

1  
De overheid bezuinigde 200 miljoen (op een budget van 900 miljoen), de gemeenten nog eens 125 miljoen. Zie: Jet Bussemakers, 'Kamerbrief over de gevolgen van de cultuurbezuinigingen', Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 24 december 2013. Geraadpleegd via: [www.eenvandaag.nl/uploads/doc/kamerbrief-over-de-gevolgen-van-de-cultuurbezuinigingen.pdf](http://www.eenvandaag.nl/uploads/doc/kamerbrief-over-de-gevolgen-van-de-cultuurbezuinigingen.pdf), op 23 juni 2016.

2  
Sociaal Economische Raad, "Verkenning arbeidsmarkt cultuursector", januari 2016. Geraadpleegd via: [www.ser.nl/~media/files/internet/publicaties/overige/2010\\_2019/2016/verkenning-arbeidsmarkt-cultuursector.ashx](http://www.ser.nl/~media/files/internet/publicaties/overige/2010_2019/2016/verkenning-arbeidsmarkt-cultuursector/verkenning-arbeidsmarkt-cultuursector.ashx), op 23 juni 2016.

3  
Sebastiaan Timmermans, 'Kunstdebat: Halbe Zijlstra wijst alle moties af', *De Volkskrant*, 27 juni 2011. Geraadpleegd via: [www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2676/Cultuur/article/detail/2457946/2011/06/27/Kunstdebat-Halbe-Zijlstra-wijst-alle-moties-af.dhtml](http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2676/Cultuur/article/detail/2457946/2011/06/27/Kunstdebat-Halbe-Zijlstra-wijst-alle-moties-af.dhtml), op 23 juni 2016.

4  
Zie hierover bijvoorbeeld het beeld dat het Internationaal Monetair Fonds schiep in haar rapport over voor de *World Economic Outlook* van September 2011, 'Slowing Growth, Rising Risks'. Geraadpleegd via: [www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/02/pdf/text.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/02/pdf/text.pdf), op 23 juni 2016.

5  
Zie ook de Kunstlichtpublicatie De Publieke Markt. Berend Jan Langenberg, 'De financiering van de culturele sector in Nederland', in: *Kunstlicht*, nr. 1/2, 2013.

6  
Tussen 1945 en 1980 is het budget van de begroting voor het uitvoeren van het kunstbeleid meer dan vertienvoudigd. Zie hierover: H.O. van den Berg, *De structuur van het kunstbeleid*, Den Haag: Distributie Overheids Publicaties (DOP), 1985, p. 11.

7  
Uit de *Memorie van Toelichting* van het jaar 1983 van het Ministerie van Welzijn, Volksgezondheid en Cultuur, geciteerd in: Warná Oosterbaan Martinus, *Schoonheid, welzijn, kwaliteit: kunstbeleid en verantwoording na 1945*, Den Haag: SDU, 1990, p. 73.

8  
Over de Beeldende Kunsten Regeling zie: Roel Pots, *Cultuur, koningen en democraten: overheid en cultuur in Nederland*, Amsterdam: Boom, 2000.

9  
Ian Buchanan, 'Vanishing mediator', in: Rex Butler (ed.), *The Zizek Dictionary*, London: Acumen, 2015.

10  
Fredric Jameson, 'The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber', in: *New German Critique*, nr. 1, Winter 1973, p. 78.

1  
The Dutch Government cut 200 million (from a 900 million budget), the municipalities another 125 million. See also: Jet Bussemaker, 'Kamerbrief over de gevolgen van de cultuurbezuinigingen' (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap) (Letter on the consequences of the culture cuts, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science), December 24th, 2013. Accessed through: [www.eenvandaag.nl/uploads/doc/kamerbrief-over-de-gevolgen-van-de-cultuurbezuinigingen.pdf](http://www.eenvandaag.nl/uploads/doc/kamerbrief-over-de-gevolgen-van-de-cultuurbezuinigingen.pdf), on 23 June, 2016.

2  
Sociaal Economische Raad, 'Verkenning arbeidsmarkt cultuursector', January 2016. Accessed through: [www.ser.nl/~media/files/internet/publicaties/overige/2010\\_2019/2016/verkenning-arbeidsmarkt-cultuursector.ashx](http://www.ser.nl/~media/files/internet/publicaties/overige/2010_2019/2016/verkenning-arbeidsmarkt-cultuursector/verkenning-arbeidsmarkt-cultuursector.ashx), on 23 June 2016.

