

*Working
in Progress*

Seecum Cheung

'Working in Progress' was set up to think through the ways in which one might come to document a street and its residents through technical (film and photography) visual arts (conceptual) and testimonial based means. These three perspectives were explored during a workshop in Boijmans Hilleliet on the 18th—22nd October 2021 where conceptual, audio and visual techniques were shared as part of a collective learning moment. A small group of recent graduates from MA programmes within the Netherlands were invited to attend x5 full day workshops, to learn new skills in audio visual documentary techniques for the eventual development of a photographic and audio portrait of the shopkeepers in Beijerlandse laan, Rotterdam-South.

The purpose for this workshop was two-fold. One, was to learn about the lives of the shopkeepers who live/work in one of the fastest gentrifying shopping areas in Rotterdam city. In exchange for their conversation and time we would offer them a printed portrait, a USB with their complete audio, video or photography files, gifts and support in return for their time. The second was to further train young artists who had some existing experience or interest with audio and/or video interview recording techniques. Through professional guidance they were guided through ways to work with a selection of modern camera bodies, cinema and vintage lenses, set lighting, and audio recording equipment (see credits for detailed itinerary). Provided alongside this was philosophical sound exercises, cinema screenings, collective lunches, and further audio editing classes (September 2021—February 2022).

9 pre-selected artworks were shared as resources for the shopkeepers and participating artists to think through the potential form of a portrait. This included selected works from the painter *Rachel Ruysch 'Still Life with Flowers' (1698)* and filmmaker *Bert Haanstra's 'Glas' (1958)* (both in the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen collection) and filmmaker *Agnes Varda's 'Daguerrotypes' (1975)*. Such works served as a starting point for the shopkeepers to think through the composition of their portrait. Additionally, the works served also as a reference to further develop their initial ideas. From here, we produced product photos alongside store photographs, solo, team and family portraits which would be shared publicly or privately (for family only).

The shopkeepers invited include Reshma from Bambino Gift Boetiek (1998), a baby gift and special events attire boutique which has traded for 23 years on the Beijerlandse laan). Rita, reggae singer and owner of Royal Roots Corner

and her team, who sell African traditional and urban fashion, natural products, fresh homemade vegan food and coffee, household items, culturally specific books and more with all profits going to support her mothers charity *One Love* in Kenya. Jurick, of Cakes by Kee who told us about the story of Kee – the founder of the bakery, a young self-taught Curaçao-Surimanese man whose cakes have become so popular that bookings have to be taken months in advance due to the store's popularity. Adnan, the Turkish-Dutch entrepreneur whose beautifully hand-painted store Aytac Noten & Delicatessen is named in memory after his brother, from which he sells nuts, fresh Turkish delight, chocolates and Turkish coffee in beautifully crafted boxes, celebration platters and displays. Finally, the Iraqi silversmith who we know as Pa, with his wife, May, a painter, of Adelaar Gift Shop (2006) where they sell handcrafted culturally specific jewelry for diverse individuals, sculptures, fountains, papyrus drawings, lights, ear piercing services and more. They show us their family legacy, a documentary, preserving the memory of the grandfather and father of Pa who continues to carry on the family tradition of silversmithing. Their twin daughters are now learning the skills of silversmithing, already selling their bracelets and offering piercings to new customers in the store.

The shopkeepers shared their stories with us, including their personal commitments, familial relationships, heritage, concepts and purposes for their stores. They also shared the vulnerabilities that they now face as a consequence of the Covid-19 lockdowns and riots (and continued present day restrictions and regulations). Rapidly rising rents and higher taxes in light of the recent gentrification plans by Rotterdam municipality (2019—2029) add even greater pressure to these difficult times.

Our short-term goal for this project was to create a moment to share, gift and exchange knowledge, time and resources in a way that would be practically beneficial and meaningful for all those who participated. Our long-term goal is to create wider publicity for the shopkeepers on the street in hope that it will deliver more customers and visitors to their stores. Please visit!

