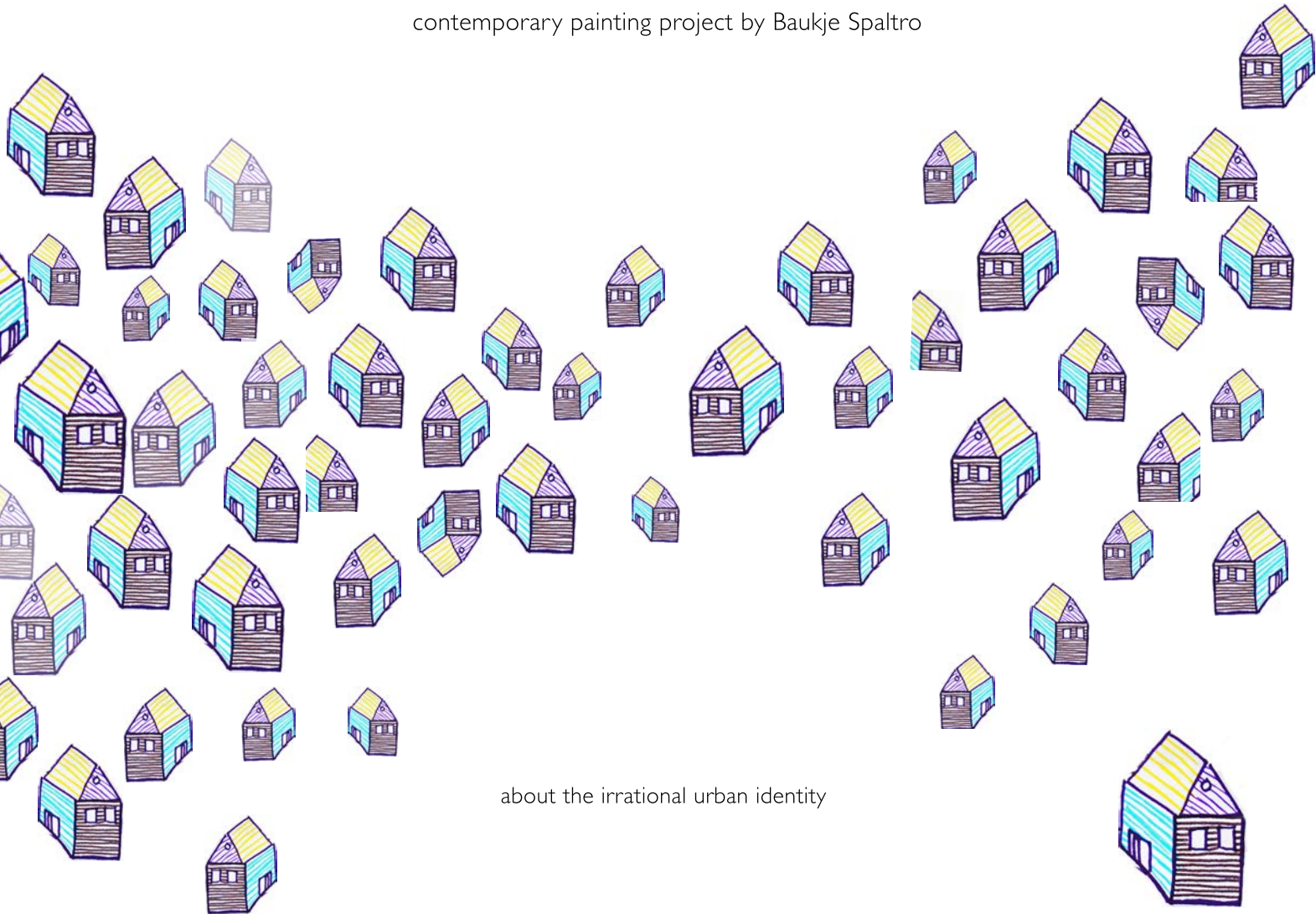


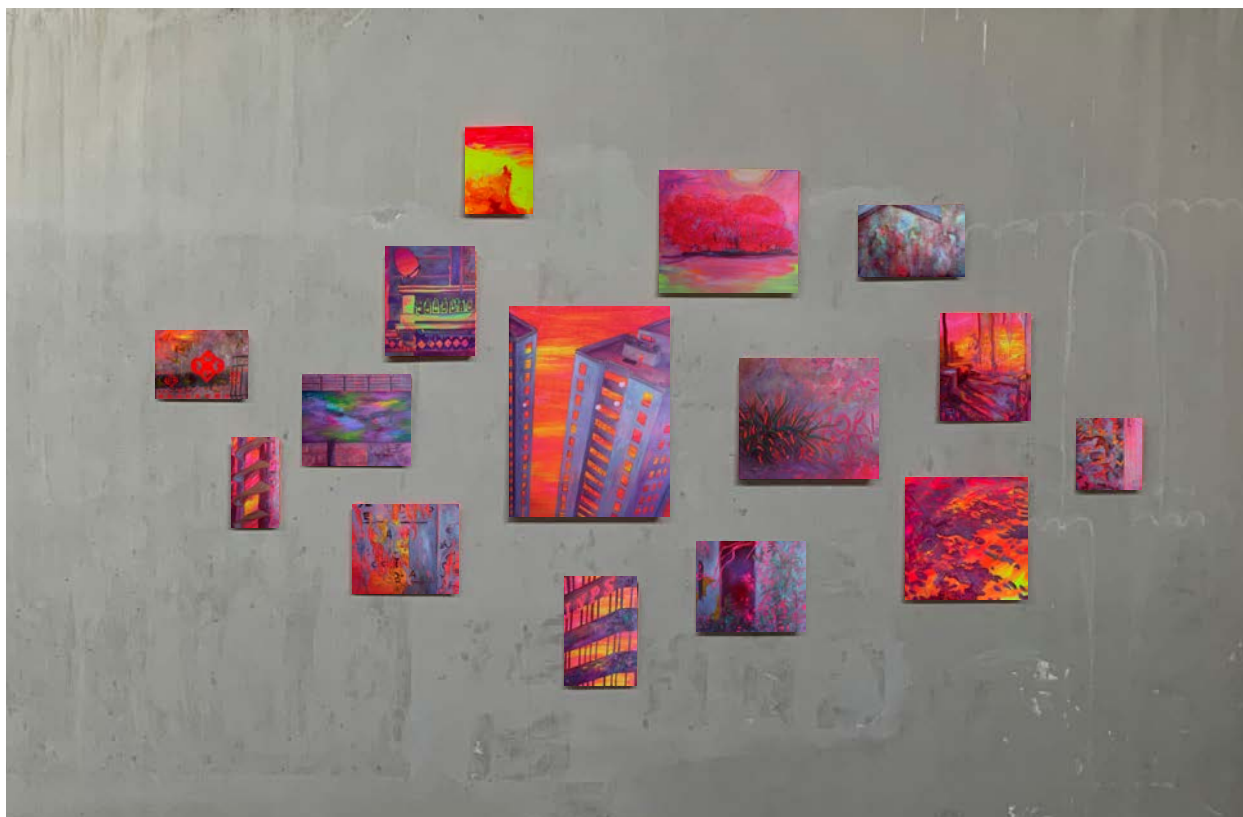
CITY SPHERES

CORVETTO SCHALKWIJK KREUZBERG

contemporary painting project by Baukje Spaltro



about the irrational urban identity



City Sphere Corvetto

2 x 4 m mixed media on linen ViaFariniWork Milan 12.2022

Baukje Spaltro

CITY SPHERES



In City Spheres I research the city as an irrational space, as an ambiance resulting from the communal construction and use by it's inhabitants and visitors. How can I, as a painter, catch this unique urban ambiance with specific colours on canvas?

I have grown up in different European cities with completely diverse atmospheres.

This is how my fascination with the authentic city, as a living space and as an identity originated.

What is this authentic identity and what shapes it?

The Irrational Space

The city is a constructed space, an assembly of concrete buildings and less tangible structures.

What interests me is the fluid, non-tangible authentic character of the city.

As a source of creation and growth, which originates from an elusive power (force), which I could call irrational or authentic. I would rather call it 'the soul' of a place, not in any rational or religious sense, but more in the sense of the character nature of a person. In Roman mythology this is called genius loci, in other words the 'protecting spirit' or 'spirit of a location'. I have embraced this theme wholeheartedly .

Ever since 2015 I attempt to catch this genius loci of specific cities in my City Spheres series.

This is a site-specific research into urban authenticity, whereby I focus on this elusive character. Until today I have painted series in Amsterdam, Arnhem, Berlin, Den Helder, Haarlem, Milano and Turku (Finland).

This catalogue shows the works made in Milan, Haarlem and Berlin.

With saturated colors I try to capture (strive to shape) the form of the experience of the urban identity in a way that diverges from the factual visual reality. This is somewhat distorted under the influence of the subjective experience and gaze, which add an dimension to how we normally look, and which could lead into a questioning of what this reality really is.

