Activities plan SKOR 2009-2012

1. Introduction and summary

The purpose of SKOR is to develop and realise special art projects in relation to public space. SKOR also wants to contribute to the quality of public space in the broadest sense of the word. Practical action, aimed at the realisation of works of art, is consequently the first matter of importance. In addition, SKOR is involved with reflection and theory, and fulfils a memory function as a centre of knowledge and documentation in the field of art and public space. (Chapter 2.)

These three activities - practice, reflection, memory - were easily recognisable in the past period. As usual. the main point is practice. SKOR distinguished three areas of work in terms of implementation: special projects, regular projects in the health care sector and regular projects for schools. Besides these chief tasks, SKOR developed supporting activities such as debates, lectures and publications. SKOR has cooperated with numerous other organisations. (Chapter 3.)

There are several reasons for wanting to designate and classify SKOR's package of activities differently in the coming period, even though the aims remain the same. As a result of developments in society, in art and in government policy, public space and the public domain are continually under discussion. Experience shows that a role and position in these discussions is expected of SKOR. Because of the ceasing of regular art projects in the public health sector, SKOR's work has shown a stronger emphasis on special projects which by definition are in the forefront in the discussion and interaction between theory and practice. Finally, it is SKOR's aim to make its 'silent values' - a unique documentation and professional library, both of many years standing - accessible to others. (Chapter 3 and 4.)

In the policy plan for the period 2009-2012, SKOR has arranged its activities in three fields of work: *practice, theory* and *documentation*.. The effort to realise special projects remains undiminished (*practice*), SKOR will actively contribute to the creation of ideas (*theory*), and the wealth of information stored in SKOR's knowledge centre is being made accessible (*documentation*). (Chapter 4.)

The plans for the coming period will lead to a number of changes in the organisation, including a hoped-for expansion of 1.5 fte. (Chapter 5.)

SKOR remains true to itself and its aims, but it is using the experience and advancing insight gained in past years in order to formulate its own tasks anew and with the greatest possible precision. SKOR will hence be able in the coming years to come closer to its goals than ever before.

2. Objectives and position

The most important of SKOR's objectives is the development and realisation of special art projects in relation to public space. SKOR's aim is thus to make a contribution to the quality of public space in the broadest sense of the word. These two aims are closely connected: realising a work of art is at the same time a means of creating ideas and public debate. A SKOR project is more than just a work of art.

As its name suggests, SKOR is involved in the area where art and public space meet one another. It is a vast and unsettled field of activity. Society and its public domain are constantly changing, and the same goes for art. SKOR's way of working provides room for this dynamism. Each art project can offer a new, additional, confrontational or broadening view of social issues. SKOR also brings topical themes up for discussion in the form of lectures, debates and publications. SKOR's method of operation rests on a solid basis of

knowledge and experience, thanks to a unique archive documenting twenty-five years of art and public space, a well-stocked specialist library and an extensive network of many years' standing.

In realising art projects SKOR by definition works with others. SKOR has knowledge, skills and a budget at its disposal, while the partner organisations have buildings or land and hence locations for art assignments. SKOR performs as partner, advisor, supervisor and co-financier. Through properly analysing a proposed commission and establishing preconditions, SKOR offers guarantees for an interesting formulation of the commission. SKOR moreover vouches for the intrinsic freedom of art. SKOR is selective in the projects it takes part in. It does not support 'common' commissioning situations, nor projects in which a necessary role for SKOR cannot be substantiated.

The degree of openness to the public differs per project. The target group is sometimes small and specific - for instance the staff and patients of a psychiatric clinic, or those professionally interested in art; sometimes large and broad, as with a major event in a city; and sometimes the audience cannot immediately be pointed to, as when use is made of public media such as 'urban screens' or mobile telephony.

In order to be able to do its work well, SKOR closely follows developments in both art and the public domain. It works with numerous organisations at local, regional and international levels. It gives talent the opportunity to develop and initiates innovative models for testing theory and practice against each other. Since its foundation in 2000, SKOR has frequently been imitated both at home and abroad. Its approach has evidently been inspiring for other sponsors involved with art and public space; schemes are sometimes even borrowed almost literally. SKOR amply fulfils its task of setting an example.

