Meet iii-resident Philip Vermeulen

Frits Dijcks

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Philip Vermeulen is a young upcoming artist from The Hague. He studied at the ArtScience Interfaculty at the Royal Conservatory & The Royal Academy of the Arts. Vermeulen discovers primary phenomena in all kinds of media, sound, light, physics, and nature. Vermeulen will take part in the iii residency program in October and will show his work during TodaysArt and the iii program No Patent Pending #34.

You have already lived and worked at iii. What does it mean to be an iii resident for you, now?

It means that I will return to the studios where I used to be. It's a very nice and friendly place with a lot of familiar faces. But there will also be other artists, who come from different parts of the world, what will hopefully result in getting interesting feedback. My working period is restricted to one week, and my calendar is empty, so that gives me the time to focus on one project only. And there is a deadline and a presentation attached. So it's like a small pressure cooker.

But it is still uncertain what project I will work on. I can work on *Flap Flap* or on *Int/Ext*. They are kind of opposite to each other. Flap Flap is a rough and powerful installation playing a choreography for a big orange square curtain. It's about sound and harshness and the feeling of danger.

Int/ext is still in the beginning stage and is more experimental. Both projects will also be shown at TodaysArt next weekend. But they are both visual instruments. With Flap Flap, I would like to concentrate on composition more and to get feedback on that.

Flap Flap

So instead of being an inventor and machine builder, you will become a composer?

Yes. It always takes a long time to build a machine and to get to know it as an instrument. To become the master of the instrument is something totally different. Within the ArtScience studies the saying was that the time you need to build your instrument is the time you need to learn playing it.

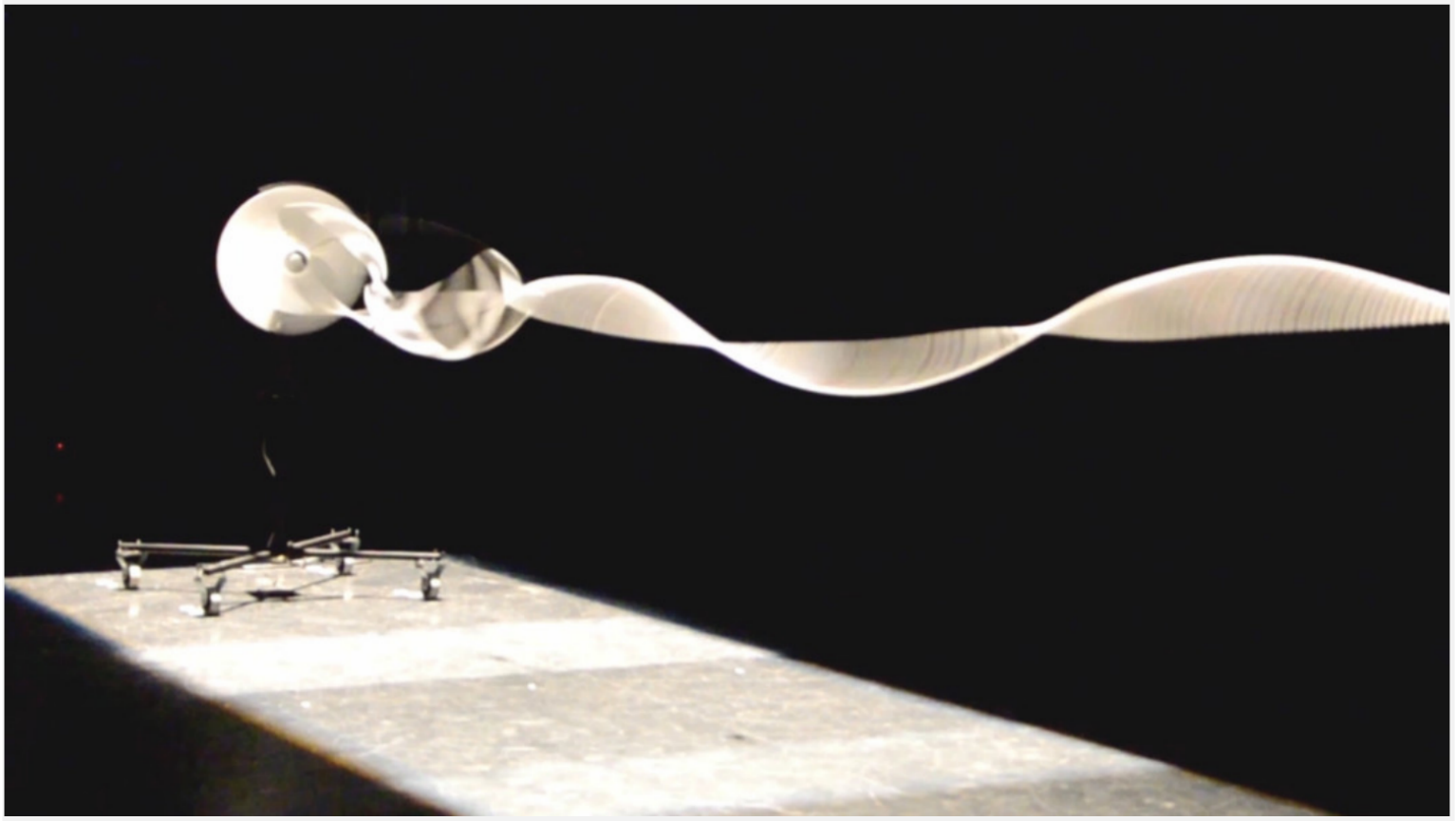
Like smoking? The time period you have smoked is equal to the time you need to quit smoking? (laughs while pressing down his cigarette) As an artist you deal with failure, trying, testing and retrying. And now it will be about controlling and mastering the instrument?

