



INDE
PENDENT
SCHOOL



WORKSHOP



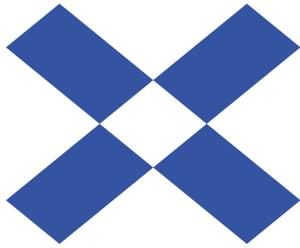
FOR THE CITY



RECON-
STRUCTIVE



POT-
TERY X SAM



JACOB





RECONSTRUCTIVE POTTERY BY SAM JACOB

Peculiar Museum of Speculative Artifacts

An instant museum of artifacts that speculates on the relationship between history, narration and objects.

Working with your hands and eyes, making them dirty in equal amount, you can create narratives about the city you live in, its past and its secrets. Reconstructive pottery has no theoretical framework, nor does it aspire to solve the world's problems. It is, in fact, a form of meditation, a way to contemplate the mysteries of the urban world around us.

Sam Jacob has been showing his work in this field in art galleries over the past few years and has been willing to share his secrets. Using fragments of artefacts of an unknown origin, clay, plaster and paint are used to reconstruct them to their original form, original in the sense that you make it up yourself.

Sam is principal of Sam Jacob Studio, professor of architecture at the University of Illinois at Chicago, director of Night School at the Architectural Association, and the editor of Strange Harvest. Sam's relation with Rotterdam goes way back. In 2008 he was part of the regeneration of Hoogvliet as the designer of cultural centre de Heerlijkheid. "It's not quite Psychedelic Brutalism, but it's aspiring to be something like that," says Sam Jacob about his work there.

During the Reconstructive Pottery workshop, Sam talked about the importance of the physical act, the improvisation, the impulsive gesture of getting the clay and reconstructing something. As Michelangelo saw the finished work in his marble block, the participants see in the ceramic fragments an opportunity: the opportunity to create something that does not exist, that perhaps will exist, has already existed or that exists elsewhere.

Thanks to Sam and all the participants for their great work, which resulted in the 'Peculiar Museum of Speculative Artifacts!'



PARTICIPANTS

Alex Hewitson
Anna Borunova
Antonio Barone
Cassandra Wilkins
Kasia Heijerman
Luca Moscelli
Luisa Parisi
Mark Minkjan
Michelle Provoost
Nicole van Roij
Sarah van der Giesen
Wouter Vanstiphout
Yağiz Söylev

Photo by Maarten Laupman

SAM JACOB

A Bowl That Describes Its Own Destruction Even in Its Reconstruction, Mars, 1895

6

Everything in the universe is made up of matter and energy. Matter is anything that has mass and occupies space. Energy is the ability to cause change or do work.

This bowl - thought to be an extra-terrestrial ketchup dispenser - depicts matter and energy. Vectors of movement and the explosion forcing the fragments apart have been decoratively applied to the surface of the object, making visible things which the human eye is unable to see.

Life forms that perceive both matter and energy seem to celebrate the interaction of matter with energy. Cycles of making, breaking and remaking are ritually performed on the date of the Martian mid summer.

It's presentation to Earthlings helped them realise that domestic objects are subject to the same forces that work at planetary scale. Plate tectonics are in evidence on dining tables as well as continents. Others dismissed this Martian gift as a storm in a tea cup.

With grateful thanks to the Ming the Merciless' Aeronautics and Space Administration



