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1. SHORT STATEMENT & PORTFOLIO BAUKJE SPALTRO

I challenge the public to experience the urban soul and discover a deeper connection with the cities we create and call home. Let's create cities together.

In my ongoing project, City Spheres, I encourage viewers to engage with the urban spirit and to reflect on their relationship with the places they call home. In this Anthropocene era, marked by environmental and social crises, my work leverages imagination to propose solutions grounded in shared human values. I believe that both society and its creators should more actively consider the kinds of places (cities, communities, world) we wish to shape together. This requires hope, new perspectives, and new narratives.

My paintings, distinguished by their unique use of color (notably fluorescent backgrounds) and narrative approach, invite the audience to contemplate our society and its cities. They inspire viewers to participate in the co-creation of our environments, regardless of our differences. Since 2015, I have developed the City Spheres project, drawing inspiration from the concept of *genius loci* (the spirit of a place) and the philosopher Peter Sloterdijk's book *Spheres*[*]. Sloterdijk urges us to focus not only on who we are, but also on where we are - on the atmosphere and sense of place that people collectively create to express their identities.
Today, the urban identities of European neighborhoods face threats from economic interests, populism, and gentrification. My vibrant paintings aim to raise awareness of the *genius loci* as something co-created by residents. I use the city as a metaphor for society, and color as a tool to reveal the perceived essence of a neighborhood-symbolizing the interconnectedness between residents and their city, and highlighting this connectedness as the foundation for future urban well-being.

Rather than depicting the physical aspects of each city, I focus on painting the atmosphere of the urban areas where I temporarily reside. My deliberate use of fluorescent colors alters the viewer's perception, encouraging a more heart-centered and imaginative engagement with their surroundings. Together, we build the neighborhood, the city, and the future.

For each City Spheres project, I live a few weeks in a European urban neighborhood often under threat of gentrification. As both visitor and observer, I create a cloud-shaped installation using local color combinations to express the area's unique sense of place. At the end of my stay, I organize a collective presentation with local participants-artists, dancers, poets, or youth - to share reflections on local identity. Back in Amsterdam, I create studio works using the same color combinations, resulting in paintings that are more intense, layered, and vibrant. These works invite viewers to feel the urban *genius loci* as a co-created identity. Between 2019 and 2022, I created City Sphere SO36 in Kreuzberg, Berlin. My most recent series, City Sphere Corvetto, began in 2022 in Milan, where I also wrote the City Sphere Manifesto (see p.2).

Through my work, I aim to inspire collective reflection and action, encouraging us all to reimagine and co-create the urban environments of our future.

Statement and manifesto: www.baukjespaltro.com
City Spheres project: www.baukjespaltro.com/cityspheres-2/

[*] Sloterdijk:" *The question of where we are is more meaningful than ever and more important than the question of what we are. We need to focus on the place that people create to be who they are. This place I have given the name Atmosphere. Spheres are space creations they act as an immune system. They include and exclude.*"

PORTFOLIO: City Sphere Corvetto (Milan) and City Sphere SO36 (Berlin)

Some images to underline my artist statement: Each neighborhood has it's own color palette.
Milan is purple and Berlin is red.

City Sphere Corvetto: dubble cloud installations Viafarini.work in Milan 2022
Left: Voices of Corvetto - ca. 250 x 450 cm - Printed quotes on paper by youngsters of Corvetto
Right: City Sphere Corvetto - cloud shaped installation - ca. 250 x 500 cm - Mixed technique on linen

This installation I made in Milan during my one month residency in the Corvetto area of Milan. These painting, their color combinations, are the basis for my studio works on the next pages. This works show the genus loci, the sense of Corvetto I have perceived during my stay there.

This Corvetto series is accompanied by a City Sphere Manifesto
- THE ARTISTS VIEW as an invitation into the irrational space of a sphere.
- THE GENIUS LOCI is the local identity of an urban space.
- FLUORESCENT COLORS influence our perception of urban identity.
- MORE AWARENESS about an urban space.
- THE VALUE of visual art combined with social intelligence for inclusive cities

The arts offer a unique means of connecting us to our common humanity. Whether visual, musical, dramatic, or literary, the arts allow us to "create together" and to discover shared understandings. The creation and presentation of art often inspires a raft of civically valuable dispositions – trust, openness, honesty, cooperativeness, tolerance, and respect. From museums to open-air amphitheaters to dance studios, arts spaces are, at root, civic spaces. The arts are a superb means of building social capital….

Czech president Vaclav Havel

OLTRE *Beyond*
City Sphere Corvetto - studio work

100x120 cm 2024
mixed technique on linen

OLTRE has a double meaning, literal and figurative. This work is literally my construction on canvas, a spatial creation in which I bring to the surface a hidden energy, the hidden identity that I perceived in Corvetto.
OLTRE is part of the City Sphere Corvetto series of my City Spheres project and shows my perception of the atmosphere of Corvetto at the end of 2022. Corvetto has a strong identity as a suburban neighbourhood, despite the transition due to gentrification and ambitious municipal plans. Beneath the urban surface, if you broaden your perception, you can feel the essence of this dynamic neighbourhood.

City Sphere Corvetto is not only an exploration of the urban landscape but also my contemplation of the invisible urban identity. Within my project, each neighbourhood produces unique colour combinations. Using fluorescent colour bases with tonal oil colours on top, I create a 'sparkling' image that depicts the local energy and atmosphere. With this use of colour, I invite the viewer to look and perceive the city as a living environment in a different way. And to reflect on the intricate tapestry of the city as a dynamic, self-built society. What kind of city do we want to build together?