Yes, but it will start breaking again within the process. Flap Flap is kind of a hardcore instrument. And it's fun to go completely over the top and to see where the material ends. Will it hold or not? These aspects can also be interesting to compose with. If it breaks we have to change the composition to a point that it will break almost!

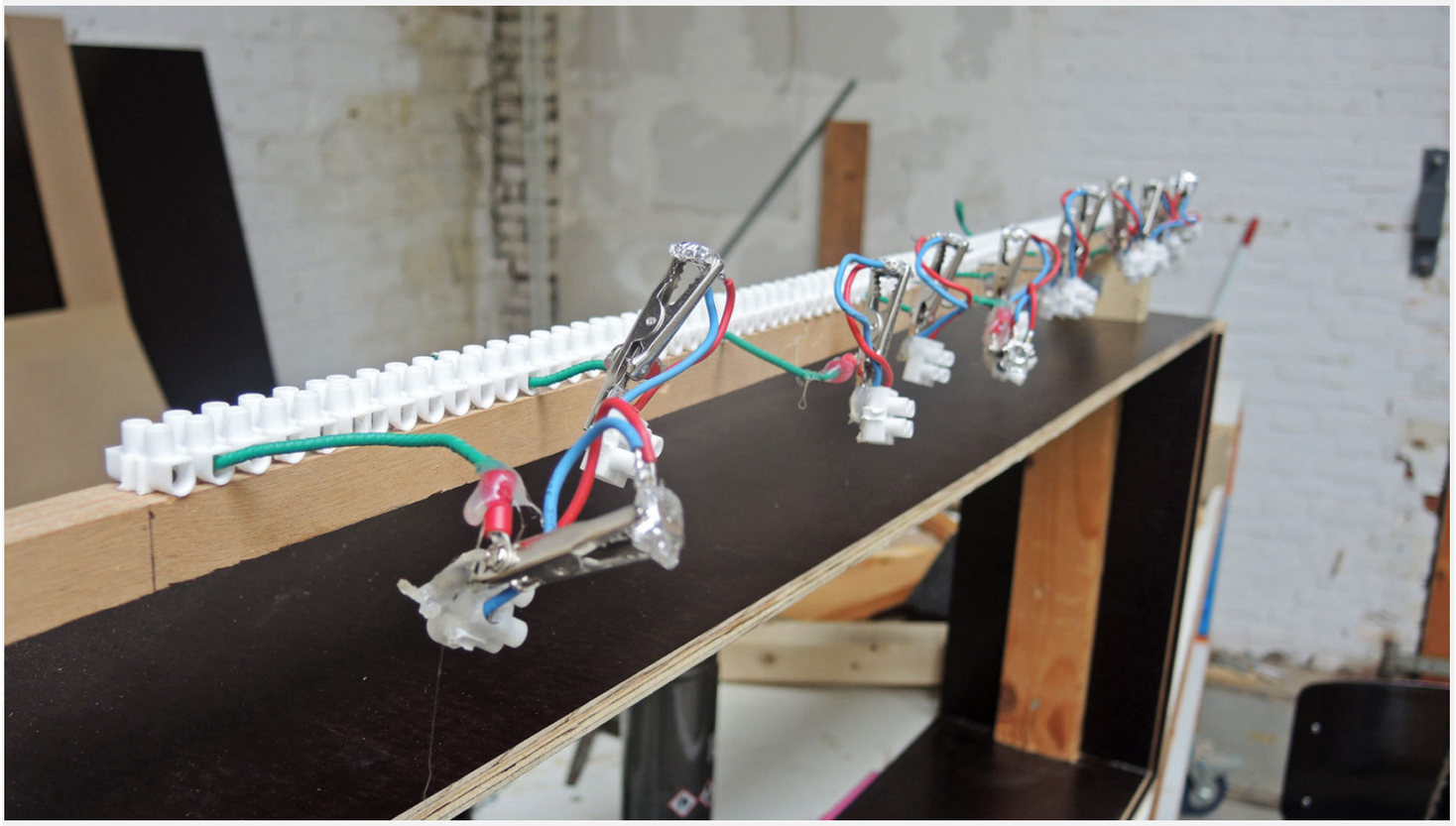
And during the final presentation, everything should be perfect? Failure is not an option anymore?