Operating from the basis of art, SKOR comes in contact with virtually all layers of society and with all aspects relating to both the physical and the non-physical organisation of the public domain. It is hence an intermediary par excellence. More particularly, SKOR functions as a pioneer, platform and knowledge centre. These functions are easily distinguishable in the past period and will be even more recognisable in the coming years.

3. In retrospect 2005-2008

The development and realisation of art projects was SKOR's most important task in the last policy period. A distinction was made between special projects, regular projects in the health care sector and regular projects for schools. Furthermore, SKOR developed supporting activities such as debates, lectures and publications.

Main tasks

SKOR carried out the following three main tasks:

1. Special projects and manifestations. The special projects in this period were mainly focussed on environmental planning, the key question being, how can art make a meaningful contribution to the spatial development of the Netherlands? Under the title 'Beyond Leidsche Rijn' (2004-2009), SKOR developed several art projects and events in cooperation with the municipality of Utrecht, which touched upon such themes as suburban living and building, and which can serve as models for art schemes in other VINEX neighbourhoods. The 'Spatial Architectural Framework' project for Sint Oedenrode involved using historical reflection to investigate the genesis and map of the village, after which a platform for art projects was created.

Manifestations represent a special category of projects. They are not an aim in themselves, but function as laboratories serving to get new developments going. Examples are 'Pursuit of Happiness' in Leidsche Rijn in Utrecht, 'Quicksand' in the Pijp (in collaboration with de Appel/CTP) and 'Love in the City', both in Amsterdam.

2. Regular projects in the health care sector. Since 1984 SKOR and its predecessors took care of carrying out a state scheme for art in new public health care buildings. The scheme was terminated as per 1 January 2006. Among the last works of art to be realised under its auspices are Edwin Zwakman's archaeological sculpture for De Tjongerschans Hospital in Heerenveen, three sculptures by Thomas Rentmeister in Deventer Hospital and Marieke van Diemen's 'Waterlanders' project for the hospital in Purmerend.

Besides these incidental works of art, SKOR set up a number of projects with a more research-like approach. The Reminiscences project in cooperation with Zorgonderzoek Nederland (Netherlands Care Research) and a related project in cooperation with the Vivium Care Group looked at how art can contribute to a different approach to dementia.

3. Regular projects for schools. SKOR also received a fixed budget for art projects in schools. Here, too, SKOR realised both incidental works of art for educational organisations and research-oriented art projects on the theme of education.

The 'School Playground Project' (in collaboration with Premsela. Dutch Platform for Design and Fashion) is testing the possibilities and conditions of the school playground as an urban social space. Another example is the image-generating system that Driessens and Verstappen introduced as a work of art in the research building of Leiden University Medical Centre.

Since 2004 SKOR has published *Mr. Motley*, an art magazine aimed at young people. In part because of the lesson material, the magazine seems to be satisfying a need within secondary and higher education. Circulation and subscriptions have grown considerably, resulting in a paid edition of 3,400 copies at the end of 2007.

Other activities

SKOR's other activities served principally to support its main tasks. SKOR organised lectures and debates related to projects or publications, such as a series of lectures and debates to accompany the 'Pursuit of Happiness' exhibition in Leidsche Rijn. SKOR also initiated symposia about topical subjects, such as one in 2007 about the contribution that art can make to the complex processes of environmental planning in the Netherlands (in collaboration with the Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research).

The annual SKOR lectures are more autonomous. In 2004 the American art historian Miwon Kwon gave a lecture about the history of site-specific art since the 1960s and an analysis of its contemporary significance. In 2005 the American sociologist Saskia Sassen talked about the 'making' of public space by means of architectural and artistic interventions.