WOUTER VANSTIPHOUT

Vermeers Ear

early twenty first century

Delft, the Netherlands

This object has been a centrepiece in one of the most notorious cases of scientific fraud. In the late twentieth century the Dutch Historian Geert Mak claimed to have found the remains of the painter Johannes Vermeer from Delft, entirely encased in a shell of Delft Blue Porcelain, as was his wish in his last will and testament, also found and presented by Geert Mak. Vermeer was shown to have been part of a secret Dutch Secret Society of Potters (De Aardewerkers), whose members would be encased in porcelain after their death and be secretly buried. Based on his findings Geert Mak wrote a bestselling book, and the cracked porcelain sarcophagus of Vermeer was shown all over the world. Geert Mak, who had earned millions, was however secretly filmed by two russian prostitutes in the Moscow Hilton who were planning to blackmail him. Unaware of the camera, a heavily intoxicated Mak suspended from the ceiling in a leather harness, confessed to having created an elaborate hoax and that the Vermeer remains were in fact those of a Schiedam homeless person, encased in porcelain of cheap chinese provenance. These images were shared on instagram and rached a worldwide audience. After this Mak was convicted of fraud and sentenced to lifelong labour camp in the east of the Russian Republic. Efforts by the Dutch government to have his jail time referred to the Netherlands have as yet not yielded results. The fragments of the casing were sold on the black market by employees of the Moscow Morgue where the body of the homeless person was taken. This fragment was found in a thrift store in Liverpool and gifted to a Dutch collector.

Private Collection, Schiedam



ALEX HEWITSON

Taxidermised ITS-Branded Iddle

Early 1950s, found in Surbiton in 2020

Iddles were 3-legged Transubtamian mammals, closely related to the Hebriden Shraw. The eccentric owner of ITS Newspapers, Ian Tucker-Smythe, discovered the creature on a shamanic retreat in Transubtania in 1952. He brought all remaining examples back to Britain, tattooed them with the ITS logo, and awarded them as exotic prizes to readers for completing the ITS crossword. The scheme was a marketing disaster, as Iddles were notoriously difficult pets, commenting on their owners' appearance, marriage, and financial status at any opportunity. All known examples were killed by their owners, resulting in extinction.



SAM JACOB

Decorative Plate

Earth, date unknown.

Eating equipment such as this – plates, bowls and cups – were often covered with images of places, buildings and landscapes. We can only guess at the reason for this incessant and frankly ridiculous depiction of location.

Perhaps human culture was unsure of its place in the world? Perhaps the act of eating became associated with rituals of identity? External geographic, landscape and urban worlds seem to have been associated with the internal bodily functions of digestion and nutrition.

The primitive urge to first cover the world with, say, baked beans, then rediscover it by eating said beans could have been a ritual performance that allowed for the destruction and subsequent rediscovery of the human's own home.

Perhaps these objects helped to domesticate these external and existential fears of oblivion providing an optimistic idea of salvation even as they munched their way through fry up.

On loan from the Museum of Human Fear.



MICHELLE PROVOOST

Three-way drinking mug 2nd Century BC, Almere

This is the oldest known piece of Greek pottery in the Netherlands, found in the archeological site next to the ancient Castle Almere. This type of mug is well known from other parts in the periphery of the Greek empire. It was probably used in a peace-ceremony between Greek officers and the indigenous groups who lived on the location of Almere. After this piece of pottery had been found during the building of a Vinex-wijk in the 1990s, the city marketeers explained that the origins of the city were actually Greek and that Almere means: on the sea (Gr). It also inspired the planners to call the next housing area 'Almere Floriade' (designed with flowers, Gr).

P195-56/3, Nieuwland, Lelystad



SARAH VAN DER GIESE

Sharpiston

Enlarged reconstruction of a future spicie
Clay, ceramics

This magnified version of the tiny sharpiston [2 cm x 5 cm] will be held as a pet and weapon at the same time. It is bred to be extremely loyal and vicious, with her magnetic legs it could reach incredible speeds. The sharpiston prefers to hide on underneath the armpit of its owner.

The estimated revealing date will be 2041



NICOLE VAN ROIJ

Reconstruction of the last penguin looking back over his shoulder.

2120, Byrd Land, East Antarctica

Found by an unknown Hermit from the future.

Porcelain tea pot found in an ice peak, clay, paint, glossy spray.
Molding and painting

The creator of this work tried to portray the drama that must have been part of the life of the last living penguin. The meeting moments of old and new accentuate the breaking of ice, the melting of ecosystems and the new shapes that can be created out of found fragments.



LUCA MOSCELLI

The Stammerer
719 AD, Nicaragua

Reconstruction of a ceramic artifact, shaped as a cow's tongue.
According to some recent findings the ritual of braking the tongue was
aimed to improve their loquacity. Apparently, during the ritual, roasted
tongues were served with mole sauce and corn cobs. Delicious.