3  
Sebastiaan Timmermans, 'Kunstdebat: Halbe Zijlstra wijst alle moties af', *De Volkskrant*, 27 June 2011. Accessed through: [www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2676/Cultuur/article/detail/2457946/2011/06/27/Kunstdebat-Halbe-Zijlstra-wijst-alle-moties-af.dhtml](http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2676/Cultuur/article/detail/2457946/2011/06/27/Kunstdebat-Halbe-Zijlstra-wijst-alle-moties-af.dhtml), on 23 June 2016.

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See for example the image created by the International Monetary Fund in its report for the *World Economic Outlook* of September 2011, 'Slowing Growth, Rising Risks'. Accessed through: [www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/02/pdf/text.pdf](http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2011/02/pdf/text.pdf), on 23 June 2016.

5  
See also the Kunstlicht issue The Public Market: Berend Jan Langenberg, 'De financiering van de culturele sector in Nederland', in: *Kunstlicht*, nr. 1/2, 2013.

6  
In the period between 1945–1980 the budget for carrying out the art policy is more than tenfold. See: H.O. van den Berg, *De structuur van het kunstbeleid* (The Structure of the Arts Policy) Den Haag: Distributie Overheids Publicaties (DOP), Den Haag, 1985, p. 11.

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From the *Memorie van Toelichting* (Explanatory Memorandum) of the year 1983, published by the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture, cited in: Warná Oosterbaan Martinus, *Schoonheid, welzijn, kwaliteit: kunstbeleid en verantwoording na 1945* (Beauty, Well-being, Quality: arts policy and accountability after 1945) Den Haag: SDU, 1990, p. 73.

8  
Considering the Beeldende Kunsten Regeling, see Roel Pots, *Cultuur, koningen en democraten: overheid en cultuur in Nederland* (Culture, Kings, and Democrats: government and culture in the Netherlands), Amsterdam: Boom, 2000.

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Ian Buchanan, 'Vanishing mediator', in: Rex Butler (ed.), *The Zizek Dictionary*, London: Acumen, 2015.

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Fredric Jameson, 'The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber', in: *New German Critique*, nr. 1, Winter 1973, p. 78.

## THE ART OF IMPACT: ASPIRIN FOR AMPUTATION

Steven ten Thije

*The Art of Impact* is a state-funding programme initiated by minister Jet Bussemaker of the labour party PvdA dedicated to the support of art with substantial societal impact. It is a special two-year programme, with a total budget of seven million euros, and the main thrust is rather straightforward. Beyond the safe ivory towers of culture — the museum, independent gallery spaces, etc. — artists enter into direct dialogue with their social context. These encounters result in new types of artistic projects that have immediate social impact. Supporting this type of art has been one of the few new investments this minister has been able to make in the arts.

It is quite easy to be critical of the programme, even if one is sympathetic to the idea of art being impactful. What can an incidental seven million euros do, in light of the 200 million cut from the cultural budget five years ago? These cuts were implemented with the blessing of a cabinet with the same Prime Minister — Mark Rutte — that introduced *The Art of Impact*. Only back then, the politician responsible for these cuts was of a different political family: the liberal party VVD. The damage done by these cuts — a drama still unfolding — makes any incidental investment in the arts seem apologetic in a disingenuous way. After the disastrous cuts, the new minister for culture has used this programme to give some substance to her desire to appear as a friend of the arts and mark the divide between her social democratic identity and her liberal predecessor. To many, *The Art of Impact* appears merely as a political strategy.

I'm afraid the critique of the programme as 'window-dressing' is legitimate. *The Art of Impact* feels like aspirin given to someone who has just lost a leg, with a doctor saying somewhat sheepishly that this is the best she could do. This casts a large shadow over the programme, yet stopping further analysis at this point would only leave us bitter and without any new insight into the situation. This is perhaps more unbearable than a straightforward dismissal of its strategy, so let's inquire for a moment as to what particular brand of aspirin it offers.

When zooming in on the programme itself, the most obvious issue that it raises is regarding the dynamic between art's autonomy and the programme's target: impactful art. One can imagine a critical analysis which demonstrates that throughout modernity, it has been especially art's autonomy that has made it useful and impactful. This argument might be theoretically valid, yet *The Art of Impact* is not a total overhaul of the tradition to support art's autonomy. In fact, *The Art of Impact* only marginally affects this autonomy, since it consists of an incidental programme drawing from a relatively small total amount of money. Especially if one considers the 80 million recently spent on the acquisition of one of Rembrandt's portraits, *The Art of Impact* is more of a gesture than a dramatic shift in politics. We could project the minister's hidden agenda onto it, suggesting that in her ideal world all art should follow the principles of *The Art of Impact*. However, there is little evidence to support such a projection. When analysing what it is, and not what it could be, the programme works primarily to raise awareness that a new type of art has emerged, which would benefit from public support.

