



 Exhibition Research: Sketches for the Future

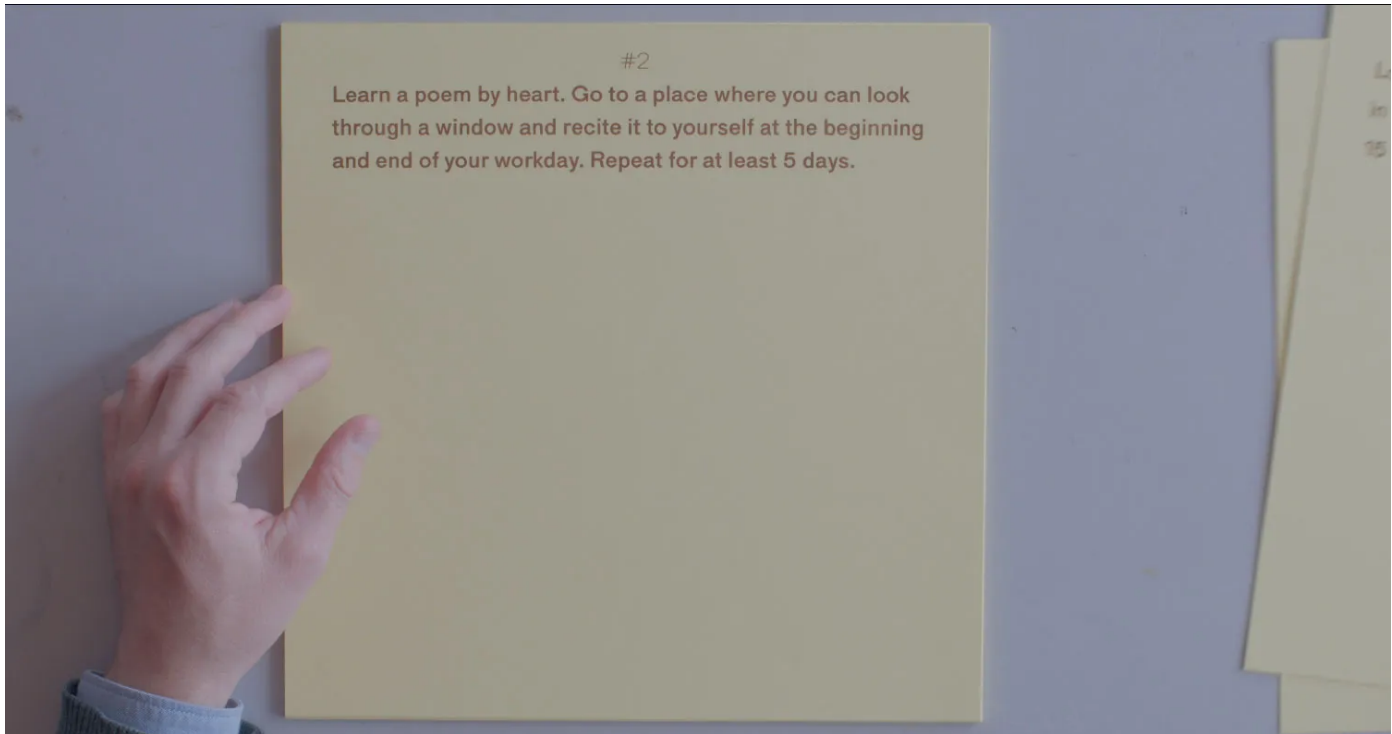
# Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen

12 interventions for the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 2021

by Danica Pinteric

## The Museum as Workplace

Throughout the run of *Video Club: Sketches for the Future*, Stedelijk visitors may stumble across one of the twelve performative interventions that Sander Breure & Witte Van Hulzen developed for museum employees to carry out during their regular working hours. The interventions highlight a range of activities intended to spark a critical dialogue about the nature and visibility of labor taking place at cultural institutions. Largely performed in the museum's public galleries, these actions disrupt the typical workday with behaviors that contradict socially-constructed norms like "professionalism" of a "strong work ethic." As a result, they highlight how the everyday rhythms and patterns of professional etiquette are shaped by prevalent ideological forces.



Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen, *12 interventies voor het Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam / 12 interventions for the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam collection, 2021. © Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen

An Amsterdam-based artist duo, Breure and Van Hulzen are known for their conceptual artistic practice, which spans several mediums including video, performance, writing, and sculpture. In the Video Club screening room, the work is presented in the form of a short video in which two hands are seen flipping through a thirteen-page risograph script outlining each intervention. As a selection of the script's performances are enacted by museum staff throughout the run of Video Club, Breure and Van Hulzen's exploration of labor, value, and social performativity comes to life, animating the qualities of the museum as a workplace rather than a cultural institution.

The Stedelijk as an organization comprises a workforce of nearly 200 people performing a range of different duties, and include everything from conservators to reception security guards. Each intervention staged will also be unique to the person performing it and their occupation. One example of how this may influence the performance is in the visibility of the performance itself; for instance, many public-facing employees of the museum wear a uniform, while the majority of the office staff do not. While performances by uniformed employees are more likely to be interpreted as an activity or an outcome of the museum,

this intervention also plays with the degree of visibility of labor at the museum and highlights the spectrum of working styles that the museum houses.

## A Wide Scope of References

Each intervention has a unique instruction, frequency, and duration. Some, like #4, come with straightforward instructions, while others, like #2, leave room for interpretation and personal choice. The conceptual scope and influences of each of the twelve interventions are also particular to each one. For example, #4 requires the performer to stand in the middle of a gallery space, listening with eyes closed, for 4 minutes and 33 seconds. With this instruction, Breure and Van Hulzen reference *4'33"*, a work by the experimental composer John Cage in which musicians refrain from playing their instruments for 4 minutes and 33 seconds, leaving the soundtrack of the room up to the atmospheric noises of the venue and audience. Imagined for the Stedelijk's galleries, #4 approaches the museum's everyday sounds as a "score" unto themselves.

