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THE STATE AS A PATRON, AND HIS RATES

As a resort of support and purchase-agreements the State of the Netherlands functions as a particular patron for a growing number of visual artists who are not able to make both ends meet, by way of the Ministry for Social Affairs, as mr. Paalman happened to explain.

As a patron of the arts in a more conventional sense the government offers commissions for artistic participation, in connection with public buildings for national and lower authorities, erected under the care of the Ministry for Housing and Physical Planning's State Building Service. 1.5% of the buildingcosts of these constructions, born by this Service are by arrangement reserved for works of art, in, on or, more often since recently, in the immediate vicinity of the architecture in question. A similar arrangement, at a rate of 1% of the construction-costs exists for schoolbuildings, financed wholly or partly out of the public means - the facility applies to all educational buildings from public schools up to academies and universities. The expenses for the works of art in the case of the 1%-rate are met by the Ministry for Education and Sciences.

Besides these arrangements of national character, there are own, municipal agreements of the same nature in three big cities: Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam, where for artistic contribution in connection with the construction of new schools and public buildings, both municipal, at a rate of 2% budgets are reserved. Like nowadays the Architect in Chief of the State Building Service, the three big cities attract artists for the commission concerned by open tender, under approval of the many who insisted since long on more disclose of the procedures and more controllability. A weak point in the system may be a new limitation on the side of the principal; no own choice, no chance to attract an artist with a certain renown in a special kind of job. Unless he happens to take part in the tender.

So far a short and rather noncommittal description of the rules of the rates and the conditions for their application. The intention of the arrangements have practically the same provenance and the same ethical background as the Social Scheme: economical and cultural protection against the vicissitudes of the free market, by means of institutional commission where the private ones fail to present themselves, and other supports.

In the case of the 1%-arrangements another accent however marks itself as dominant: the role and function of artist and art in relation to the other members of the society, in particular those who happen to be confronted regularly with the artist's artistic outcome - not only the artist, also the public is a subject of concern in the sociocultural concept of the arrangement-System. The interaction, if not the coupling of these two factors got as already indicated by dr. van Velzen, soon the overtone in the Ministry of Culture's Note and several other documents on the visual arts, the culture of the society, and on the policy for both. The development, since the early fifties, in concept and practice of the since then steadily criticized 1%-arrangements is closely related to the all-over changes in approach of man and living, at the Ministry for Culture's. Its public servants made about 1968, admonitioned by artists Associations, the Advisory Council for the Arts and others, a beginning with the conversion of (I quote prof. Hans Jaffé) art management into art policy, a work still in progress. It is to be hoped, that in a following edition of the Notes a social art-theory with a certain degree of exactitude, as substructure of the policy, will have an own place. But in the present Note is expressed the fact of great positive value, that government and artists have build a platform where the twin shall meet. If not a tradition, at least a habit and use concern-art and its function have found their confirmation there.

The idea, to couple a budget for works of art with the buildingsum on rate-basis date back to 1939 when the then alderman in Amsterdam, Boekman, designed a plan on national level, to help visual artists by commissions for (monumental) contributions to all buildings and constructions ordered or financed by the State: not only governmental public buildings and schools, but also social housbuilding, parks, bridges etc. The plan however was granted little chance for reflexion and discussion - one year later worldwar II stepped over nearly everybody's doorsill instead. Boekmann's plan was on some points analogous with the Travaux de Décoration - scheme in France, and with the commission-system in scandinavian countries, in those days.

The system of arrangements in force now, dates from 1951 for the 1.5%-arrangement (decorative art, applied in or on public buildings of "representative and important character" for the State Building-Service) and from 1953 for the 1%-arrangement for schoolbuildings ordered of partly financed by the State. It follows in the main lines Boekman's idea, with restrictions and certain own assumptions about art and public: importance, representation, art as adornment in combination with the consideration, that art, presented in such a nonconspicuous way would work wholesome and constructive on the perception of the public, and would awake their cultural interest and taste for the genuine, instead of fake and kitsch.

The difference between these assumptions and notions about the function and the effect of art and artist and the ideas of today are, though notable, smaller than they seem to be. Today the artist is supposed to works wonders by new forms and appearances of integration for the elucidation and the conscious experience of their surroundings of the above mentioned public, as recommended and hoped for in the Notes on Art and Artpolicy. Put aside the rather optimistic, if not missionary thoughts

about art and society in that document, practice may come down to overcharging the artist, if he is not prepared for quite different and new demands, inherent in new types of commissions, where sections of the public (f.i. teachers and pupils, local inhabitants) have a say in the game; where he has to confront himself with unfamiliar materials, technical procedures, sizes and distances; where he has to be able at explaining his plans in a clear and exact way, and must be capable of several sorts of negotiations, without losing his balance. Not all of our Academies possess in this moment an adequate curriculum for this new specialism of in- and outdoor-environments (this as a general character). I want to finish these remarks on several aspects of our arrangements with a small but maybe characteristic choice of the critical remarks on the arrangements and their working, from the start up till today:

The arrangements have habit, a bit of tradition, readiness and a spirit of agreement as their basis, with support of certain influences from councils, committees and artists-associations. But they still lack the force of law, and as a consequence therefore of jurisdiction, the, in this case so important jurisprudence (very proper materials for the development of an arttheory), effective control and sanction. A law in the proper sense is hardly possible because of the autonomies of province and municipality, but an Order in Council, which has a flexible nature according to the situation, would do quite well. The procedure to come to this Order is rather simple. Another remark concerns the controlability of the application and proper procedure of the 1.5- and 1%-arrangement. In particular in smaller communities and in the province regularly incomplete and straight improper practice of the arrangements is noticed, often as a consequence of insufficient and incomplete information about the possibilities on art's side.

For a rather painful form of improper use I refer to mr. Paalman's remarks about the not unadvantageous practice, where able commissions are converted into Social Scheme ones. These would be a lot more to say. That's why I set my hope on the discussion to be expected.