The most interesting thing about *The Art of Impact*, in the end, is not so much the introduction of heterogeneity within the vocabulary of public funding for the arts, but a subtle conflict that this programme exposes in the political family of the social democrats who developed it. This conflict starts with the simple contradiction between its aspirations and its incidental nature. Those projects which are supported hope to introduce new artistic thinking within social processes beyond the domain of art. How can health care, science, social work, city development, infrastructure, etc., innovate

through artistic thinking? Appealing as this may be, the size of the programme is far too small to truly imagine that these vast and complex public terrains could be transformed or affected by a one-time investment of several million. This does not mean that nothing good can come out of it, yet it is not likely that the impact of the programme will be very big, to put it gently. Artists who have experience working in direct dialogue with social processes know that duration is essential, and two years for such processes is only a beginning. The programme, therefore, gives the impression of merely indicating this art exists with the hope it can find resources elsewhere. When following the discourse of the minister it becomes clear that this is not an impression, but rather, exactly how she hopes funding works in the arts. Evidence for this can be found in the vision of the minister on public support for the arts. At one point in her vision paper, 'Culture Moves', the minister directly addresses the question: why does the government support art? She answers by stating:

many artistic and cultural productions are not subsidized. However, I believe cultural policy is necessary because without government intervention, it would be difficult to fully express the many different ways in which culture is valuable to society. Government has a role to play precisely where the commercial market faces financial or geographical barriers, where talent incubators are lacking, or where innovation or experimentation is difficult to get off the ground.<sup>1</sup>

What this segment makes clear is that the position the government takes in relation to the arts is that of correcting the market. Even if the minister undoubtedly will state that this form of correction will be an indefinite task of the state with no end in sight — concert halls, museums, art schools, etc., cannot all survive without public support — still the most obvious conclusion is not drawn: supporting art is a structural part of the public infrastructure of the state. Following this logic, the incidental nature of *The Art of Impact* defines it primarily as a form of market correction, whereby the hope is that other flows of capital will happily take over this artistic production, when they have tasted its merits.

It is especially the combination of incidentally supporting socially impactful art combined with this admission of the primacy of the market in the early vision paper, which makes *The Art of Impact* an uncomfortable testimony to the current soul searching of the social democrats. In its current formulation it is hard not to read *The Art of Impact* as a child of neoliberal thinking. The social democratic element in it is reduced to the fact that the government tries to actively kick-start a new market for socially committed art, yet this makes the social democrats into not much more than benevolent, social feeling liberals. In this way the programme has not opened the door to reimagine the relationship between the state and art within social democratic thinking, which would truly differentiate them from the ruling neoliberals.

If the minister would have suggested the inclusion of a new criterion in already existent funding programmes, then the type of artistic production now supported for two years could have found a more sustainable foundation to build upon. This would also mean recognizing that funding for the arts is not merely a means to correct the market, but that next to private enjoyment, art also serves public interests, and that it is only logical if some artistic production is therefore structurally supported by the government. It should not be hard for the current labour party to state that after two decades of neoliberal experiments it has become clear that social processes do not improve when left to the market.

Hence, the biggest missed opportunity of *The Art of Impact* is that it neglected the possibility it offered to rethink the social democratic position of art's place in society. The heart of the social democratic vision is to make sure that people can actively participate in society, that they are treated fairly, and that they have an influence on the way they are governed. Art that allows people to express themselves and practice empathy through the encounter with the unfamiliar can be a valuable asset to restructure social processes and make them more inclusive. Only such processes require structural, and not incidental, support. When something is public, for both the artists as for the public engaging with the works, it is much easier to do this in a constructive manner when it can be placed consciously in the public part of our lives and financed through collective means. Which leads to a somewhat melancholic conclusion along the lines of 'let's not waste a missed opportunity'. Perhaps *The Art of Impact* is a problematic programme, but its merit could be its potential to show the social democrats exactly where they need to alter their discourse and change their tune. I would say this has come along just in time for the next election.

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<sup>1</sup> 'Culture Moves: The meaning of culture in a changing society', letter by the Netherlands Minister of Education Culture and Science to the Lower House of Parliament, 10 June 2013. Accessed through: [www.government.nl/documents/letters/2013/10/15/culture-moves](http://www.government.nl/documents/letters/2013/10/15/culture-moves), on 10 June 2016.