Besides, I wonder if the subjective perception is perhaps more true than that which is being considered the factually registered reality. In my work I focus on catching the unique urban character, her fluidity, with the experience of the impossibility of one, unambiguous interpretation.

I translate an urban quarter into a specific use of color: tonal and often grayish colors on fluorescent backgrounds, influenced by the local surroundings. Color is an important element in my work for indicating the irrational. 'Fluor' colors are highly saturated colors, they are dominant and determine my observation and enforce specific and instinctive painterly choices. On a pink fluor background each color is looking entirely different than on a white or a neutral background. The fluor causes an almost physical and direct reaction in me while painting, not my thinking but my intuition is being called upon. The amount of the unpainted layer of fluor strongly determines the composition of the work, because the fluor makes every color on top of it 'vibrate'. The top layer's colors are just about out of harmony with the fluor under-layer; they actually have an abrasive relationship with the fluor background. It becomes unclear which is foreground and which background. The question arises what exactly can be seen. In a similar way this use of color produces a direct, spontaneous reaction in the viewer's observation. This way I invite the observer to look from another point of view at their own environment, to reflect on the quarter that has been painted here.

Fluor colors are the real contemporary colors, they refer to the virtual reality, to the online RGB colors of our computer and smart-phone screens. What do we perceive and what is the truth? Is the truth that what we, on the spot, really see and experience ourselves?

Or, do we only have eyes for a 'truth' that is being defined online as being the reality, the city of the online pictures (and fables) instead of our own experience of that city? I use the portrait of a specific urban quarter, painted in colors that are dictated by the city, as a means to research these questions time and again.