SKOR took part in international symposia and lecture programmes in order to enlarge and maintain its international network. SKOR also involved itself in the national debate, with SKOR staff giving lectures in different parts of the country. SKOR also took the lead in setting up LOKO, the National Consultation on Commissioned Art, and organising the annual 'LOKOday' since 2006, together with a locally-based art institution.

Publications have become a substantial part of SKOR's activities. Some publications appeared in connection with projects, such as *Regionale Identiteit. Kunst en Ruimtelijke planvorming* (Regional Identity. Art and Environmental Planning), in collaboration with NAi Publishers. All of SKOR's projects are extensively documented in words and images in handsome publications and on its website. In addition, SKOR produces *Open*, a bi-annual journal about art and the public domain (in collaboration with NAi Publishers). The journal

seeks to jparticipate in the international debate and features contributions from such prominent writers as Brian Holmes, Lieven de Cauter, Geert Lovink and Chantal Mouffe.

Experiences and reflections

In the past period SKOR has continued the policy that was expressed at its foundation in 2000. Attention is primarily focussed on securing, developing and realising projects. The 2006-2008 policy plan was clear about this: "The main task of SKOR is the production and realisation of works of art in public places directly aimed at the public." The departments of documentation, publications and communication were subservient to this, with the exception of *Open* which has pursued an independent course as a theoretical platform.

Over the course of this period SKOR felt a growing need to take the initiative itself more often and to seek financiers. In education in particular, SKOR has seriously tried to make education the theme of an art project rather than to respond to a concrete request for a sculpture for an educational building. Practice, however, proved recalcitrant. Education has become split up because of all the privatisation, which has made it more difficult to get groups together in a common initiative. Positive exceptions to this were the collaborations with Schie 2.0 on the 'Dryswimming' project for the InHolland College and Jurgen Bey's 'Blob' project at the Technical University of Eindhoven.

Since the division into special projects and regular projects left a heavy mark on SKOR's way of working, there was little scope for adequately reacting to urgent issues in the public domain, in education or in public health. On the grounds of these experiences, SKOR wants to organise its policy and way of working for the period 2009-2012 in such a way that it can perform decisively across the full breadth of its set of tasks.

4. Plans 2009-2012

While its aims remain the same, SKOR wants to adopt a different and more distinct position in the period 2009-2012. The realisation of works of art remains of undiminished importance, but SKOR wants to grow into an institution that uses art to consciously and strategically engage with public affairs. This chapter deals first with the considerations regarding this change of course, followed by the changed priorities within its set of activities under the headings of practice, theory and documentation, and finally the forms of collaboration that SKOR is interested in pursuing.

Considerations

The two most important statutory aims of SKOR are the development and realisation of special art projects in relation to public space, and providing a contribution to the quality of public space in the broadest sense of the word. In the elaboration of this, the main emphasis has until now been on the former goal. The realisation of art projects will continue to be of major importance in the coming period.

The second aim came over less well until now, in the opinion of SKOR, and this has to change in the coming period. Whoever wants to contribute to the quality of public space cannot do so without contributing to the debate about public space. Art in public space enters into a domain full of social, political and cultural meanings, tensions and conflicts.. SKOR would like to give more direction to the debate about this and to let its own voice be heard. To this end, it is necessary that SKOR structurally follows social processes and investigates the connection between art and the public domain at the point where it counts the most.

The public domain is being influenced by numerous changes. Decentralisation and privatisation have led to forms of public-private cooperation in virtually all sectors. Public interests are being mixed more than before with economic and administrative interests. The effects of this are felt not only in physical public space but also in education and public health care. Other aspects of the public domain, such as intellectual and cultural exchanges, news coverage and public opinion, are also being influenced by advancing neo-liberalism in a globalised and mediatised world.

The term 'public space' is evidently too limited and too difficult to use. It is no longer simply a question of the physical side of public space but also and in particular of non-physical aspects such as social, cultural and political dimensions. It is crucial to keep examining what is actually meant by the words 'public' and 'space'.

