



the artlab paris edition update

#8

## when there are just images (of works of art)

Just before I moved to Paris at the end of last year, I saw an interesting video in which an installation by the American painter and sculptor Sarah Sze was introduced by Bruno Latour and the artist herself. It made me wanting to see this work in the Fondation Cartier, but upon arriving in Paris the musea had closed their doors. The two part artwork was there, but could not be admired. Luckily the artwork was captured in a beautiful book and bookshops remained open.

So no real, spatial experience of this work of art which it deserves, just a book with pictures. I am fascinated by the work and it was quite inspiring for me when conceptualising an image of an advanced form of leadership with the

installations' fragility and projections, the movement and layers of meaning. A construct of mundane fragments which, carefully composed, make up a larger entity. The center is a deliberate void and it is at the periphery where the form comes to life while the projections extend to a bigger space.

I have planned to visit the work later this month when the restrictions due to covid-19 are to be lifted.

This installation by Sarah Sze is in its various aspects influential for my work in Paris.



## while drawing

My work involves the social contract and art as power. I want to explore how these two spaces could create a meaningful interference, especially in the domain of organisations and enterprises.

The drawing is my deliberate tool of exploring for I want the image to take the lead more than the word. As can be noticed in the earlier Paris updates, I made drawings about people as the actors in any social agreement, about the abstraction of the contract to which people have to relate, about the traces that behaviour leaves physically and mentally and about the patterns these traces leave that could be regarded as the real materialisation and representation of a social contract.

The drawings did create and continue to deliver new insights in what my work is about, with all the moments of doubt and satisfaction.

The biggest challenge for me was how to express the combination of the conceptual abstractness of a contract and the deeply human and individual aspects of a such an agreement. How could I create a form, a composition that would incorporate the various aspects, without becoming too literal or too narrative? The drawings should not be the analysis nor the solutions, they should, while being works on their own, open the space for reflection.





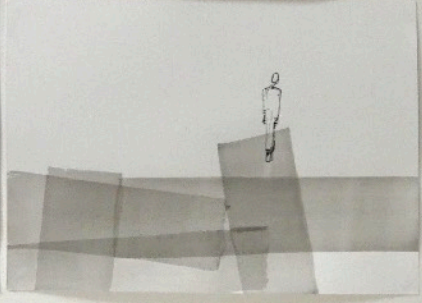
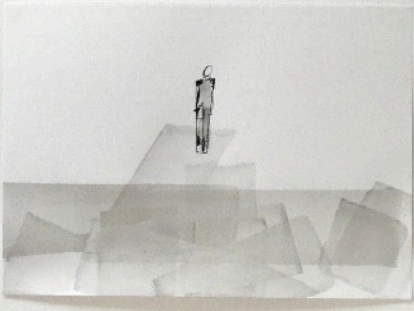
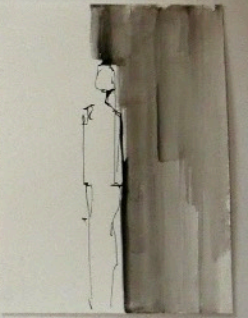
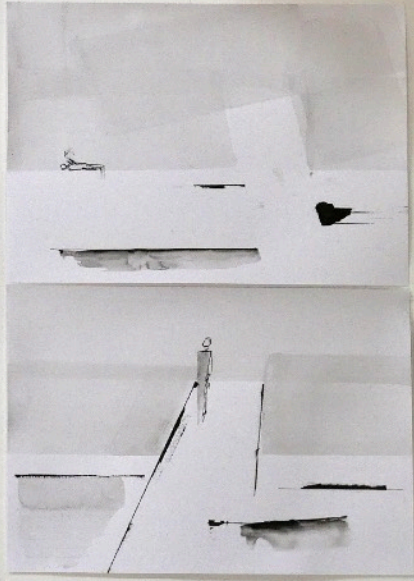
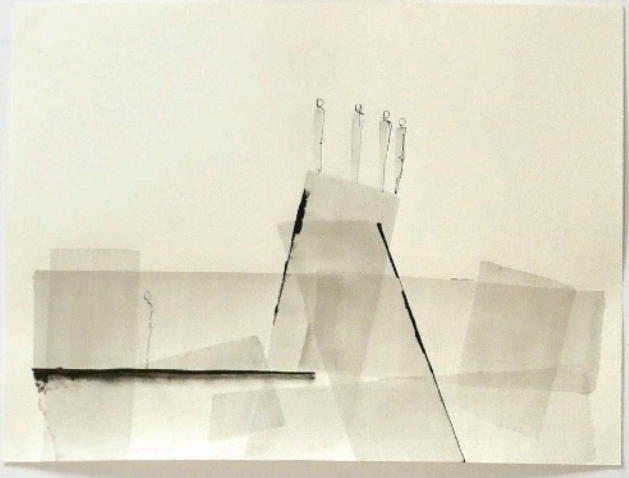
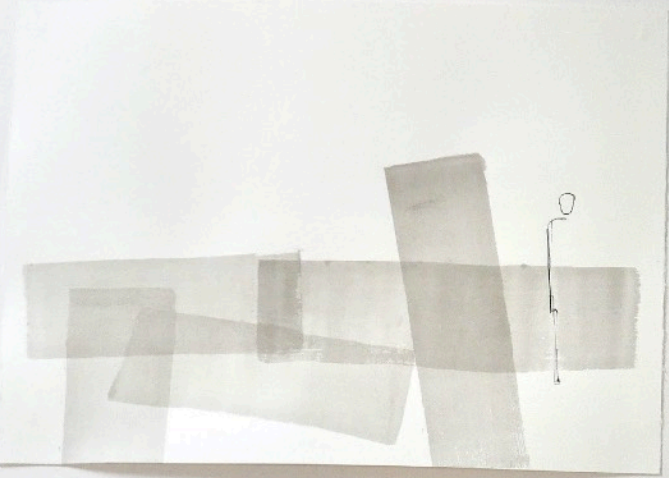
Then I saw the photograph made by Kadir van Lohhuizen titled 'point hope' in a mailing from the gallery 'Vriend van Bavink'.