Thank you for having us, Adelaar Gift Shop, Aytac Noten & Delicatessen, Bambino Baby en Kinder Boetiek, Cakes by Kee, Royal Roots Corner. We will look forward to becoming your regulars.

written by Seecum Cheung



1.
Thank you to the independent shopkeepers of Beijerlandselaan.
You offered us the warmest welcome with your eternal kindness,
generosity and time; our growing bonds root here. — *Seecum*

2.
I am grateful that Seecum taught me to listen better and that I
embraced this unforgettable risk. — *Fabienne*

3.
There are ways of hearing, as there are ways of listening. — *Jacco*

4.
Hearing the whispers of the street, leads me to think of all the
things my ears do(n't) hear. — *Jeanine*

5.
The doors to the shops were open, and so were the arms of
those who shared their stories and livelihoods with us. — *Anonymous*

6.
Explaining, learning and changing is powered by knowledge. — *Laurens*

Notes on the experience of participating/teaching on the 'Artist as Educator: Working in Progress' series

Hoi ja hoor. Jullie mogen het wel
publiceren, mooie foto's toch

*Reshma, Bambino Baby en
Kinder Boetiek*

Jawel de fotos zijn goed Ziet er nice uit.
We look forward

Rita, Royal Roots Corner

De foto's zijn mooi maar ze komn
toch. Niet ergens online of in public?

Adelaar Gift Shop

Jaa leuk!! Dankjewel Hartelijk gedaan!
Hoi hoi, Prima hoor.

Jurick, Cakes by Kee

Top dankjewel voor de foto's

*Adnan, Aytac Noten
& Delicatessen*

an invitation *noun* **1:** a written or verbal request inviting someone to go somewhere or to do something... open and spacious enough for others to enter by extension through considerate requests

adaptation *noun* **1:** something that is adapted especially : a movie, book, play, etc., that is changed so that it can be presented in another form **2:** a change in a plant or animal that makes it better able to live in a particular place or situation **3:** the process of changing to fit some purpose or situation : the process of adapting stepping backwards and moving forwards to generate moments for lateral thinking...

porosity *noun* **a:** the quality or state of being porous **b:** the ratio of the volume of interstices of a material to the volume of its mass¹ membranes that allow for one to collect, absorb and breathe, to generate a healthy environment for learning...

collaboration *verb* **1.** to work with another person or group in order to achieve or do something. The two companies agreed to collaborate.

exchange *verb*

transitive verb **1a:** to part with, give, or transfer in consideration of something received as an equivalent **b.** to have replaced by other merchandise **2:** to part with for a substitute **3:** to give and receive reciprocally, exchange gifts

intransitive verb **1.** to pass or become received in exchange **2.** to engage in an exchange

One can never presume nor predict what someone might need.

Artist & Project Lead

Seecum

¹. Dictionary by Merriam-Webster: America's Most-Trusted Online Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>. Accessed 30 Nov. 2021.



Process Pictures

Process Pictures









Birgit and Lisa gave me the chance to get acquainted with Seecum Cheung. I googled her name, which at the time I did not know how to pronounce correctly. For me, the meeting was relaxed and tense at the same time. We spoke in English and the work was still In Progress. I did not yet understand what my role would be. Seecum started our collaboration by creating an open space to share thoughts. In this process, we developed a mutual understanding through careful and considerate listening.

We met with a number of shopkeepers from Boulevard Zuid. By hearing, talking, tasting, smelling and feeling, we came into contact. The project moved dynamically along with our senses. Through conversation, we discussed ‘The Artist as Educator’ series with the shopkeepers, and asked if they might be interested in receiving a portrait and interview from us. Based on a mutual interest and trust we collaborated with Aytac Noten & Delicatessen, Adelaar Gift Shop, Cakes by Kee, Bambino Baby en Kinder Boetiek and Royal Roots Corner.

Project Assistant

Fabienne

Explaining, learning and changing is powered by knowledge. To explain one needs knowledge to give, to learn one must absorb knowledge to know, to change one must see knowledge to see what was unseen before.

Director of Photography, Workshop
lead on video + photography

Laurens

Sound can often be an elusive subject to talk about. We are all trained from a young age to listen for what we need to hear, as a student to a teacher, or, as a pedestrian to the sound of an approaching car. In the process we sometimes tend to forget to open ourselves up to what experience offers us; not only in terms of the everyday sounds around us and our environment, but also in conversation. Truly listening to the story of another can be hard and listening itself can feel as vulnerable as speaking.