Yeah. Play is part of the process, but not of the performance. That is a different modus. But the feeling of danger always returns. Flap Flap is a performative installation with two options. I can simply press the button and it will perform a composition by itself. Or I can play it live and control everything during the performance. I don't know yet which modus will be shown at iii.

Fan



elements from Int/Ext



Int/Ext is kind of a booth. The viewer will stand in front of it, in the dark. There will be almost total darkness when you enter the booth. The installation uses the smallest amount of light that we can see. Consequently your eyes will produce after images. I use multiple black screens with different grids, a white screen and small LED lights. There will be real grids but also grid shadows. Your eyes will not see sharply, everything will be blurred. And during the time you are having an after image, I want to throw in a small dose of light, to see if I can surf along on that image. Flap Flap is kind of aggressive and 'in your face', but Int/ext will be extremely subtle. It will be totally at the other side of the visual spectrum. The Int/Ext experience will last about 15 minutes.

Do you know about the viewer who recently fell into the black hole installation of Anish Kapoor? (link)

Yes, wonderful!

Would you like something similar to happen to your audience? Do you want people to fall into your trap and slowly fade away or loose vision forever?

That would be the best result. It would certainly be a good goal.

Boem BOem @ KABK Graduation

Usually in a museum-like situation visitors will see a warning sign in advance. Do you have to prepare something like that?