I experienced the authentic, wayward character of a city for the first time in Berlin, during the collapse of the Wall in 1989. There was much energy, turmoil, hope, the air crackled with tension. It was the first time I was introduced to the irrational aspect of a city, an elusive energy or atmosphere. I felt that the city had its own 'soul' and voice, which, in my perception, radiated tension. There, I was searching for a new, not yet existing color. Later it became apparent that I had a psychosis while I was in Berlin, and that this profound experience shaped me as a painter. Back home, I experienced the urban character of Berlin as an intense, deep red color. This experience I have worked into one large, red painting, which I worked on for a year. It has led to contemplating what is true and real in our perception of a city. The realization of a parallel reality – in my psychotic state I saw different things than when I am stable – made me look at the world differently. Influenced by a small physical or mental nudge, we have entirely different experiences than that what we experience as being rational, such as chronology or causality. Is the one more true or valuable than the other? *In my opinion it is exactly the art of painting that at times approximates this experience of insecurity about what we observe.*

In 2019, thirty years afterwards, I have returned to Berlin and have painted City Sphere SO36 in the Kreuzberg quarter. In this entire series the color red, in all its warm gradations has remained crucial.

I draw much inspiration from the paintings of Jules de Balincourt and Jadé Fadojutimi. Balincourt because of his urban landscapes in saturated colors, that seem to blur the border between fantasy and reality.

Fadojutimi's 'emotional landscapes' question her everyday experiences, memories and self-knowledge. In powerful lines and intense colors she researches the relationship between herself and her surroundings.

The city as atmosphere, what kind of world are we building together?

Regretfully, the authentic atmosphere of cities is under much pressure during the past years, because of the complex, contemporary world of globalization, efficiency and optimization. Dutch tomatoes in Italian supermarkets, garlic from China, Starbuck everywhere and foreign investors. Because of gentrification cities have started to look more and more alike and have become unaffordable and uninhabitable besides. The city seems to increasingly exclude, rather than include. To which extend do the inhabitants still have input in and added values to their own living environments? Are we aware of this, or have we succumbed to over-consumption and passive indifference? Is there still space and attention for the local identity? Or are we merely a little bolt in the larger mechanism of the Western capitalist society, where there is no room for individual input?

I'm inspired by the book 'Spheres' of the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk. He says: "The question where we are is more important than ever and more important than the question who we are. We have to concentrate on the place that people create, in order to be who they are. This place I call (atom)sphere." Sloterdijk says that we, as humans, construct inner spaces on different levels. These human inner spaces are to be found in the intimate sphere within their own home, as well as in the larger sphere of urban inner spaces. Sloterdijk's concept of sphere, as a non-physical space which we construct together in order to be who we want to be and from which we derive our identity and reality, really speaks to me. Especially the spheres of old, lived-through neighbourhoods, that have originated organically, intrigue and fascinate me. This authentic urban sphere has largely been shaped, through the centuries, by the inhabitants and users of a place and can be experienced as an identity and as an intangible given, as soon as you walk through the neighbourhood. In City Spheres I research the urban character as a fluid and not concretely perceptible 'sphere'. I create images of this typical individuality of the local, the idiosyncratic character of a specific community with the exchange and input that exist in urban neighbourhoods.

From my own experience I know the importance of people being able to shape their own environment, co-create the city, besides their own, concrete living space, also participating in the construction of the collective, less tangible space. I live and work for more than 30 years in artists' house Tetterode, www.wwpt.nl. I was part of shaping this place both as a construction worker and as a member of the Board. Motivated by idealism, without any money and at times running into problems, we have, as a community, build a mini village under our own administration. The direct involvement and input of the inhabitants, ultimately contribute to a greater connectedness and a higher quality of life. It also leads to the polyphony that gives each neighbourhood its individuality.

Work process

For the duration of one month I visit a European city quarter I don't know yet, so that I can work without foreknowledge. This is often a rather poor, multicultural suburb which is being threatened by gentrification.* I always take three suitcases along with same basic materials, among which are the same 9 fluor colors in acrylic and 30 colors in oil-paint. This equal, but limited starting position, helps me in optimally researching the genius loci of a specific neighbourhood.

On location I work in a temporary studio. Everything there is different from my own studio. The paint-tubes are positioned in a different way, the daylight is different, and I paint in a different position, sitting down, standing up, laying down. This is how I intuitively chose the local colors for that neighbourhood. Each neighbourhood has different characteristics and yields different color combinations. In Turku it became orange and green, In Den Helder blue and green.

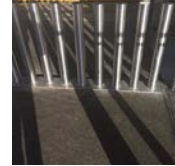
On the first day I straight away determine the color chart of a neighbourhood, a small canvas with the selected fluor colors. These fluor colors I use as the ground for every canvas in the series. Every day I stroll through the neighbourhood while researching; I observe, meet people, take pictures, jot things down. After the stroll I paint my observations in the shape of concrete characteristics, such as buildings, trees and sidewalks on top of the fluor colors I determined earlier. The local, the architecture, culture and meetings influence my view. Besides, the inhabitants have co-created this genius loci; it is they who have defined the composition, colors and sphere of the place. I work concentrated and non-stop, because I only have three weeks; a real marathon. In the end the result is a painted installation, a composition of about thirty, carefully installed individual paintings, which I call a cloud. A cloud is spatial, just like a neighbourhood. Besides, the inhabitants have co-created this genius loci; it is they who have defined the composition, colors and sphere of the place.