Courtesy of 'McDonalds' foundation



SAM JACOB

Gravy Boat Approximation Gravesend, 1977

After the great gravy boat disaster of 1976, an entire form of tableware was erased from the archaeological record. Only fragments and half formed memories remained. This, the first of the what became known as Object Extinctions, was a new phenomena that brought with it immense feelings of loss.

UNESCO commissions were established to reconstruct all that had been lost. Before long it transpired that the entire designed world could only ever be considered an act of reconstruction. Designers no longer imagined the future but tried to remember the past.

History was no longer a thing that had happened, but something to be resurrected and reconstructed as multiple potential futures.

A gift of the Historical Futurist Association supported by a generous grant from The Past Is Our Future Foundation.



ANTONIO BARONE

24

Absolute Absence Commemorative Centerpiece

Late XXI Century, NL-USA. Found in Rotterdam in 2112
Mixed Media/Feelings
Ceramic, Glass, Pigments

This ornamental kit is believed to be a former commemorative piece to celebrate the anniversary of the first Coffee Cargo that left The Netherlands for the USA. It was a personal gift from the King of Netherlands to the President of the USA. Believed to sport the inscription "Absolute Absence of Coffee", the piece, originally a scale model of a Royal Dutch Coffee Vessel has been broken on purpose and unskillfully rebuilt and painted with the resemblance of Donald the 3rd and sent back to NL. Fragments of the original set are still visible: the '3 wise men', famous coffee brewer and a picture of a dutch house, together with the word "Coffee" on a glass fragment.

on loan from:
Museo della Scienza e della Tennica
"Leonardo Da Vinci" Milano, Italy.



KASIA HEIJERMAN

Left Over
Corner of a Breakfast Plate

Easter 2019, found in Diemen Zuid.
Traces of a possible recent historic event.

Private collection.



LUISA PARISI

Terracotta vase for withered wildflowers.

The unfinished object is a sweet accompaniment to the act of lying down, a praise to the act of withering. The hands of a seamstress sew the dress of the sadness of a flower, a cook bakes the bread of survival while the caress of the wind tries to raise the stem. No stream water quenches his loneliness, the flower will not return to bloom but there will be a new place for his eternal sleep.

Collection of Discarded Feelings Museum.



KASIA HEIJERMAN

Bottoms Up

2021, Delfts Blauw white shards, paperclay, blue pigment

First, they understood these were shards of Delfts Blauw, from someone who knows about these sort of things. While reconstructing, there were conflicting thoughts and discussions. Paint the original flowers and patterns, but that would have become a representation of a representation, and that didn't feel good. It was decided to keep the fragments isolated but still constructing a type of plate and just add the Delfts Blauw separately only on the clay. Later they understood the shards had to be facing upside down.

Collection of the Nootdorp Museum



KASIA HEIJERMAN

Philip

male of some sort, ceramic and porcelain since 2020, 15+ cm
1970's - ongoing

not owned by anyone

Philip did not want to be like any other seventies handmade bowl. he wanted something else for his second half of his life. When the porcelain shard presented itself to him in a random event he knew the future will be better.



KASIA HEIJERMAN

no-shape shape
not-random random
no-function function
non-value value

2020, Rotterdam



ANNA BORUNOVA

Chaos is Joyful

Now

Ceramic, Glass, Pigments

By taking on the incomprehensible combination of the remnants, the sculpture addresses the questions of loss, destruction and fragments that are at the core of art historical research. Categories and explanations are vital but the nervous mobility of our ideas and stories is something that they cannot give. The chaos is joyful.

Private collection.



MICHELLE PROVOOST

Amulet

Early 21st Century, found at archeological site Zuid-As, Amsterdam

As the service industry dwindled and the third industrial revolution started to get a firm hold, many over educated people were forced to leave their safe offices and perform manufacturing tasks they hadn't been trained for. Their lack of training and mismatch in education was often countered by amulets like these, which with their two hands symbolize the 'hands on' mentality necessary to survive and the wish that someone would have 'two right hands', meaning be a handy(wo) man.