City Sphere SO36: cloud installation SOMA Art Space Berlin ca. 200 x 450 cm 2019 Mixed technique/linen

CITY SPHERE SO36 2019-2022

In 2019, I created in the Berlin area of Kreuzberg, the cloud-shaped installation: ***City Sphere SO36***, about the atmosphere of the SO36 district, Kreuzberg. In 1989, I experienced the fall of the wall. The air crackled and filled with hope, we had faith in a united Europe. At the same spot in the Kreuzberg area, but 30 years later, there is mainly gentrification.

Bürgersteig 4, Reichenbergerstraße 4 *Sidewalk 4*
80×60 cm 2022 Mixed technique on linen City Sphere SO36 (Berlin) – studio work

'Bürgersteig number 4, Reichenbergerstraße sidewalk, a studio work from this series City Sphere SO36, I delve into the urban fabric of Kreuzberg. I involve an underlayer of fluorescent acrylics and markers, overlaid with tonal oil paint on linen. The panting brings to life the concept of a 'platform for the citizens' – a literal translation of 'Bürgersteig' in German. Through various iterations of this main street, I capture the illuminating and connecting role of the road in the SO36 district, emphasising the integral role of urban spaces in fostering a sense of community.

I invite viewers to look beyond the concrete and steel, urging them to embrace the vibrant, pulsating heart that beats within the urban spaces we inhabit. Through my unique use of colour, I challenge the public to experience the urban soul and discover a deeper connection with the cities we call home.

2. SHORT INTRODUCTION RENÉE HARTOG

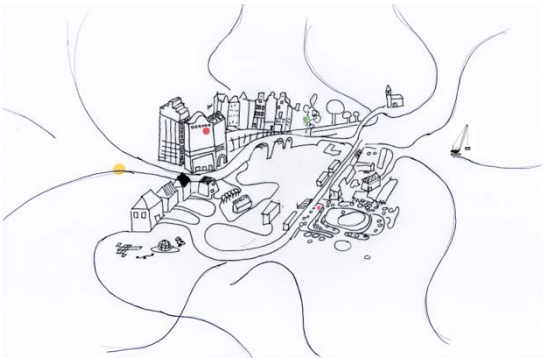
Renée Hartog -Cultural Diplomat

Departing from my own discipline, Public Administration, my ambition is to contribute to society in all ways possible. I believe that art is a universal language that can improve common understanding within and between different cultures. I believe in social capital, in human interactions and relationships, in dynamic networks. The aesthetic value of art can serve individual needs, meanwhile it could serve society as a whole to improve or break structures. My ambition is to facilitate artist in making a living by means of both commercial and public resources. The triangle of the artists, the commercial value of their work and the contribution they can deliver to society is what intrigues me.

https://research.vu.nl/en/persons/renate-miriam-hartog

3. CO-CREATION METHOD - TEKENDIALOOG SPALTRO/HARTOG

Co-creation is a creative method developed by Spaltro and the Norbau foundation (www.norbau.nl)



Left: This is my logo and outline of the imaginary city. This outline is always in the centre of the tablecloth of eacht Tekendialoog
Right: *Teken dialoog* (Drawn Dialogue: 'What colour would you paint your city?'). Commissioned by Rabobank.

Tekendialoog is an innovative co-creation method* developed by me, Baukje Spaltro. This year, in collaboration with Renée Hartog, we developed a special version for the Anthropocene symposium at VU-Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (January & April 2025). We called this workshop: *Together connecting to the rhizome to address questions of Governance for Society.* In this workshop, up to ten participants gather around a table covered with a white tablecloth, using drawing as a medium to collectively explore a central question.

* the co-creation method www.baukjespaltro.com/wp-content/uploads/2024-CO-CREATION-spaltro-A4-ENG-web.pdf

The process consists of four phases, where each participant quickly and intuitively draws their answers to four guiding questions directly on the tablecloth. This results in a visual map reflecting the group's imagination and perspectives, sparking out-of-the-box dialogue.

The workshop at the VU addresses themes such as convivial citizenship, resilient education, and sustainable, inclusive city-making. Participants are encouraged to view the city as a metaphor for society, tackling issues like housing, poverty, sustainability, and social cohesion. The method emphasizes a "rhizomatic" approach—working as a non-hierarchical network—highlighting the equal value of artistic and scientific perspectives.

Workshop Structure:

1. **Introduction** by Hartog and Spaltro
2. **Tekendialoog** with collective drawing and discussion, following these steps:
    - Knowing
    - Sharing Experience
    - Dreaming
    - Doing
    - Collectivity

Participants actively connect and collaborate, listening and contributing without judgment, to co-create new solutions for societal challenges. At the end, each participant takes home a piece of the collective artwork, symbolizing shared ownership and ongoing dialogue.

Introductions by: Renée Hartog and Baukje Spaltro January 2025, VU Amsterdam

Tekendialoog January 2025, VU Amsterdam – first part

Result of the Tekendialoog January 2025, VU Amsterdam – first part

Result of the Tekendialoog April 2025, VU Amsterdam – first part

Participants discussing the results and cutting their drawing from the tablecloth, Tekendialoog April 2025, VU Amsterdam