A man standing on a spike of ice. An intriguing scene that refers to a glacial habitat threatened by global warming. A symbol of an indigenous way of living endangered by the consequences of human behaviour thousands of miles away. The image shows the loneliness of a broken social contract and yet the individual remains somehow standing confidently.

The composition of the image and the meaning I found in the picture struck a cord with me.

The landscape of ice and the grey sky give the image a certain abstractness. It is more than just the figurative image, it has graphical qualities. At the same time there is a human figure in the picture who is more than just one person, it is a symbol for people who have to individually cope with the consequences of the behaviour of others. The dirtiness of the ice mass as the traces of those distant actions.

This picture offered the insight that the abstract and the individual can be linked, not by deliberately looking for a connection, but treating both as one. The abstract image does not conflict with the sole figure in it, they are naturally connected, just by being there in the picture, at the same time, each in its own right.



This photograph started of a set of drawings using this insight. It ignited a process of finding new forms, a new direction to be discovered and cherished.

Whilst working on the drawings, the idea of the social contract developed. Drawing is also looking and thinking, it is a visual and associative process for me.

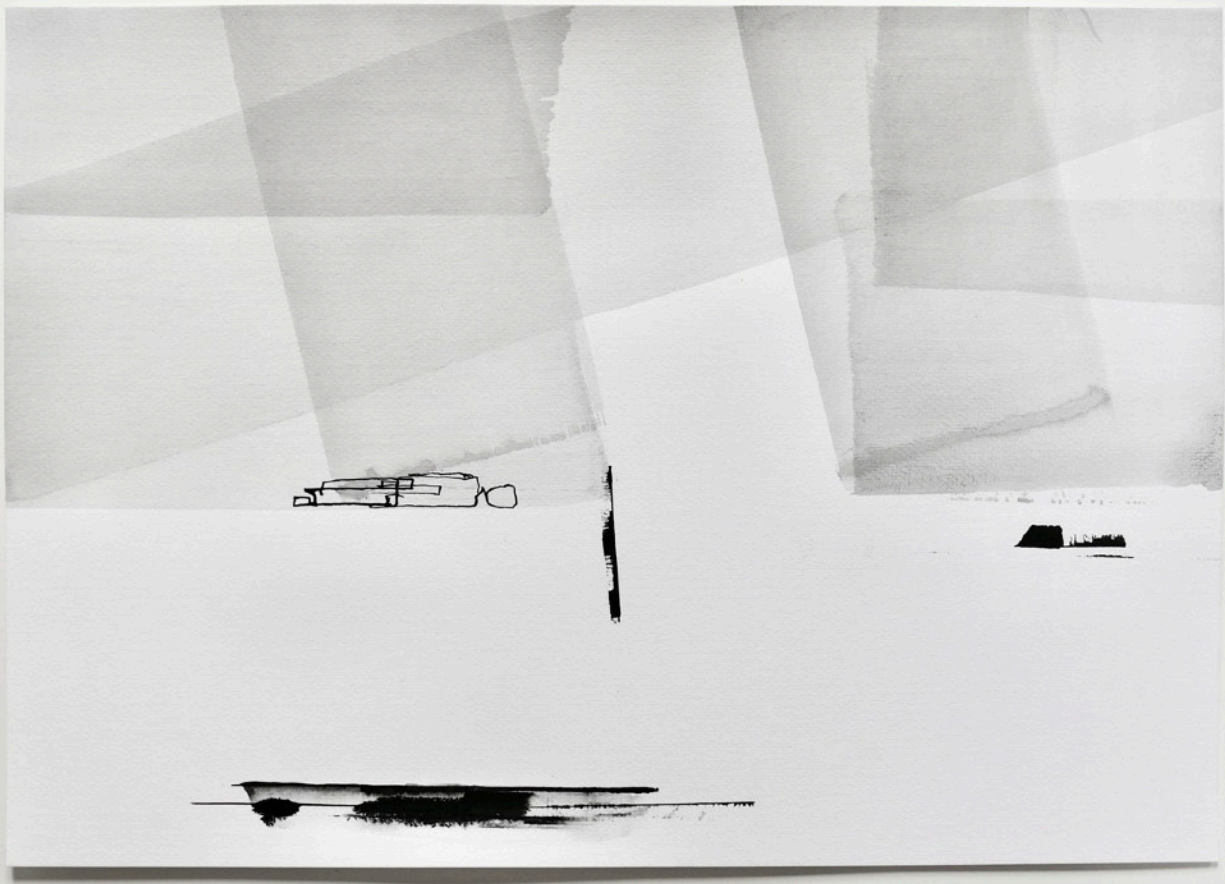
How does the social contract, the concept with its overarching and deep ideas, overcome its abstractness? Any social contract, even if it is in its essence a sublimation of behaviour of individuals, needs a way forward to make it relevant for the individual in his acting and to do so in such a way that it confirms and strengthens the ideas and ideals of the contract.

This question is evident in the context of the purpose and strategy of an organisation: how do these formalised and structured intentions become meaningful for the individuals and guide their acting?

How to avoid micro management of behaviour or making objectives so s.m.a.r.t. that they become a straitjacket that inhibits all human flexibility of curiosity and ingenuity?

How to engage people to translate the abstract believes to a personal context which they can relate to? How to create a space for interpretation and individual behaviour that ultimately add to a pattern that is emblematic of a subscribed social contract?