Collection Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



CASSANDRA WILKINS

Design / art object 156-1

Beginning of the 3rd millennium, maritime archeological site of Rotterdam

Object found in dig 156, 17,4 meters beneath sea level, near the train station site in 'Delftsestraat'-area.

Design/art object from the Circular Period in which the re-use of all materials was central to design. This art style lasted for around 150 years in the beginning of the 3rd millennium when a strong movement of Recyclers or Gretans organized itself around a Scandinavian child priestess to counter the still dominant carbon-based economy which caused climate changes. Within the cult it was prohibited to use any new materials.

This cup-like object was crafted from several shards of ceramics from the 20th century, glued together with a paste fashioned from recycled paper (cellulose). Scientists are uncertain if the object was meant as an art object or was a daily utensil, as in Circular art the boundary between the two was deliberately blurred. The attention to detail found in the ornamentation of this object, which re-uses as-found decoration on the shards as a motif, places it in the early Circular. The mid-Circular is characterized by a very crude style that conveyed the rising despair felt by Recyclers about their inability to change the tide (see object 156-2), while in late Circular objects no distinction can be made between different re-used-parts or materials, a perfect synthesis was aspired as the expression of new found hope and a firm belief in the New Way.

Collection Rijksmuseum, Arnhem.



MARK MINKJAN

Alida van Ens, Consolation Bowl

2023, Rotterdam
Clay, ceramics, acrylic paint

Arnold van Ens possessed the largest private collection of worthless mass-produced ceramics from the 1970s and 1980s. The 37-metre long display cabinet in his home in Rotterdam Alexander collapsed in 2021, shattering his entire collection. His one-armed wife Alida collected the shards featuring hallmark and worked them into a new bowl. The object is one of the earliest and most important examples of the brut crafts that came to dominate the art market in the 2030s.

Collection of Kunsthal, Rotterdam.



ALEX HEWITSON

Irish Coffee

Pre-Happening, found in Rotterdam in 2022

This fragment of a vessel was recovered after the Happening and was one of only 6 recorded discoveries in the greater Europe area. Since all knowledge of life before the Happening has been lost, we can only speculate as to the purpose of the vessel – perhaps it was used for life-supporting supplements, or maybe a drink with health-giving properties?



MICHELLE PROVOOST

Plate

Ca. 2050, Rotterdam

This piece of crude pottery is believed to be first generation pottery from the post-disaster period. Radical re-use of existing materials suddenly became the only way to provide in clothing, furniture or kitchenware during this era. A simple 20th Century industrial plate, destroyed during the blast, was glued back together by someone who clearly hadn't been trained to do so, which was typical in this first unorganized and chaotic period. Fragments of poetry, traces of decoration.

Collection Stadsmuseum, Rotterdam



CASSANDRA WILKINS

Design / art object 156-2

Beginning of the 3rd millennium, maritime archeological site of Rotterdam

Object found in dig 156, 17,4 meters beneath sea level, near the train station site in 'Delftsestraat'-area.

Design/art object from the mid-Circular Period, characterized by a crude style and overall shortage of old shards and pieces to re-use. In the Late Circular period due to the general circular organization of the economy everything was synthesized and the collage-method of the early and mid-Circular period can rarely be found.

Collection Rijksmuseum, Arnhem.



LUISA PARISI

Ashtray for wooden tables to burn.

She always had a cigarette in his hands, every puff was a kiss for the missing loved one. She kissed him so much, so insistently for days that holes appeared in the ashtray and the table burned. Since then, it has been tradition to give a widow an ashtray with a hole in it, symbol of desired kisses.

On loan from the Ash Museum.



ALEX HEWITSON

Shrine to the Gods Villeroy and Boch

Mid-2nd millennium, found on the Earth (Planet 312, Milky Way) in 3067

When Giantids first landed on Planet Earth, they discovered a planet of vast resources, including the rare element Carbon, and inhabited by a strange mix of solid-based life-forms. These creatures were ruled over by dictatorial rulers, known as hu-mans, who destroyed anything in their way to gain total control of their planet. Hu-mans were finally defeated in the battle of Jupiter in 2658, after most of their planet had been destroyed in the preceding war. This pocket shrine, carried by the Giantid soldier Sulian III was carried in his cheek pocket and revered the hu-man gods Villeroy and Boch, who Sulian began to worship during her mission on Earth. The piece comprises five fragments of porcelain, glued with slime excreted by her trusty Welkid.