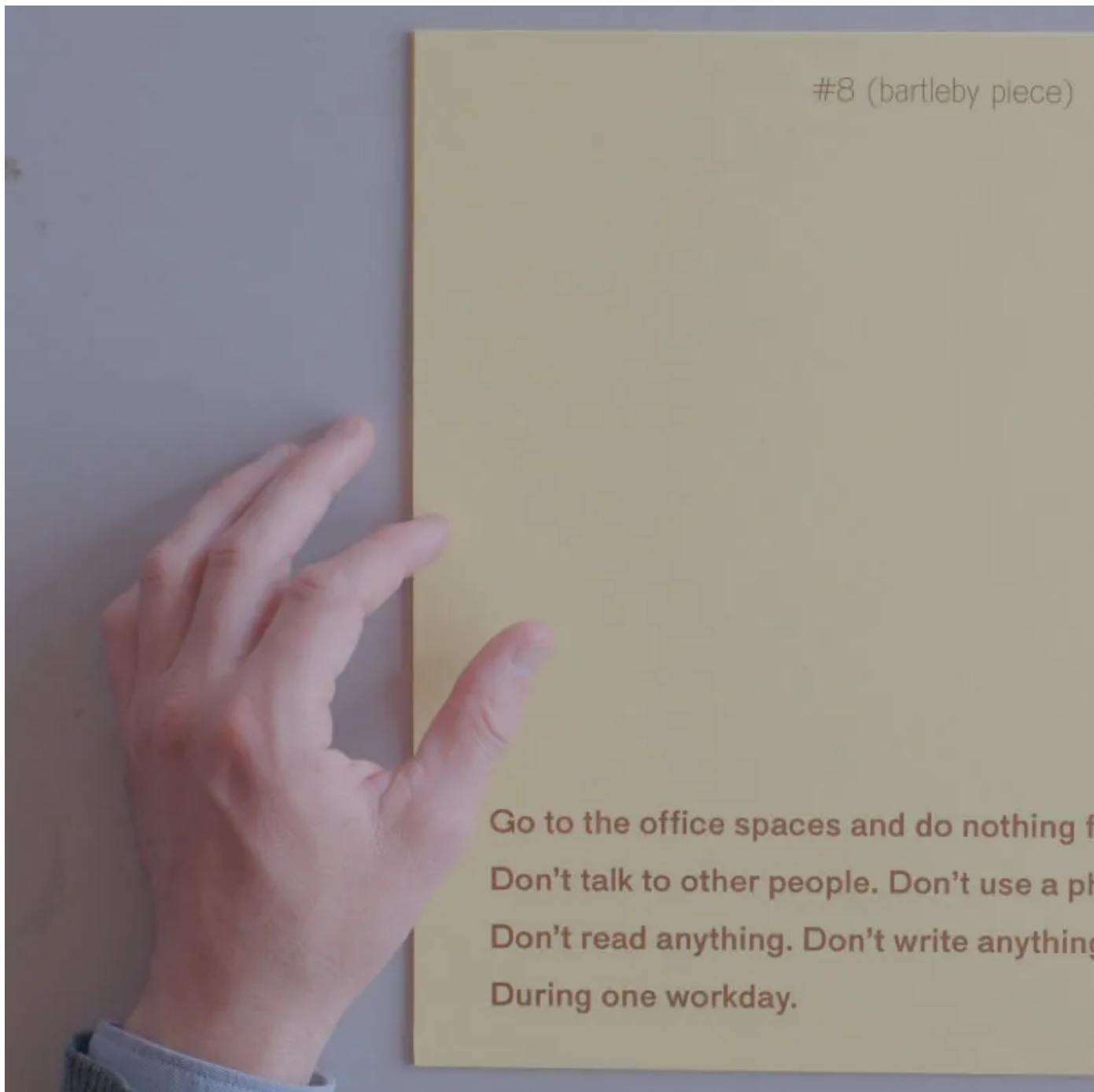


Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen, *12 interventies voor het Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam / 12 interventions for the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam*, 2021. Collection Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam. © Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen



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One intervention which generated a lot of conversation among our staff while preparing the acquisition was #8 (Bartleby piece). Referencing Melville's short story of Bartleby the Scrivener, who famously uttered the phrase "I would prefer not to," #8 invites an employee to spend an entire day doing nothing at all. The intervention challenges conventional attitudes that conflate labor with productivity by temporarily redefining labor to mean doing nothing. While #8 reinterprets the intended outcome of a workday, it is not to suggest the absence of effort. During the acquisition interview about this work, we spoke with the artists about the implicit social (and, perhaps, self-inflicted) pressures to stay productive that the office environment reinforces.



Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen, *12 interventies voor het Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam / 12 interventions for the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam collection, 2021. © Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen.

In addition to this observation, #8 brought up some amusing follow-up questions in our pre-production discussion, such as:

| *What if a colleague approaches a “performer” to ask about work?*

(They can respond by saying they are performing the piece.)

| *Can the person take a break?*

(Yes, the usual toilet and lunch breaks are fine, the same as any other day.)

| *Should other colleagues be notified about the performance?*

(Not particularly; only the employees' supervisors should be informed to avoid them getting into trouble.)

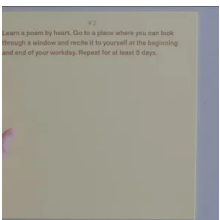
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## More Sketches for the Future



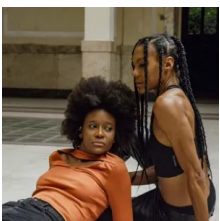
### Christine Sun Kim, IOU 4 USA, 2021

by Fabienne Chiang



### Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen, 12 interventions for the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam

by Danica Pinteric



### Michele Rizzo, Rest, 2021

by Danica Pinteric