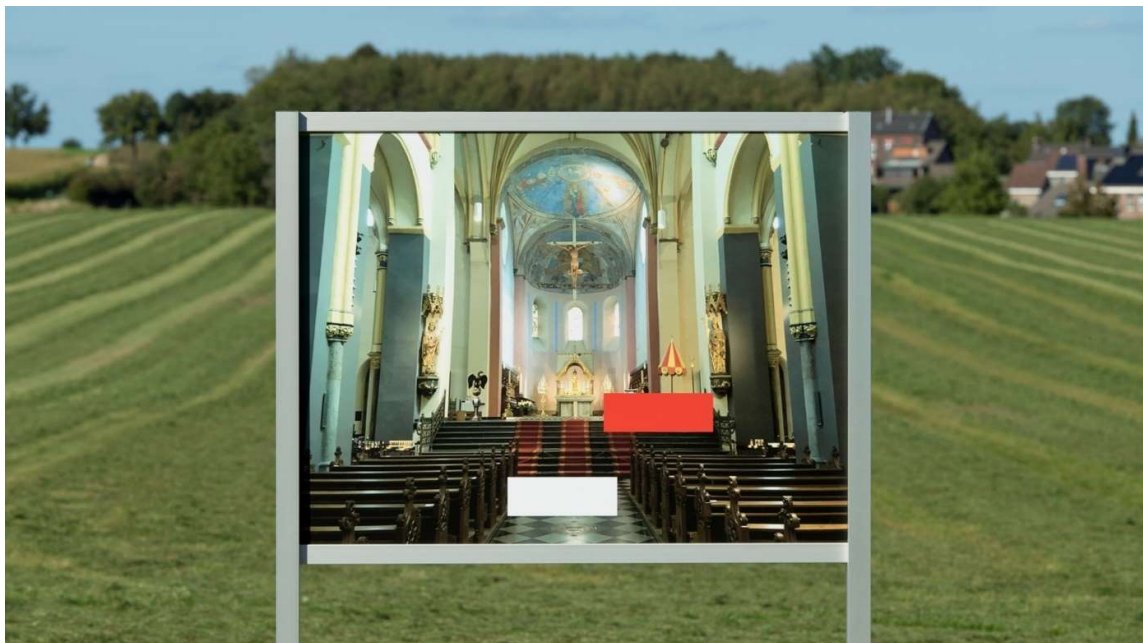


The train station in Eijsden. From here you are within 1.5 hours by train in Brussels. On March 22, 2016, the attacks in the Brussels metro (Maalbeek) and at Zaventem airport took place. Dozens of deaths and many injuries resulted. This image refers to perhaps the most famous image of the attacks in Brussels: the two injured women sitting on a bench at Zaventem airport shortly after the explosions. A photo taken by Georgian journalist Ketevan Kardava, with her cell phone.

The colors, white and red, were chosen because of their symbolic meaning, the contrast effect and because they were already part of the color palette of the image series. The color white represents innocence and peace. Red represents blood, life and war. The colors contrast nicely with the background and with each other.

In the early morning of 10 November 1918, the station in Eijsden was world news thanks to the fleeing German Kaiser Wilhelm II. The emperor had applied for asylum in the neutral Netherlands and had to wait until the morning of November 12 at Eijsden station before he received the message that his application for asylum had been approved. In the meantime, the armistice had been signed on 11 November 1918. The end of the First World War,

Christchurch. Sri Lanka, 2019 / Basilica of Saint Servatius, Maastricht





On March 15, 2019, attacks took place at two mosques in the city of Christchurch, New Zealand. 51 people were killed. The deadliest shooting in New Zealand in the modern era. A month later, on Easter Sunday April 21, 2019, eight attacks took place in Sri Lanka. Three Roman Catholic churches and three luxury hotels were targeted, among others. About 253 were killed and about 500 injured. The attacks in Sri Lanka appear to be a retaliation for the terror attacks in Christchurch. A cycle of violence.

This image refers to both attacks and makes the link with the Basilica of Saint Servatius in Maastricht. The oldest still existing church in the Netherlands. The complex is still a focal point in Catholic life, which is so characteristic for the religious atmosphere and folk culture in South Limburg. The Saint Servatius has an important pilgrimage function, which also resulted in the most famous Dutch sanctuary procession: the seven-yearly Sanctuary procession of Maastricht.

The colors, white and red, were chosen because of their symbolic meaning, the contrast effect and because they were already part of the color palette of the image series. In the Catholic faith, the color white is used during the Easter season. Red symbolizes the blood of the martyrs and the fire of the holy spirit. The colors contrast nicely with the background and with each other.