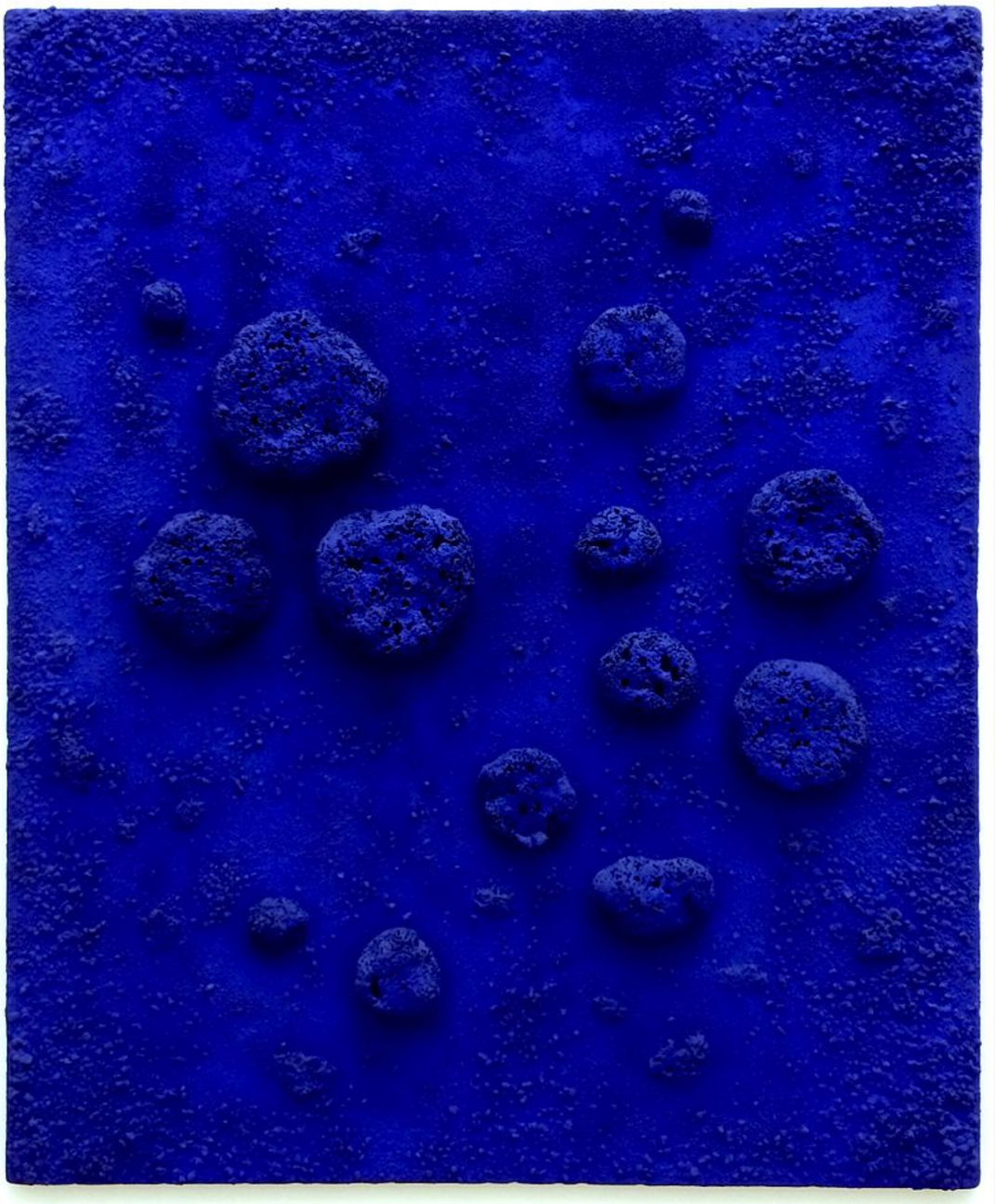
I am not sure about Int/Ext. It does need a beginning ritual where the viewer slowly gets used to the dimmed light. I just got back the piece *Slue* (the pumped up sister of *10 Meters of Sound*) I made with Mischa Daams. It had its premiere at a festival. For the first time, we added stroboscopic lights underneath the rotating strings. That way we could control the visual image of the rotations. People were disappointed that there was no warning, because one could get sick from it. But when you show a sign, the composition already starts there, with the first warning. And then the tension should be extremely more powerful to have an effect.

Did you do experiments like these when you were younger?

I studied fine arts at St. Joost in Breda. And I didn't like it. I liked playing around and testing the limits of materials and of myself. But that was not what the academy had in mind. They wanted you to go to the library first, read books, choose a philosopher to follow and then make something of interest. I was demotivated and became a bit self-destructive. To stop that I quitted the academy. And had a depression for one and a half year. Then I went to visit the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, which had just re-opened, to see some paintings. Among my favourites was a blue painting with sponges by Yves Klein. Looking at it, I was becoming one with the painting, the blueness was all around me. That somehow changed my state of being.

International Klein Blue has saved you? (link)

Yes, more or less.