* Floor Milikowski "The future of super diverse cities lies right there in the suburbs, where there is an abundance of ambitious artists, entrepreneurs and social workers. Empowered by the communities they come from, they bundle their forces, for a more equal future in which nobody will be forgotten." from *We are the City* www.floormilikowski.com

The identity of authentic districts is often based on an invisible sense, according to the Romans known as the *genius loci*. Here under the color card and one picture as frame of my research about the *genius loci*.



City Sphere Den Nieuwen Helder (nl) 2015.06



City Sphere Platform One (Amsterdam Z.) 2018.03



City Sphere Civic Pride (Bijlmer nl) 2016.02



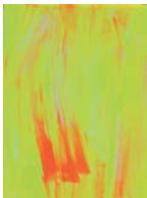
City Sphere KNSM (Amsterdam) 2018.09



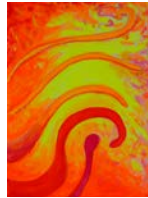
City Sphere Aura (Turku Fin) 2016.10



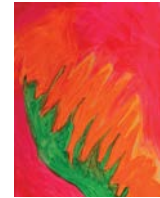
City Sphere Beek (Arnhem nl) 2019.03



City Sphere Isola (Milan) 2017.01



City Sphere SO36 (Berlin) 2019.09



City Sphere Schalkwijk (Haarlem) 2021

I work concentrated and non-stop, because I only have three weeks; a real marathon. In the end the result is a painted installation, a composition of about thirty, carefully installed individual paintings, which I call a cloud. A cloud is spatial, just like a neighbourhood.

Another aspect of this research is the local intervention. This is a collaboration with local artists, in which I show my cloud next to the local art. This cloud is the starting point for a dialogue with artists and inhabitants about their urban identity and how they relate to it. Each neighbourhood yields a different collaboration. In the Milanese quarter Isola I organized a Painters Club with colleague painters, which became a grandiose public event. Because of the diversity of the paintings, an interesting dialogue originated between painters and the public about the value of painting in an urban context. In Turku, Finland, I collaborated with a choreographer during four dance performances, while I painted live, on stage, the atmosphere of Turku on a gigantic canvas. The interaction with the local creatives is very important. Through the arts and this interaction I experience the local identity even more intensely.

Back in my studio in Amsterdam I hang the cloud-installation on the wall, in order to experience the local sphere anew. I elaborate the cloud further with larger works in a more abstract visual language. In this phase color is more important than the recognisability of the physical characteristics of the city. Only at a distance, from the memory, I see the genius loci more clearly. In this I trust my experiences and intuition. Just like a music track from my youth that can call up an important memory and nostalgic feeling, so does the cloud of the researched place also evoke a melancholy image, which I further define with color. But how true is the memory? This studio image interprets the genius loci the best. Painting these works in my own studio is an intensive process that takes a lot of attention and sometimes takes years.

Schalkwijk

The specific of the genius loci of a quarter stands out best when series are being exhibited next to each other. In 2022 I presented at the Vishal in Haarlem City Sphere Schalkwijk (Haarlem NL 2021/2022) next to City Sphere SO36 (Kreuzberg, Berlin 2019/2021).

City Sphere Schalkwijk is a collective image of 111 small canvasses of 90 inhabitants and 21 of mine. It is the first time I have collaborated with inhabitants, who, each of them painted their own vision of the neighbourhood on a floor underlay. The floor as defining element of the image links all the works into a cloud about the sphere of Schalkwijk.

City Sphere SO36 is a strong autonomous and individual image.



Corvetto: my gaze as a painter

Corvetto

Corvetto is in transition due to gentrification and ambitious municipal plans. You see gigantic flats, the first social housing in Milan, many empty warehouses, the new Olympic village under construction, many foreigners, loiterers, dealers, artists and rappers. This suburb is bustling, but there is also a lot happening that does not tolerate daylight. City Sphere Corvetto shows the genius loci of this area in Milan. The local character is determined by its new and old buildings full of stories and 'vivid' greys.

End of 2022 I created in Milan City Sphere Corvetto for the exhibition NZSD Corvetto at ViaFariniWork. This series consists of two clouds: a painted one and a written one. The painted installation is made of 15 paintings with 'lively' shades of gray. The written cloud is a local intervention 'Voci di Corvetto' (voices of Corvetto). It is a flag with quotes of youngsters from Corvetto and organized by Spaltro, together with Gigi Tufariello (XYZ Corvetto), Dora Casadio (Viafarini) and young artist Dima.

Now I work in my Amsterdam studio on larger works about the atmosphere of Corvetto.



Voci di Corvetto and City Sphere Corvetto 10 x 2 m

ViaFariniWork Milan 12.2022

Baukje Spaltro

City Sphere Corvetto 2022.11 Milan (Italy)

All the works by Baukje Spaltro are made in a mixed oil technique on linen.