## if art as power matters

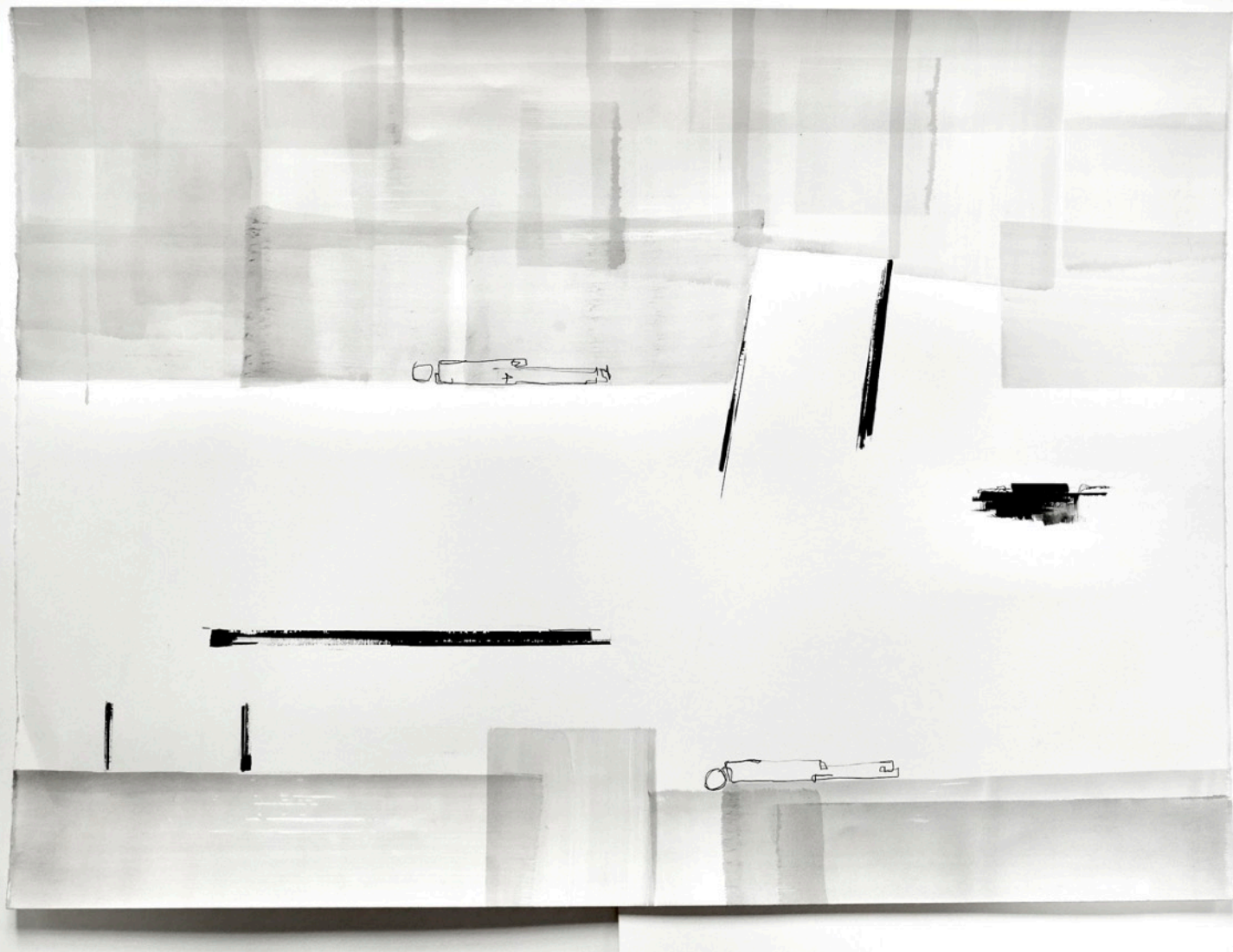
Making the drawings, recognising the power of the photograph of Kadir van Lohhuizen and discovering the magic of Sarah Sze's installations, gave me the idea that art has, maybe unintentionally, the capability to create a mental and emotional bridge between the large and the small, the abstract and the personal, the collective and the individual, the social contract and one's behaviour.

I think that a work of art can put an abstract idea into personal perspective. It can channel big thoughts to a specific and relevant context. It creates for the viewer meaningful references in unexpected manners.

Seeing a work of art creates a magical relationship between material form and the intentions of the artist. This force of connection extends beyond the artwork itself.

A work of art allows for ambiguity, aversion, connection, wonder, affection, disgust, lethargy, energy. It provides even in its most activist or compelling form a freedom for the viewer to relate to it. This freedom provides the space and the trigger to take position towards any social contract (or whatever abstraction) related to one's own actions.

With all the personal preferences and in the right setting this magic will happen with any work of art, not as a subject of art historical, but as an object that entertains dialogues.



The effects of the interpretation of a bigger idea by the individual are real. Consider for a moment the effect of continuously ranking employee as an instrument to keep only the best at the company and thus improve overall performance: colleagues stop collaborating.

Cooperation and competition do both exist in any social construct and simple answers to the question how to make it a fruitful mix and not a toxic one, do not exist. And yet, a good look at the picture by Kadir van Lohhuizen might evoke some fresh and useful clues.