Yves Klein - L'accord bleu (RE 10), 1960

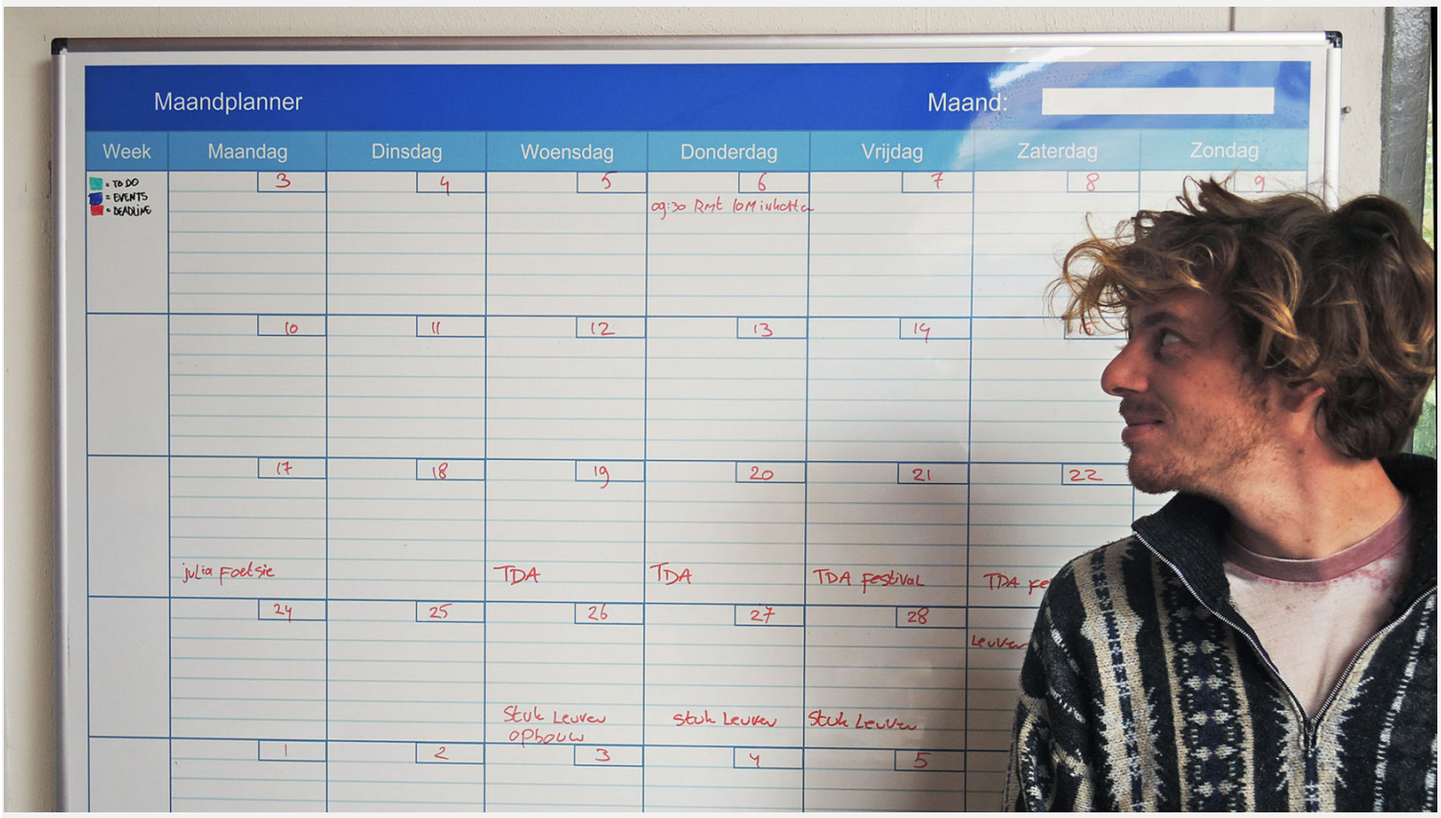
After that period of nothingness, I came to KABK in The Hague. But at the Fine Arts department I was told that I was probably more of an ArtScience person. ArtScience teacher Joost Rekveld suggested me to go and see Sonic Acts in Amsterdam. And there I thought: Wow! Yes, that's my tribe! Their film and sound projections gave me a similar Yves Klein feeling. The wish to go inside and be immersed into a work. But these Sonic Act film and sound experiences are one hundred times stronger than an Yves Klein painting.

