

Presentation Alexander Wechgelaar
December 1, 2011, Podium 0950, Rotterdam

Good evening everyone,

First of all my special tie with Rotterdam. Born in Djocjakarta, travelled at an early age to Holland on the 'Indrapoera', Ocean liner of the Rotterdam Lloyd Line. I had regularly heard about Rotterdam as the city where my grandfather was one of the first employees at Thompson's Port installations as confidential clerk, whatever that might be and where my father was raised. Rotterdam attained more and more the status of a sort of holy Jerusalem in the promised holy Holland. The sabbatical in Holland was interrupted by the Second World War and from the yard of a market-gardeners house which we had rented for a year in Nootdorp, appalled I saw the bombing of Rotterdam at a distance the first war action.

Return to Indonesia seemed impossible due to health reasons of my father and we moved to Groningen, myself until my military service. After that I was accepted at the Jan van Eyck Art Academy in Maastricht, on the housing truck printed in large letters stood: Groningen-Maastricht-Rotterdam. Housed, among other things was an inspiring painters easel that once belonged to Cesar Domela-Nieuwenhuis a renowned member of 'The Stijl' group, he lived in Paris; I received that from his nephew, my rowing mate, friend, Edzard Domela-Nieuwenhuis. Some ten years later I was invited for the German group exhibition "Enkel der Stil"(Grandchildren of the Stijl) in the Neue Galerie in Aachen, how is it possible?

As a professional conceptual artist in Maastricht, I was told that I didn't make art but culture and therefore was not eligible for selling art to the national or local government under the auspices of the BKR (an acquisition of art works by the government regulation at that time). At that moment Frits Becht, an art collector appeared and along with Wim Beeren, both members of the Rotterdam International Sculpture Commission asked if I would be willing to come to live and work in Rotterdam to reinforce the artistic climate. The city assisted me with a studio including a house on Northerneiland (island between north and south Rotterdam) and thanks to the invitation of Gust Romijn a teaching position at the art academy was offered and it was possible to exist independently and continue to make art, as I personally understood that to be without any market influence whatsoever.

Thank You Very Much Rotterdam!

At a certain point I was asked to design a sculpture for the new House of Representatives using material from an artwork in the former Supreme Court made by Richard Roland Holst with images of amongst others four historical legislators, including Moses.

An antiquarian bookseller in the Nieuwe Binnenweg assisted me in finding a study about the work of Richard, who discovered in the old Jewish scriptures that the Ten Commandments were not written on tablets but that Moses descended the Sinai mountain with two stone blocks inscribed with signs, hieroglyphics.

The tables were a trick of the painters and clergy during the Renaissance. By which they could portray the entire ten commandments.

There was no written language in Moses' time. However oral tradition and art. During this period, the assimilation of the shock of this new information I met Barbara Jean and together with our combined knowledge, Barbara's library and an invitation to design a picnic environment on Schouwen-Duiveland 'Your Ten Commandments' originated and was realized with two large blocks with the hieroglyphics of ciphers 1-10 and all around surrounding the blocks 10 stone benches, abstracted 'fingers', each persons individual ten commandments, as a sitting (reflection) place. (A Dutch expression "you eat with your fingers", thus the reference to 10 fingers = 10 benches).

The steps in Barbara's work intrigued me very much.

From that time on a working together came into being such as with a 'Floating Labyrinth' in Middelburg, working on films, and here 'HeavenOnEarth' in Rotterdam.

From the State Architect and the heirs of Roland-Holst I received the remaining marble from the Supreme Court to be used for a new art work.

I immediately decided to donate this marble to Rotterdam, as gratitude for services rendered and found in a computer drawing made as design for 'a city in space' a way to beautify the marble.

After years of fruitless searching, with and without help of the Center for Visual Arts Rotterdam for a perfect location Petra van der Ham discovered this blessed, exceptional place in Rotterdam.

During the first contact with the gentleman Sandberg, of Podium 0950 he took us to the top floor of the building overlooking the site and gestured outside, a platform on a dyke and steps leading up to the dyke and said " mister Wechgelaar, here is the platform for your column, and ms Jean here are your steps. Voilà "

And so it was presented ! And so be it written, so be it done.

As an utmost positive sculpture intended as an enrichment for a splendid city.

Alexander Wechgelaar