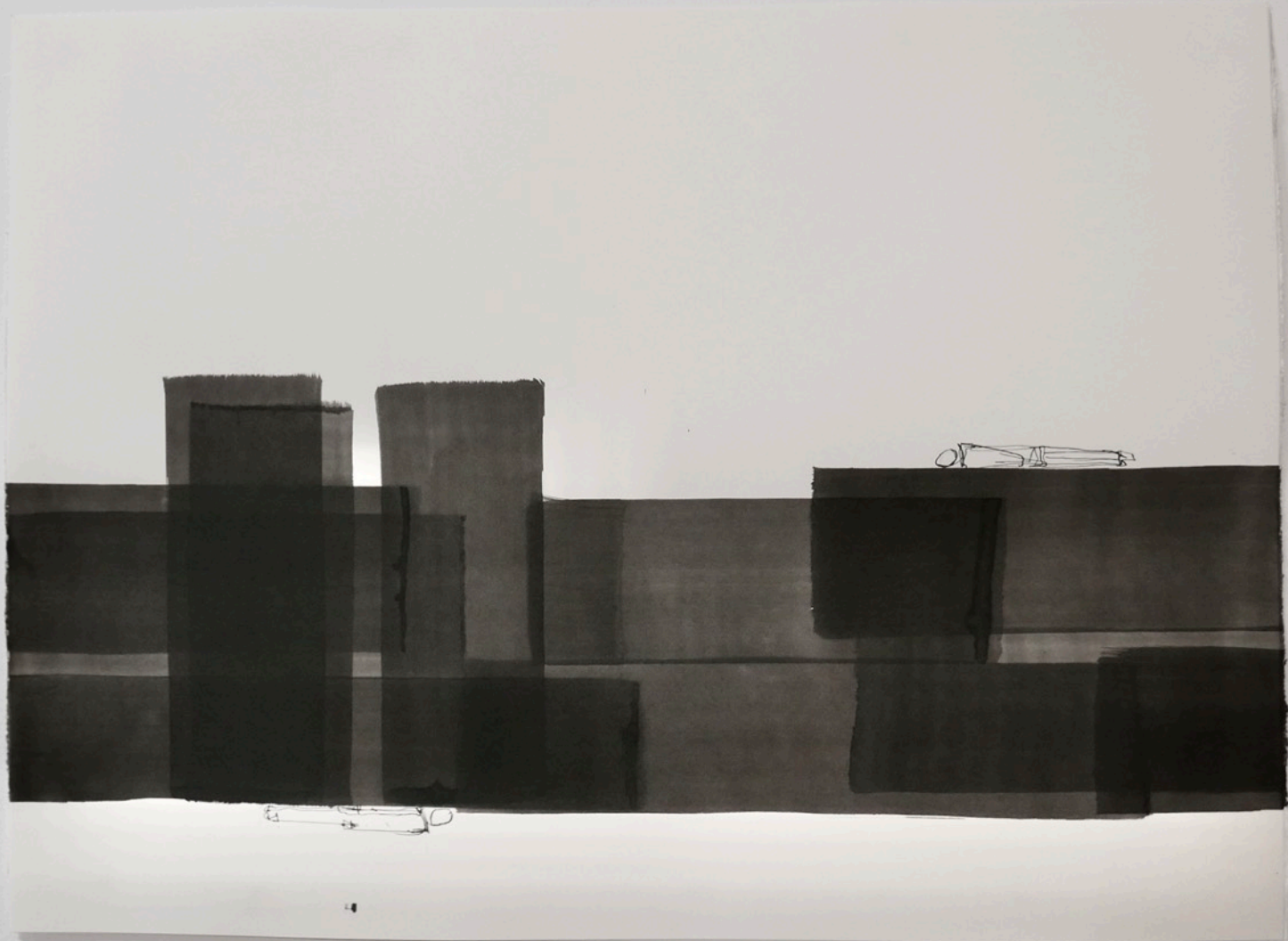
Two years ago stordes started what we called 'occasions'. By using (images of) works of art we wanted to see how we could change and enhance the dialogues with clients. We have seen unexpected outcomes and encounter a lot of positive feed-back.

One of the triggers to start the artlab was to avoid this becoming just another tool. We want to investigate the intrinsic value and consequences of what we called art as power in the domain of organisations and society.

Being in Paris, working intensively on this subject in the context of the social contract is invigorating and exiting. The work has many surprising and sometimes confusing angles.

In business people talk about 'sweating the assets'. And I suspect that art has enormous underused capacities to sweat. I will keep you posted on the results of the quest to find them.





this update has the format of an illustrated essay.  
i would like to suggest to read it in its original format,  
which can be downloaded [here](#).

of course you may also read it in this email format.