Nor is art a fixed given. In recent years it has started to relate more and more explicitly to society and the public domain. The free discipline of art is more capable of occupying a creative position and providing a different view of reality than design-based disciplines. Art is able to plumb the depths of reality in a way that is not self-evident, thereby revealing and representing unsuspected aspects of reality. SKOR creates the conditions for a good commissioning situation and provides the artist with a platform whereby he or she can relate to everyday reality. SKOR thus functions as an outstanding intermediary between art and society.

This position is not, however, reserved explicitly for SKOR. The question of how art currently relates to the public domain concerns not only art itself but also various art institutions. These have to legitimate their public mission anew or to invent it. SKOR, too, is being challenged to reconsider its own status.

SKOR is in the special position that it is able to examine these themes in reference to concrete commissioning situations, and it will make use of these possibilities even more than before. It means that in selecting art projects SKOR will operate more independently of demand and will ask itself more carefully which commissioning situations are important for art against the background of the debate about the public domain. In this way SKOR will be better able to take advantage of commissioning situations that can lead to art projects with a greater social relevance. The thematic approach will be continually tested and adjusted in an interaction between practice and theory.

Three fields of action

SKOR will henceforth distinguish between three fields of action which will have an equal status within the organisation: *practice*, *theory* and *documentation*. This puts SKOR in a better position to boost the debate about the role of art in the public domain. It also means that more content-related depth will be possible and that more exchanges of knowledge (internally and externally) can take place. The three fields of activity are not separate but actually enhance one another.

Field of action 1: Practice

The practice-focussed activities remain a central part of SKOR, which also in the future will devote itself to the realisation of art projects. This will be done as follows:

1. Thematic approach. Topical themes related to the public domain will henceforth determine the selection of commissioners, artists and situations. SKOR wants to give artists the opportunity to offer a new perspective on these topical issues. The thematic approach enables more cohesion to be achieved between the projects and to be less dependent on random requests. SKOR wants to present a stronger image of itself as a body that is

intrinsically involved, is concerned about topical issues but also watches out for the delusions of the day. A content-based, thematic framework also benefits internal collaboration and hence the products that SKOR supplies.

One example of a useful social theme is the issue of the (supposed) lack of historical awareness and the need for a national canon of history. This theme has already led to the setting up of a SKOR project around the monument to Spinoza in Amsterdam, for which Thomas Hirschhorn, Aernout Mik and Maurice Nio have been approached. Other themes are to be found in the discussions about health care, safety, mobility, education, public opinion, landscape and recreation.

2. Alliances. The incidental art project with a personally slanted triangular relationship between sponsor-artist-supervisor is becoming increasingly rare in SKOR's practice. This is partly because projects are becoming larger and more complex in terms of organisation, with more parties, diverse interests and a long preparation time in order to guarantee the basic conditions, the points of departure and the financial frameworks. At issue, for example, are large-scale developments in South Limburg, in the strip of land along the North Sea Canal from Ijmuiden to Pampus, the Second Maas Plain, the Rijn-Gouwe Line and the so-called 'Enschede Culture Mile'.

In order to ensure the success of art projects at this scale it is necessary to form alliances. A risk here is that it is not always clear where the responsibilities lie and who the commissioner is, since the commission comes from a combination of institutions, which makes it difficult to build up a personal relationship with the artist. SKOR wants to ensure that the artist does not become the victim of this.

3. Health care projects. The termination of the Public Health regulation does not mean the end of SKOR's contact with this sector. In the awareness that health care continues to furnish important themes for the social agenda, SKOR is keeping the door open for motivated institutions with ambitions for important art projects.

Here too it is SKOR's intention to deal in an innovative way with complex forms of sponsoring. It plans to bring together a number of persons who occupy strategic positions in the care sector into an alliance that can nominate and expose urgent public health issues. They can be supplemented by independent experts. This group will not involve itself with the artistic furnishing of the institutions under their control, but with bringing up subjects and situations in which art can offer a different perspective.

The already existing 'Reminiscences' study, in cooperation with Zorgonderzoek Nederland (Netherlands Care Research), is a good example of this, as is the plan for a video network in the Jeroen Bosch Hospital in Den Bosch..