Color card Corvetto
24 x 18 cm



Antenna *Antenna*
Corso Lodi 30 x 25 cm



Cascina scomparsa *disappeared farmhouse*
Via Riva di Trento 25 x 30 cm



Guarda su *Look up*
Piazza Angilberto II 20 x 30 cm



Il tempo non si ferma *Time doesn't stop*
Via Riva di Trento
20 x 18 cm



Altovolante *'high flying'*
Piazza Corvetto 25 x 30 cm



Ombre *shadows*
 San Luigi Gambalòita (Corso Lodi)
 35 x 35 cm



Messaggio inutile *useless message*
 Via Marco D'Agrate
 25x30 cm



Case bianche *white houses*
 Via Pismonte
 60 x 45 cm

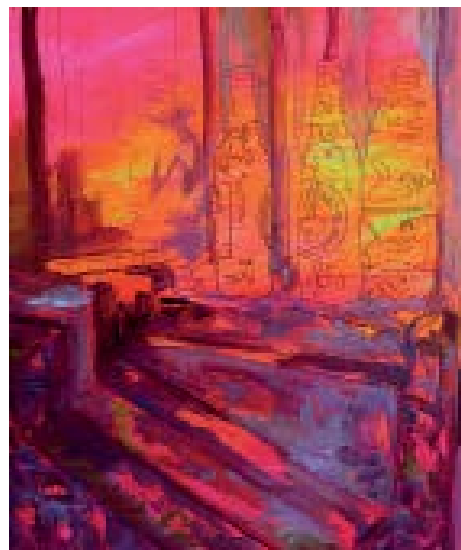
Sotto la superficie (Trapano) *below the Surface (drill)*
 Via Gargano
 25x13 cm



Erba rossa, tutti fuori *red grass, everybody out*
 Viale Enrico Martini
 35x40 cm



INPS
Istituto Nazionale Previdenza Sociale
National Social Security Institute
Via Sulmona
30x21 cm



Ora di Pranzo *lunch time*
Piazza Gabriele Rosa
30x25 cm



LOGO (case popolari) *logo (council houses)*
 Piazza Ferrara
 18x25 cm



Bosco *woods*
 Piazza Geremia Bonomelli
 35x40 cm

Corvetto is like searching in the trash,
you can find treasures

<p>1</p> <p>Corvetto is a ruined statue</p>	<p>8</p> <p>I was born and raised there but it's too messy and too many dealings</p> <p><i>Marwa</i></p>	<p>15</p> <p>Corvetto is like a full sink of dirty dishes after a meal</p>	<p>14</p> <p>POPULAR NARRATIVE</p> <p>Concrete blocks darker than the clouds about to rain, liquid trauma, alive as bruises</p> <p>apathetic gray sky, don't be nice, there's little to laugh about,</p> <p>high expectations and minimum wages</p> <p>our end without a happy ending</p> <p>the fate that always seems to lead us back to crime</p> <p>in the street I learned to be afraid and respected</p> <p>as a child I stole dreams and put them in the drawer</p> <p>while from classmates to elementary school I was marginalized</p> <p>arrived in Italy on a boat as a true immigrant</p> <p>poet of reason, there was no state or religion, because the state has left us</p> <p>in a state of illusion.</p> <p>Garbage bags like grocery bags</p> <p>Give me a frame that's not too tight</p> <p>let me live, don't survive in a hurry</p> <p>today is a new day, the one before is cancelled.</p> <p><i>Dima Palma</i></p>
<p>2</p> <p>Corvetto is full of drug dealers</p> <p><i>Badr</i></p>	<p>9</p> <p>Corvetto is like music there are those who like it and those who don't</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Corvetto is the area where I study and there are many foreigners</p> <p><i>Tymofii Ischenko (Ukrainian refugee)</i></p>	<p>21</p> <p>The respect rule</p> <p>If not, I'll fight later</p> <p>I continue straight criticism I don't care</p> <p>I put a hundred percent every time I sing</p> <p>Ferrara five hundred</p> <p>There's a lot of drugs</p> <p>I have great talent</p> <p>But I'm not proud of it</p> <p>In Gabriele Rosa there is more than a crash</p> <p>The Indian with a rose that breaks your dick</p> <p>More than a Moroccan who leaves you the package</p> <p>For this I don't go out to Corvetto</p> <p>I prefer the stage</p> <p><i>ANDREA</i></p>
<p>3</p> <p>For me Corvetto is a place that inspires a bit of fear; but if you look between the lines you'll find some nice places, green parks, large buildings, a bit of confusion it's true but finally it's not that bad as city.</p> <p><i>CATTORZ</i></p>	<p>11</p> <p>Corvetto is like a road full of kids having fun and smoking together</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Corvetto is a day that started badly that can only get worse because going wrong in Corvetto is guaranteed.</p>	
<p>4</p> <p>Point a finger at random on a map</p> <p>Leave the stories, the choices, the beliefs behind</p> <p>Buy a new pair of shoes</p> <p>Walk first slowly and then quickly, close your mouth, open your eyes, listen to the sky, run your fingers on the walls</p> <p>Take a dirty mound of dirt and make it your museum</p> <p>Pay your respects, be devoted to chance</p> <p>Look through the keyhole of the world</p> <p>With the memory of an elder</p> <p>With the instinct of a dog</p> <p>The illusion of a young man.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Corvetto is a neighborhood with some beautiful parts and some crime filled parts</p> <p><i>Muhammad</i></p>	<p>16</p> <p>Corvetto sucks because it's full of drug dealers and criminals and police</p> <p><i>Zeiad</i></p>	
<p>5</p> <p>If I think of Corvetto, I think of a neighborhood always in ruins and unsafe</p>		<p>22</p> <p>Different</p> <p>You turn around</p> <p>And you no longer find meaning</p> <p>Chase</p> <p>The dream you admire so much</p>	
<p>6</p> <p>Corvetto is like your skin in August or like a gas cloud that darkens the sky</p>		<p>17</p> <p>I don't like anything in Corvetto because I don't feel like myself.</p> <p><i>Aurora</i></p>	<p>18</p> <p>Certainty of nothing or the uncertainty of maybe</p> <p><i>Giacomo</i></p>
<p>7</p> <p>Corvetto is freedom, because when I'm in Corvetto I feel free and I'm fine, both with the neighborhood in the sense of place, and with the people. We are all different and we complement each other.</p> <p><i>Sophia Sanicola</i></p>	<p>19</p> <p>Corvetto is a free space (everything happens here)</p> <p><i>Youssef</i></p>	<p>20</p> <p>Corvetto ?!</p>	