YAGIZ SÖYLEV

A melodramatic representation of an eating thing
A faithful representation of a gripping thing

approx. early 21st century

Ceramic, clay, acrylic, super glue
Ideated by: Bernhard Siegfried Albinus

Various animal parts and bones were used during the fortune telling rituals of the Mitanni civilization, around 1300–1500 BC. The ritual consists of three phases. During the first phase, the citizens of Washukanni, the capital, covers inside the “gripping thing” with mud collected from the Khabur River, which is believed to be the source of all fortune. This phase is followed by the leadership of a young member of the community, whose hands are small enough to wear the “eating thing”. The beholder of the fortune takes a sip of the mud from the “gripping thing” then spits and repeats this until the king snaps his fingers twice (in some sources thrice). This phase of the ceremony ends with the words of the fortune teller. The last phase goes on for weeks with either the joyful or mournful screams of the crowd.

The artifacts exhibited are the representations of the instruments of the aforementioned ritual. The instruments are reconstructed by group of early-21st century craftsmen.



WOUTER VANSTIPHOUT

Kweel

4th century ad

Ardennes, Belgium

Kweels are most often found in the Ardennes, a mountainous region in the east of what is now Belgium. They were produced by the last surviving pagan tribes in the lowlands in the period around the collapse of the roman empire. Kweels played a part in religious rites wherein bats played a central role. Bats were considered holy animals and kweels were put up in caves and under roofs where they dwelt. Sugarwater was put in the lower part and the bat could suspend itself from the glazed protuberance and drink the water. The small size of the kweels has led to the conclusion that they were specifically aimed at the young bats, who made their first flight. Therefore the rites were believed to be those of initiation of young warriors. 'Kweel' refers to the germanic word 'kwelen', meaning a shrill squeal or song.

Private Collection, Heist op den Berg, Belgium.



LUISA PARISI

Shadow Does Me.
Pulvis et umbra sumus. – Orazio, Carmina IV

I don't know anything about your existence except that you exist.
Everything that exists casts a shadow. And that's enough to define
you.

Private collection.



WHAT IS THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL FOR THE CITY

The Independent School for the City is a post-graduate educational platform based in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The school is an initiative of Crimson Historians and Urbanists and ZUS (Zones Urbaines Sensibles) and is rooted in their practices of combining a critical and activist approach to the city with effecting real change through architectural and planning projects. The independent school for the City is founded on a strong belief in an incremental instead of a tabula rasa approach to city planning which blurs the lines between critique and practice on the one hand, and research and policy on the other.

The Independent School for the City is a school in, of, and for the city. It builds on the conviction that strategies for the city – architectural and economic, spatial and social – should be based on real, first hand, empirical research. Empirical because the reality of the city offers interesting conflicts and unpredictable synergies to learn from and build upon. The school is fully independent and has an unaccredited status by choice. Its research is rooted in the different disciplines teachers and participants have been schooled in. It will not be constrained by the formalities of academia or disciplinary boundaries

Participants and teachers form one team in which the advanced and less experienced will inform each other and contribute to the research. Research that is not necessarily solution-oriented or focused on final designs, and may not come to design as such, but will lead to a text, a film, an exhibition or an action. Our approach is open-minded but critical, inclusive but discerning, flexible but precise. This offers the participants and their international team of teachers the full intellectual freedom to research the city in the broadest sense. It will give us the chance to have seemingly coincidental encounters with parts or aspects of the city where clashes of various kinds take place, where otherwise invisible realities reveal themselves. These are, we believe, the instances that can teach us fundamental things about the city in all its complexity.

The educational programme of the Independent School for the City is composed of different stand-alone courses, ranging from a 4-day crash course on filmmaking in relation to architecture and the city, to an intensive 12-week programme on contemporary urbanism. The activist and multidisciplinary approach of the Independent School is strongly embedded in all activities, whether you participate in one single course or sign up for all of them.

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City of Rotterdam



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