

Eric Bolle

“I literary create my own world “

In conversation with Marcel Wesdorp in Plato's Cave.

I met Marcel Wesdorp March 28th, 2014. It was a beautiful spring day. Marcel had invited me to view his work. He had read, together with other artists my book ‘ Farewell to what has never been’ and was curious as to what my response to his work would be. During our meeting a dialogue emerged with Plato as its main point of reference.

I

Let us start at the beginning. Or better yet, let us return to the beginning, to the origins of the critical approach to Art. It goes wrong immediately, Plato does not want anything to do with Art. He wants artists to be banned. Not the Artisans, they can stay. Why ?

Because in Plato's opinion Art is mimicking. An artist draws a chair, a poet only describes the chair. By doing so they create copies of a copy. Since the real chair, the chair made by a carpenter and which is functional, already is a copy. A copy of the original. The original is, according to Plato the idea chair. The primal chair as the creator has designed.

Artists are no good. They direct you onto the wrong track. Artisans are useful since they create objects that are functional and they relate to the idea. Philosophers are the real people, because they aim there thinking towards the idea. They are the only ones that are capable of seeing the original state of the shapes and based on this educate others.

The European tradition will not adhere to this opinion and will give Art more space then Plato. Staying close to home, who will deny that there is no other chair that approaches the idea of chair as closely as Rietveld's chair. And what is Rietveld? Philosopher, artists or artisan? Or was he not all three?

Plato's exiling of Art will not be adopted. But his image of men is. According to Plato we all live in a cave. We are tied down and stare at the shadows on the walls,

shadows we believe to be the real things. There are only a few people who succeed in setting themselves free and walk around in the cave. They can see the real objects. When these people have gathered enough courage they might dare to leave the cave. After they get used to the bright light of the sun, they can see the ideas that form the basis of objects.

In the light and warmth of the sun they are happy. It is the paradise in which the things shows themselves as they are: idea. In the sensory world you can see a large variety of horses, but they are all recognizable as horse. But these horses are mortal. They will all die. In paradise you will see the idea horse, the being of the horse. The idea stands outside time . As all ideas this idea is unbelievable beautiful and immortal. She creates stability and immutability that can create something to hold on to in life and that might become something people can desire without end.

Still, a lot of people see Plato as an arrogant know it all. Plato in turn thinks people arrogant if they want to stay in paradise. They have seen the idea and it is therefore there responsibility to return to the cave and liberate others and concern themselves with the tasks of public responsibility. And they should do so even in the face of being hated and being prosecuted, even being killed. Like Plato's own tutor Socrates.

People who have seen the idea in paradise are called philosophers by Plato and they are in his opinion the most notable of people, people who determine humanity. The big question that idealism after Plato will ask , is this: Do artists, contrary to Plato's opinion, not also belong to the philosophers? Is it not they that ultimately make visible the idea that lays at the basis of reality?

Again close to home. Is Mondrians Victory Boogie Woogie not the ultimate image of the rhythm and the grid of New York made tangible? Is this painting not more New York than New York itself? This painting by Mondrian is the idea New York. The idea is equally the concept and the appearance of the city. The idea is in concept spiritual, and appearance wise sensory, she combines both ways of knowledge and as such makes the experience of the city in complete form possible. Contemplating this painting will elevate you, let you transcend yourself and let one enter into the paradise of intellectual contemplation.

II

It is not about the paradise in the work of Marcel Wesdorp. He does not wander outside nor is he busy inside the cave. He is ultimately a person who is concerned with the wall and the shadows on the wall. Wesdorp would completely agree with the poet Gottfried Benn when he speaks of the wall being a natural conversational partner of men. Wesdorp is concerned with the shadows on the wall, or formulated anew for our times, films on a screen.

What is it we actually see when watching Marcel Wesdorp movie ? We look at a black and white landscape above a camera hovers. This camera, Wesdorp states, is us. And the landscape is literally the world that I create. This landscape is fully virtual. The images are being generated by algorithms created by Wesdorp himself. All calculations needed to generate the film images are done by computer. Those filmic images are the current shadows we now see in Plato's cave. They are not pretty pictures, it is not a beautiful landscape. It does not make one happy. They are shadows in the night.

Watching a film by Wesdorp will indeed hold you in suspension, just as the people in Plato's cave are fascinated. You can do nothing else but to look forward. There is only one moment in all Wesdorp's films when the camera turns and looks back. Other than at that moment the viewer looks with the camera forward. It requires effort to break free and long after you stopped watching the images stay with you. They are stronger than reality, even when the sun shines and you go back outside again.

Plato might tell us what freedom is and show us the exit to the cave, but in Wesdorp's work there is only men staring at the wall and what they see there is a landscape that literally returns the gaze. The virtual landscape is to Wesdorp not object but subject, that through projection throws us back into ourselves. His ambition is for us to explore our inner world. An inner world that is, according to Wesdorp, circular, there is nothing beyond the horizon other than the landscape itself.

The exploration of the medium there for is equal to the exploration of our inner self. This inner self is productive and at the same time stifling. You create your own world and in it one is free. But it is an odd kind of freedom, since it will throw you back onto yourself and being thrown back onto yourself is frightening and oppressive. At night I dream of being locked within his work and that I am incapable of leaving, escaping from it.

Wesdorp shows us that there is a lot more going on between the people and the shadows than Plato thinks. And he differs from Plato (and many others) in that he does not strive for freedom, but that he wants to investigate the chilling, stifling and the oppressive. In Beckett's *Film*, starring Buster Keaton, something similar is taking place and this is an important reference for Wesdorp. Plato's wall also plays a leading role in this movie.

Wesdorp wants to show in his work who men is and what knowledge of self means. Plato is right in his eyes when he wants to ban art. If art is only a simulacrum and does not want to be more than a mirror of society, then it is of no importance to Wesdorp and might as well be left out all together.

But Wesdorp also thinks that one should not look at Rietveld's chair as how Plato would. Rietveld shows the chair purely as chair. And in the normative this is what Plato and Rietveld share: this is how a chair is supposed to look like. But differing from Rietveld, Wesdorp is not interested in the normative, the regulations of De Stijl as to how the world needs to look like: "I have created my own world and that is sufficient ". Wesdorp creates art not to begin, but in order to stop. He is not interested in the beginning but in the ending, the dead end road.

In Mondriaans Victory Boogie Woogie Wesdorp appreciates the process of abstraction into the Virtual. This painting has been created entirely from inside the head. It is the city transformed into the inner world. This inner world informs us about the city more than the city itself. Wesdorp agrees with me that this painting is more New York than the actual city itself.

Is the art of Wesdorp more landscape than the actual landscape itself? Can the inner world tell us more about the world than the world itself can? Where does the complete surrender to denial, indicated by Wesdorp as guiding his practice, lead us to. Are people in this work erasing their last trails? These are the questions that the work asks us to meditate upon.

Meditation, a description of a sensation. Nothing happens anymore, absolutely nothing. Except for that you are fleeing, even though there is no need to flee. There isn't anyone anymore you have to flee from. The feeling to be utterly alone, being naked in the emptiness of the world. No more people, no more animals, no more vegetation. Names do not matter since there is nothing to name, No dwellings, no cities, and no images. Only yourself and the empty space. And you walk, walk and

walk. Your camera eye sees the sloping hills of anthracite and the skies above, a black desert. And then there is this feeling, to be the last one but still in needing to flee.