City Sphere Corvetto 2023 STUDIOWORKS



Cavalcavia 2
Piazzale Corvetto
40x50 cm
studiowork



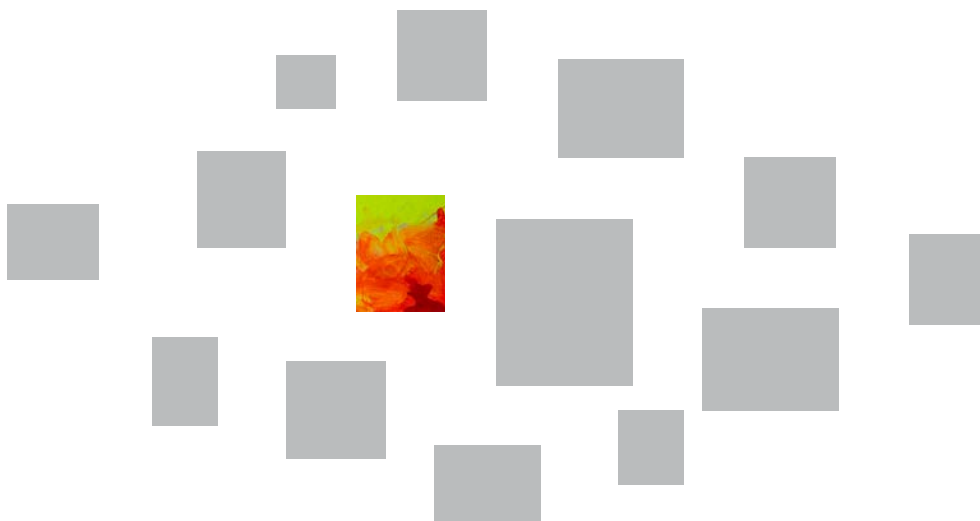
Cavalca + Via!
Piazzale Corvetto
100 x 120 cm
studiowork



Confetti *confetti*
Piazzale Corvetto
50x50 cm
studiowork



Entrata *Entrance*
Corso Lodi
50×45 cm
studiowork



City Sphere installation

A cloud-shaped composition of paintings made on the spot create a painted installation. The first painting is the colorcard of the urban area. The fluorescent colours in it define the background of each canvas in a City Sphere series. Above, the colour card of City Sphere Corvetto with the fluorescent colours: yellow, orange, pink and dark fuchsia.





photo©dominique panhuysen



City Sphere Schalkwijk De Vihal Haarlem 1.5 x 20 m mixed media on linen or canvas

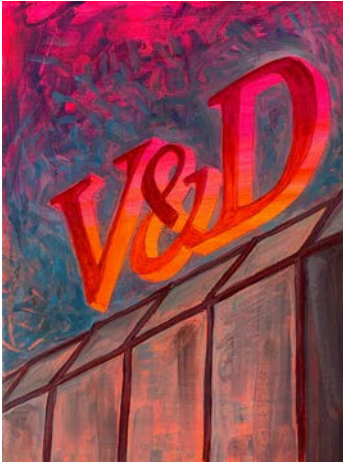
a collective picture of the current atmosphere in Schalkwijk

111 individual canvases 21 by Baukje Spaltro and 90 by residents of Schalkwijk

made in 2021/2022 both in Schalkwijk and in the Vishal

City Sphere Schalkwijk 2021/2022 Haarlem (nl)

a few single works made by Baukje Spaltro or inhabitants of Schalkwijk district.
The works by Baukje Spaltro are made with a mixed oil technique on linen,
the canvases by the participants are made with acrylic paint.