4. Education projects. In education, too, SKOR prefers to focus on an integral approach to the theme,

Experience has taught us that alliances and budgets are difficult to bring together from the world of education. This is why, starting out from other projects, SKOR strives to link up with education in a natural way. In that case, rather than a project being occasioned by an educational situation, a project arises from outside education and establishes a connection with education on the basis of its own position.

An already existing example is the project for Sint Oedenrode, where the design of a footpath is part of the programme of studies for students at the University of Wageningen. Similar possibilities are arising with the 'Enschede Culture Mile' and the art project that is establishing a relationship in Flevoland between the N23, the Hanze Line and Robert Morris's Observatorium.

Field of Action 2: Theory

For a number of years there has been a lively discourse both at home and abroad about the conditions of public space and the public domain. The discourse is conducted by politicians and policy makers. sociologists and philosophers, artists and architects. It has the form of a social debate as well as a theoretical exposition, and derives urgency from dominant processes such as globalisation, digitalisation, liberalisation, privatisation, individualisation and the problem of migration and refugees.

SKOR wishes to contribute to this discourse on the basis of its own expertise, and to take the lead in the cultural and artistic debate about it in the Netherlands, In recent years theory has developed into a valuable instrument that underpins, supplements and problematizes SKOR's practice through research, analysis and reflection. Some theory activities relate directly to concrete projects, while others consist of autonomous, critical theorisation. In the coming period SKOR intends to intensify and better structure the interaction between theory and practice. Activities in the field of theory will be of a less incidental nature. The journal *Open* will organise more activities, while SKOR will also strengthen the debate with other publications, lectures, symposia and various forms of collaboration and exchange.

In concrete terms it concerns the following activities:

1. Publications linked to projects. A number of publications connected to SKOR's projects are of an investigatory nature, outlining and problematising the context in which the works of art are created and investigating the significance of the art projects for the public domain. This category of publications demands an intensive collaboration with practice. They are meant for both a specialised and a broadly interested public, and are distributed via a publisher.

2. Open, journal about art and the public domain. The bi-annual journal *Open* is published by NAi Uitgevers, is independently edited and appears bilingually (N/E). *Open*'s theme issues ensure the creation and stimulation of autonomous and experimental thoughts about art and public space. *Open* charts new ideas about the public domain and publishes in-depth contributions by international authors and artists. The journal thus complements SKOR's practice with an overall theoretical framework that is intended to challenge and stimulate. The editorial board regularly collaborates with guest editors and external experts in order to deploy their expertise in preparing a special theme and to stimulate exchanges of knowledge.

3. Presentations, symposia, lectures, debates. SKOR regularly organises meetings, some of which are linked to projects or publications.

SKOR aims at holding a major international symposium once every two years. Subjects evolve from SKOR's practice but have a broader interest and a greater scope. Parallel to the symposium, a substantial book (N/E) is published which not only functions as a reader but also as an independent book.

The new tradition of the annual SKOR lecture is being continued. The lecture is given by a prominent speaker and deals with an urgent subject relating to the theoretical and practical areas that SKOR is involved in. Each lecture is published in the form of a small book (N/E), thus creating a structural and significant form of documentation that is of importance for the field and the domains related to it. The SKOR lecture is meant for a large audience of interested and concerned parties.

The presentation of a new issue of *Open* is always accompanied by a lecture or debate on the theme of that particular issue.

SKOR would like to organise lecture series in collaboration with art academies and relevant lectureships such as Art in Society or Art in Public Space, with the idea of entering into an exchange with a young, specialised audience.

Field of Action 3: Documentation

SKOR has a well-equipped library and a unique archive at its disposal. The emphasis lay until now on documenting and archiving art projects for SKOR's own use. The publicity means (publications, website, digital newsletters, invitations, press releases) were mainly used to publicise and provide information about the art projects realised by SKOR.