It has been a privilege to work with this incredible group of artists and to be a guest with the lovely people of the Beijerlandse laan whose shops open up worlds. Their touching stories will stay with me for a very long time I am sure.

Sound philosopher & Head of
Audio for De Correspondent,
Workshop lead on audio

Jacco

I’ve lived in this city for a number of years, but before I can call it a home I must allow myself to be taken through its movements and histories. Therefore I can only be a visitor to most of its streets, doorways and experiences, both personal and collective. In a highly condensed and linear form, the Beijerlandse laan stretches through multiple adjacencies with each threshold crossed into the shops which populate the street. Stepping inside comes with a different sight, scent and sound each time.

To inhabit a space while holding a memory of elsewhere - can this state be captured in an image or a sentence? The street unfolds as proud displays with glimmers of intimacy, short exchanges through extended commitment, outwards generosity in a contained interior. Documenting this environment has meant touching upon a few nodes within an intricate web of movement and complexity.

Participating Artist

Anonymous

Through the conversations in the different shops, I discovered that it is a layered experience to explore each space. Yes, it's a shop and yes, it fulfills this meaning but during this project we moved through this initial surface level. As a team we tapped into the history of becoming, family matters, the hard times of being a shopkeeper and the beauty of interaction with customers. We were welcomed into an open and warm atmosphere which gave us the opportunity to archive a part of the entirety of the places.

We have witnessed and recorded a heartwarming conversation between the parents that run a shop and their children who grew up there. I was touched by the way they told each other how proud they're of one another.

Another highlight was how we were invited and connected through food. This common gesture is also a distributor of culture and in that way I gained knowledge through another sense other than hearing or seeing.

Participating Artist

Jeanine

The workshop I attended for the "Artist as Educator" project allowed me to learn and explore the audio-visual world in a non-academic way. In fact, I find that an artist as educator has the possibility of transmitting the technical experience through their own practice and experience.

This was very effective in my case. Learning in a creative environment during the production of such a social project, not only allowed me to learn the techniques but to feel a sense of community in a country that is not mine.

And it is in fact the social aspect that I find very relevant to learn, in the approach of people when artists and creatives find themselves in a new location, and how an intimate and sharing atmosphere can be created in these unfamiliar places.

During the creative process the shopkeepers became participants within the project, transforming themselves from subjects to contributors. All this translated into a great creative team, of professionals and non-professionals who came together to learn from each other and unite minds in a single artistic project.