You want something external to grab you inside? You want to be confronted with something that is more powerful than yourself?

I am always in search of the limits of things. And I like it when there are so many parameters that you can control. MetaMedia gives you a lot of options.

You maybe want to increase the tension between the work and the viewer to create more alertness from the viewer?

Yes, I think alertness is a good word to describe it. I like the tension of being attracted and being in danger at the same time. It's a strong emotion that makes you stop thinking, because it is too wild or heavy or emotional.



You told me that you came from a more self-destructive period. And now you create these 'almost' self-destructive machines. Is it a way to get rid of these emotions?

When I share this self-destructiveness, I don't think this power is so negative. Its like playing with fireworks. It is an act of destruction, but it is also good fun. It also make you happy.

Maybe it is the feeling of being alive? Of living on the edge? What kind of a boy were you in your childhood?

I was a very sweet boy and didn't talk much. I was very dyslectic and my fine motorics didn't work well. I hated school. I used to dance a lot. And I lived in the east of The Netherlands which is the most boring part of Europe. I was a dreamer. But I did make a lot of bombs with friends.

How did ArtScience change your way of thinking?

At the Fine Arts department, there is already a working method and there are people who know what art should be like. At ArtScience everything was about playing. When things break down, you learn the characteristics of your material. I learned to see objects from a different perspective. You could also look at the sound or the movement of an object. That was a big gamechanger for me. Everything can be an instrument. Things then came to live for me.

I often found ArtScience students very serious, analytical and technical. They didn't make a very playful impression to. Did I meet the wrong students?

Well, some people are very fanatic into hardware and others into software. And that becomes very interesting if you have the knowledge to understand it. I am not that well in hardware, nor in software.

So what part of ArtScience did you belong to? Were you from the 'Nowhere'-department?

Yes, I am pending from somewhere to nowhere and back again (laughs). In the microcosmos of ArtSciece there is theatre, hardcore software, hardcore hardware, performance, instrument making and the experimental cinema division. I do performative installations.

Boem BOem as a package

You had a flying start since your graduation last year. You are being asked to repeat your work all the time. Your practice might tunn into a production company. It is almost like a real job!

It is indeed. I was very lucky that the Boem BOem machine was picked up very well. So I started touring with it. But there is a lot of production work involved. And it is not easy to transport and install this gigantic work. Luckily I studied production at the film academy for one year. Maybe that's why I like it. But for an artist, playing within a studio setting is of course the most fun. Maybe I should only be making prototypes. But compared to Boem BOem, my new work will be much more easy to install.

The titles of your installations are also very simple. How do you choose them and what is their role within your

work?

Boem BOem comes from the poem BOEM Paukeslag (the dada poem by Paul van Ostaijen). Because I am dyslectic, I often use words that also reflect their sound. Flap Flap just came up working on the installation in the studio. The name comes into being in the heat of the moment, under the pressure of a deadline. You have to name it something to be able to talk about it, and I should be able to pronounce it easily. I don't want to give anything away about the meaning of the work.