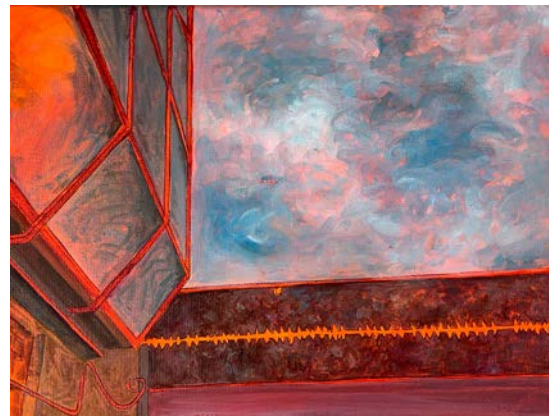
V&D - Baukje Spaltro - 24 x 18 cm



Outside - Baukje Spaltro - 15 x 18 cm



Sand, Californiëplein 14 - Baukje Spaltro 35 x 35 cm



New Horizons, Californiëplein - Baukje Spaltro - 30 x 40 cm



Tango, Spijkerboorweg - 40 x 24 cm



Costa del Sol - 40 x 30 cm



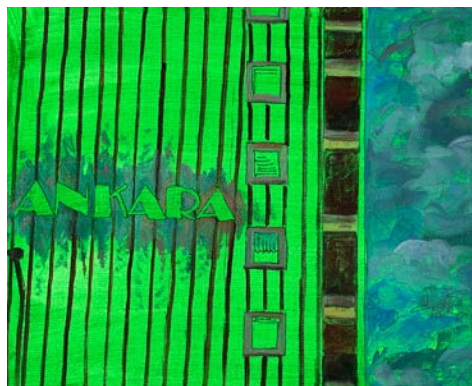
Andalusia - 20 x 25 cm



Toilet - 18 x 18 cm



Tiles, shopping mall - Baukje Spaltro
25 x 18 cm



Ankara - Baukje Spaltro
24 x 30 cm



Dog on the lookout - Ingrid Wolf
30 x 24 cm



The weeping elephant on construction site Hof van
Jacob, Boerhaavelaan - Carla de V. - 24 x 30 cm



City Sphere Schalkwijk in the mall Centrum Schalkwijk
part with green paintings in mixed media on linnen or canvas
approx. 5 by 1.5 meters



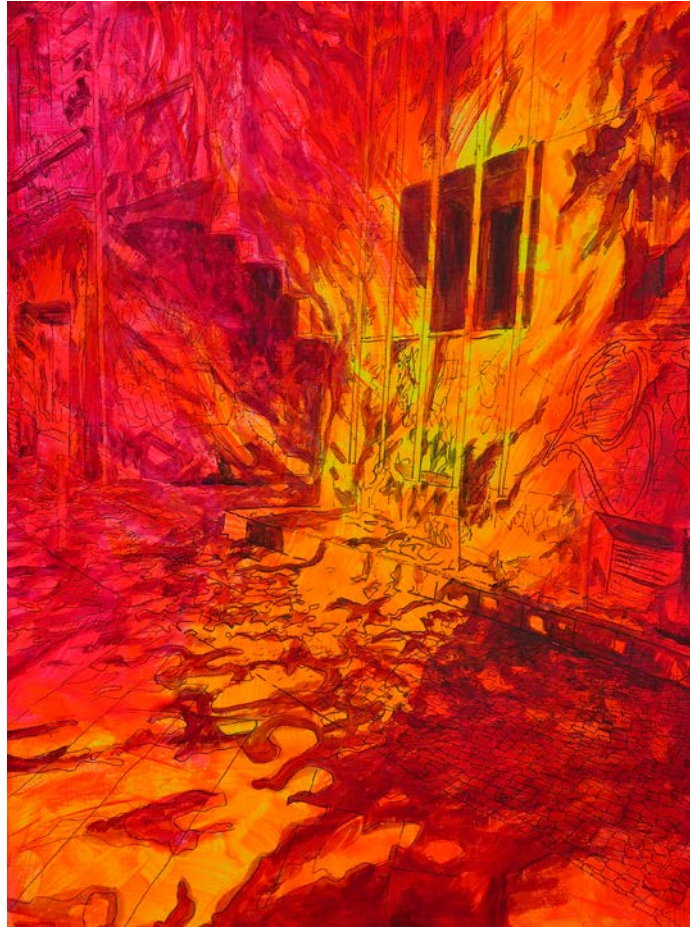
City Sphere SO36 Kreuzberg Berlin (D) 2019.09