Participating Student

Costanza

Final Portraits





Adelaar Gift Shop

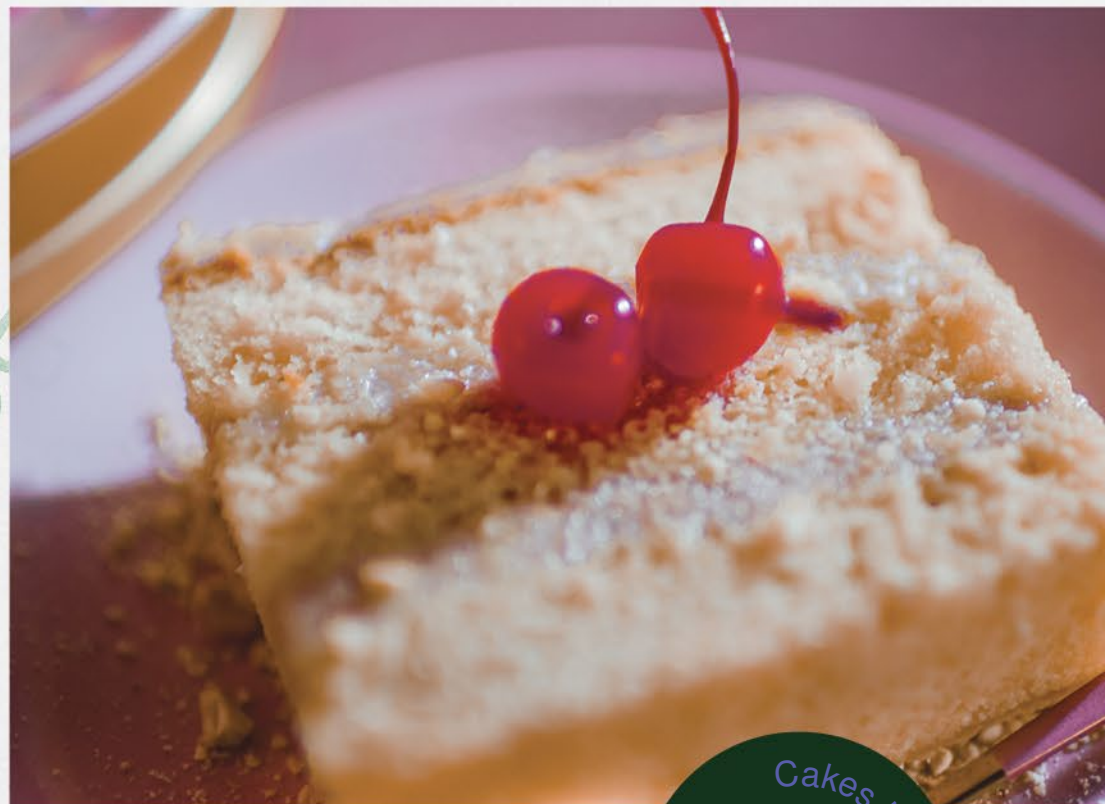
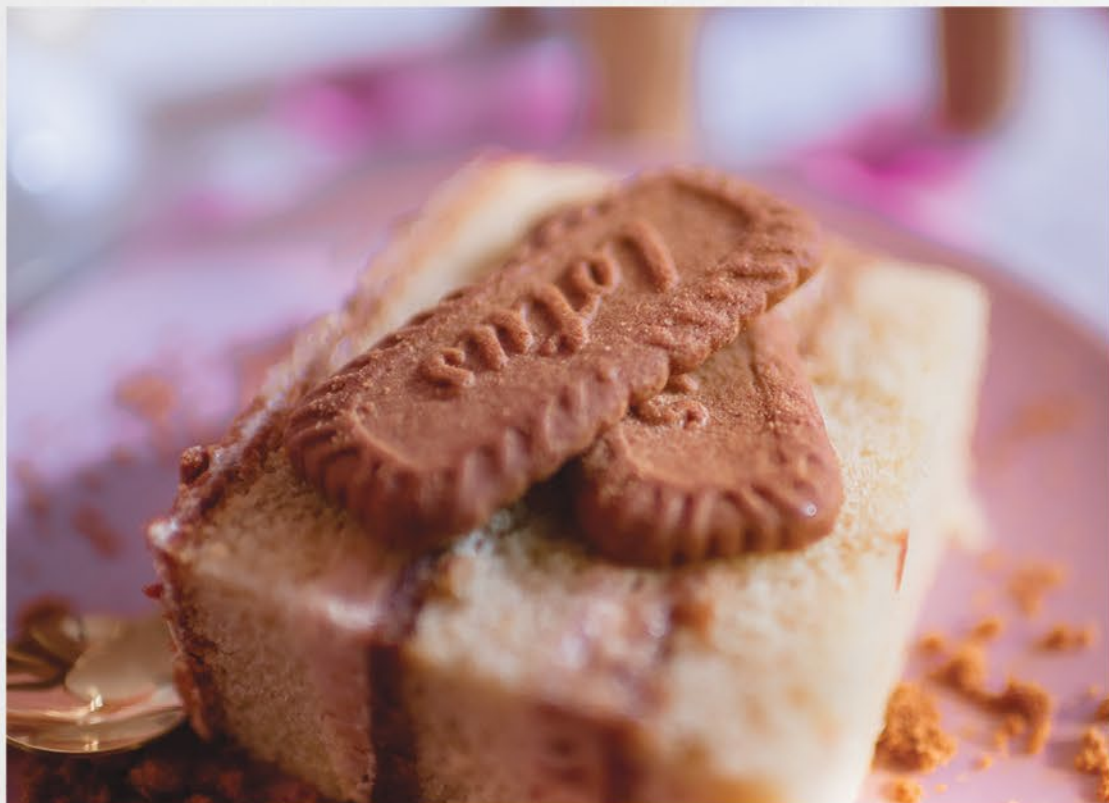
132B

Beijerlandseelaan

*The family of Adelaar Gift Shop would like to keep their final portraits for family use only. Instead, we present some process photos taken inside the store. Please visit the shop in person where they will give you a warm welcome.