the studio

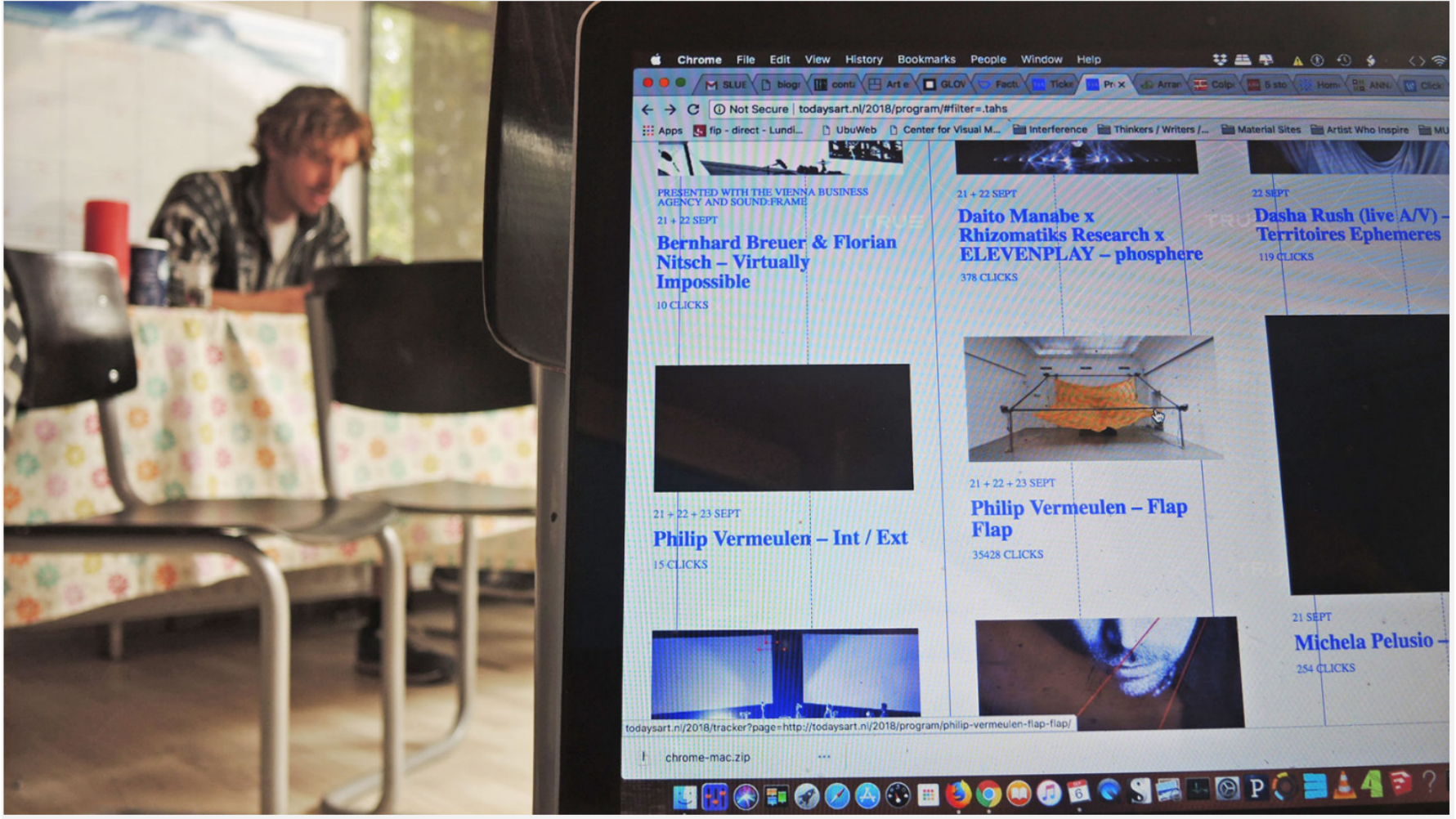
How important are the dimensions of your installations?

If it is going to be small, it should be really small. If it is big, it should be bigger than the viewer. That is the rule. I want the installation to be powerful. And to cross the border of what is possible. In the mean time we have also made a prototype program to increase the clicks on my work on the TodaysArt website. That way my work will have an absurd amount of clicks compared to the others. But we still have to run it for a couple of nights to reach one million.

Your work is on show almost constantly now with TodaysArt and No Patent Pending coming up. Will there be time and concentration to create new adventures?

That's why I am looking forward to the iii residency. To refocus on the new territory of composition.

I also want to cooperate with people who know more about composition than I do. I will talk to composers. Joost Rekveld is going to help me with composing. He has a lot of knowledge on history and philosophy. And Gideon Kiers who is from Sonic Acts and Telcosystems. He use to be in really cool bands like The Kilimanjaro Darkjazz Ensemble. I am really looking forward to that.



Tag tag tag for likes and love! Philip_vermeulen_3000

Flap Flap and **Int/Ext** will also be shown at TodaysArt festival from September 21-23 in The Hague.

October 13, Philip Vermeulen will be presenting new compositions during No Patent Pending #34 at iii.

iii is an artist-run-platform for research, production, presentation and distribution of radical interdisciplinary practices based in The Hague. No Patent Pending is their performance series presenting radical interdisciplinary practices that engage with sound, image, space and the body.

Links
TodaysArt 2018
iii - No Patent Pending #34