2 x 4 m mixed media on linen

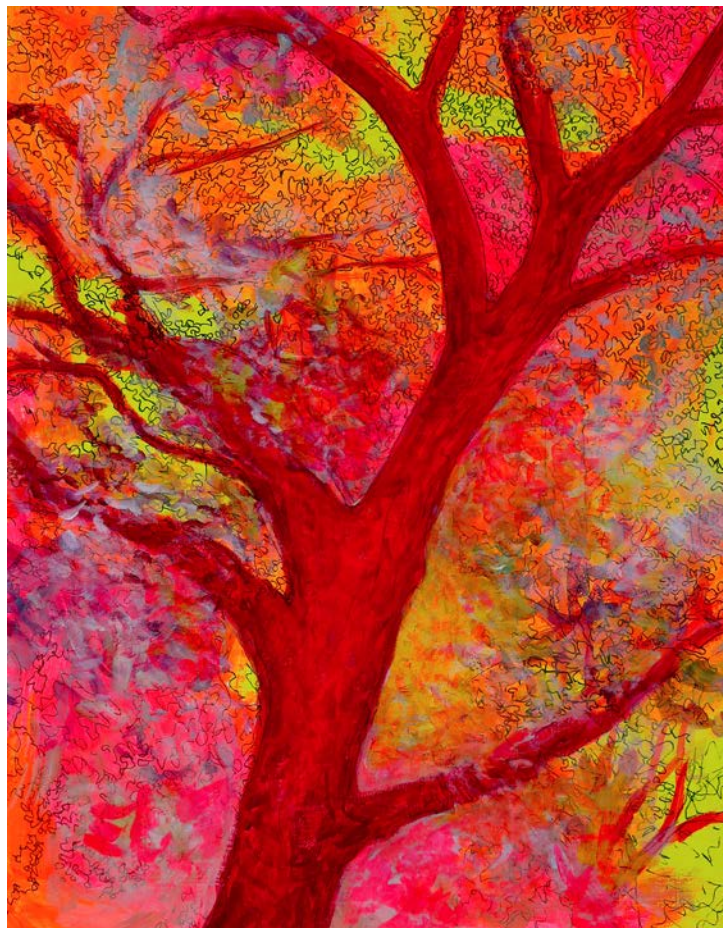
Soma Art Space Berlin



Neo Liberalism RBS 40x25 cm



Die Reichen am 108A *The Rich ones of 108A* Reichenbergerstr 60×45 cm



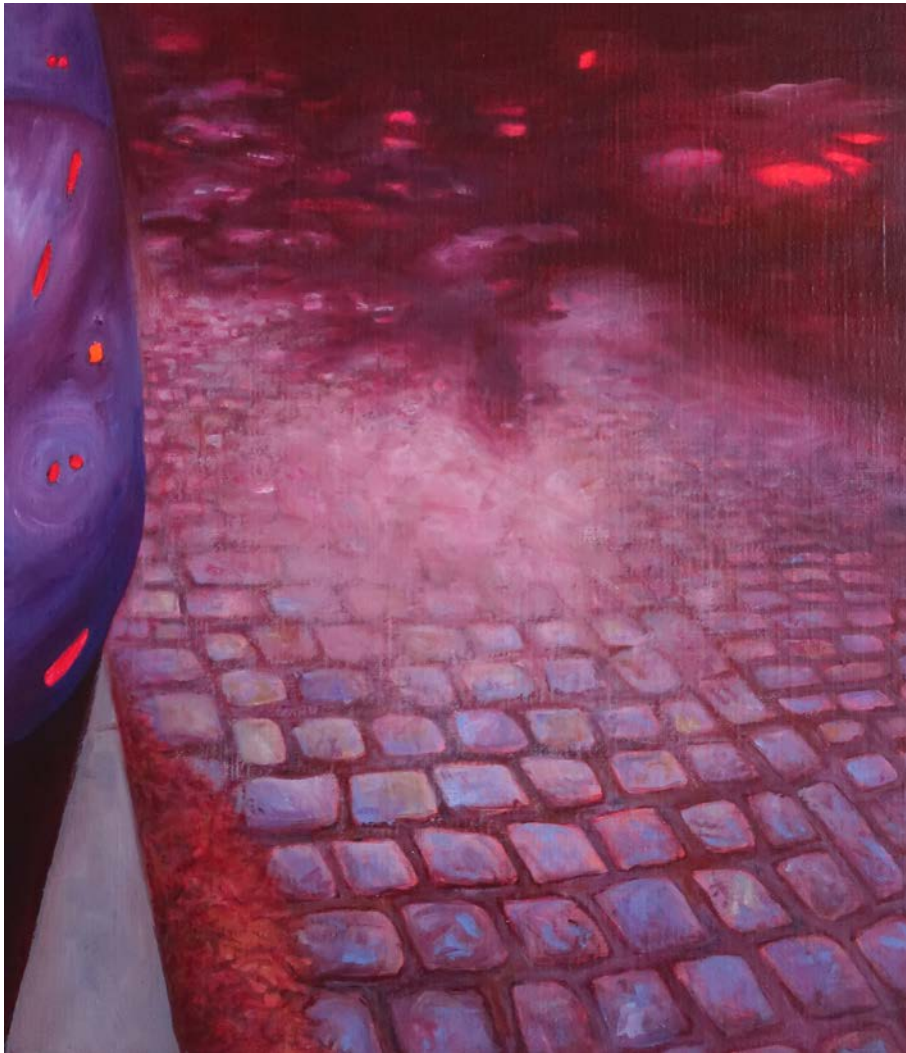
Baum Tree Liegnitzer Straße 45 x 35 cm



Satellite *satellites* Woldemar Straße 35 x 25 cm



Bürgersteig I, Reichenbergerstraße 75 x 55 cm 2021
Sidewalk I, Reichenbergerstraße



Schatten (auto) shadows (car) 40x35 cm 2021



Bürgersteig 4, weis sidewalk 4, white 80×60 cm 2022



Bürgersteig 3 *sidewalk 3* 80 x 60 cm 2022



Ich Komme wieder 2, Reichenbergerstraße 80 x 100 cm 2022
I'll be back 2, Reichenbergerstraße

Baukje Spaltro (Milan, 1967) lives and works in Amsterdam.

She studied painting at the HKU (Utrecht School of the Arts NL), at the AIS (Amsterdam Institute of Painting) and at the Academy Belle Arti di Brera in Milan (Italy).
She often works on commissions and on her own art projects.
Her work is part of several art collections.

Spaltro works currently in her studio on larger paintings and a City Spheres Manifesto.

Manifesto concept

THE ARTISTS VIEW as invitation into the irrational space.

THE GENIUS LOCI as the local identity of an urban space.

FLUORISING COLOURS influence our perception of the outside and inside world.

MORE AWARE about an urban space.

THE VALUE of visual art combined with social intelligence for inclusive cities

Baukje in her studio in front of City Sphere Beek (Arnhem nl) - photo ©Henk Pouw