Cakes by Kee

40A

Beijerlandse





Royal Roots

204

Beijerland





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Adelaar Gift Shop
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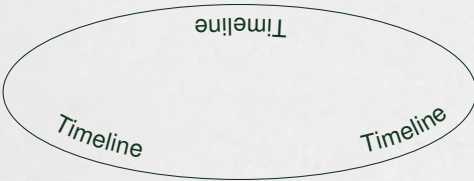
Bambino Baby en Kinder Boetiek
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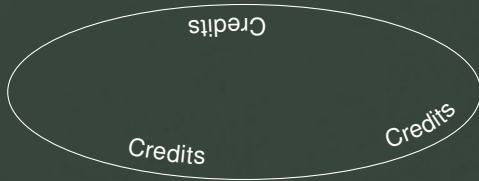
Cakes by Kee
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Royal Roots Corner
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- July
- **Approached by Boijmans, Lisa Heinis and Yoeri Meessen to deliver a potential concept for 'Artist as Educator'**
- August
- **Project developed, and approved**
 - **Meeting with Els Hoek to discuss potential artists to reference from the archive for this project**
 - **Seecum goes through the full video + photography archive of the Boijmans, and 2/3 of painting as provided by Lisa Heinis and Els Hoek**
- September
- **Invitations to post-graduate artists are sent.**
 - **Introduced to Fabienne Hendriks who will be assisting as support for the project. We begin meeting the shopkeepers of Beijerlandselaan**
 - **Cinema screenings**
 - **Meetings with Lisa Heinis and Birgit van Beek at Boijmans Hilleliet**
 - **Invitations to Jacco Prantl and Laurens Verwoest to lead on the workshops for audio, photography and video**
- October
- **Visits to the shopkeepers continue**
 - **Information Booklet with a shoot schedule is produced and shopkeepers confirm participation.**
 - **Select equipment and order, finalise structure with Jacco and Laurens**
 - **Delivery of the one week workshop**
- November
- **Communication to shopkeepers for OpenHuis Boijmans Hilleliet event**
 - **Set-up and delivery of OpenHuis event**
 - **Invitation to all participants to contribute their voices to the publication**
 - **Development of final materials for publication**
 - **Editing of photographs**
 - **Delivery of supplementary audio workshop for participating artists and team, including tutorials as led by Jacco Prantl**
- December
- **Finalisation of materials for publication**
 - **Completion**
- January
- **Tour of the depot offered to the shopkeepers plus team who worked on the project**
- February
- **Delivery of professional printed copies of their portraits + USB containing all files to shopkeepers as a thank you for their participation**



- Artist & Project Lead
Production Assistant
Video & Photography
Workshop Lead
Audio Workshop Lead
Participating Artists
Participating Student
Participating
Shopkeepers
- Seecum Cheung
Fabienne Hendriks
- Laurens Verwoest
Jacco Prantl
Ioana Tomici, Jeanine van Berkel
Costanza Salini
- Adelaar Gift Shop, Aytac Noten
Delicatessen, Bambino Boetiek,
Cakes by Kee, Royal Roots Corner
- Camera Equipment
- Nanlux as *main filler light*
Nanlite as *key light w/ Aperture C300*
Light Dome II Softbox
Dedo DLED's as *highlights*
ND + Tiffen Filters *sunglasses for lenses + effects*
Floppy Flags plus 90x90 Frames *shadow + soft and hard lighting*
C stands with Gobos
Fujifilm XT4, Sony A7s III, Canon Mark IV with Helios (Russian) + Zeiss Classic (soft but crisp) lenses
Newer Reflectors
- Audio Equipment
- Directional mics
Rode Reporter mic
Sennheiser MKH416 P48 Shotgun mic
Rycote Windshield Kit 416
Lavalier mics, (and the ways to mic a person up with loop techniques, and/or gaffe tape techniques including a triangular cushion plus different positions through lapels, hair, jumpers, shaved chests etc.)
Different types of recording devices including ZOOM H4N, H5 and H6

Thank You

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