In the coming years SKOR wants to make the knowledge it has available broader and more accessible. In fact, SKOR has already become a national centre of knowledge about art projects in relation to society and the public domain. SKOR wants to open up this knowledge centre to those interested and concerned, including art professionals and commissioning bodies.

The improved accessibility will take the following forms:

1. Internet: web dossiers and forum. SKOR's website is being expanded into a digital centre of knowledge and communication. In addition, the site will retain its publicity and archiving functions.

Knowledge will be made available in so-called 'web dossiers'. These deal with subjects that are of importance for SKOR's field of activity, related to the new thematic classification of the SKOR projects. The dossiers offer a deepening of content and make connections between concrete projects and themes related to theoretical or social debates. They are contain links to other writers, publications and activities such as exhibitions, debates, lectures and symposia.

A new feature of the website is a forum for discussions about subjects touching on SKOR's field of work. Each month, or whenever the circumstances demand, a thesis or opinion is advanced, after which those interested are invited via the digital newsletter to respond. Even after the discussion is closed, the contributions will remain in the archive, supplemented if necessary with a bibliography of relevant texts and publications.

2. Reader on art and the public domain. SKOR will compile a reader with theoretical and historical texts as an introduction to the field of art and the public domain. SKOR's library and archive serve as an almost inexhaustible source for this. The reader is intended for a professionally interested public.

3. Publications. For documenting the work of SKOR, those publications that support, illustrate and legitimate SKOR's policy will continue to be of importance. This includes the annual reports as well as publications mainly intended for sponsors and connections.

External collaboration

SKOR works together whenever possible with others. This will also happen when it comes to nominating and defining topical themes, as described under 'Field of Action 1: Practice'. More than before, SKOR will itself take the initiative to collaborate. Alliances will be sought with existing or still to be created umbrella organisations of persons, with whom a theme will be highlighted as the basis for formulating projects. A first step towards this are the plans for the manifestation 'Not Normal. Differences on Display' in 2009, under the theme of Health. This will be a major art event about normalisation and being normal.

SKOR wants to make itself more open for external talent. We are thinking of an alliance with De Appel's Curatorial Training Programme, for example. The involvement of young curators with very diverse backgrounds in SKOR projects will have an immediate effect on the three fields of practice, theory and documentation, provide new national and international contacts and ensure the increase of new talent. In their turn, the trainee curators can bring the experience, knowledge and contacts gained at SKOR to a new place of work abroad.

Intensive forms of cooperation with external organisations and persons lead to an interesting exchange of knowledge, skills and experience. For example, by asking an external party to tackle a project dealing with an issue that SKOR has little experience with at that moment, extra expertise is brought in. Thanks to its past history and the many invitations it receives to participate in international symposia and to give guest lectures at foreign academies, SKOR has built up a good network of foreign initiatives and organisations.

Expertise in the field of art and publicness is an export item. Even though the Netherlands tends not to make too much of its own achievements in this area, there is a lot of international interest in, and amazement about, what is achieved here. It would be fantastic if this recognition were to be expressed with fitting pride by the Netherlands' cultural representatives abroad.

5. Organisation and way of working

SKOR's organisational structure has remained virtually unchanged over the years, but a small expansion will be necessary in order for the new plans to be realised. Up until now the work was done by a director (1 fte), four project coordinators (3.5 fte), two production staff (1.6 fte), one member of staff for documentation (0.7 fte), one member of staff for communication and information (0.6 fte), one member of staff for publications (0.7 fte), an editor of *Open* (0.3 fte) and administrative and secretarial support (1.7 fte). In addition there are a number of freelance advisors who work at the office for a period of two to three years. When necessary, employment agency staff are brought in for office activities or projects. The bookkeeping is partly contracted out.

The projects are prepared and supervised by the project coordinators (one of whom is artistic director) and the freelance advisors. After internal discussion the projects are submitted to an Advisory Committee which does not concern itself with the selection of artists, but does judge SKOR's motives for starting up a project. The committee advises the managing board which then takes a decision.

In the coming period the team discussions will acquire a more integral character. Besides the projects, matters concerning theory and documentation will henceforth also be put on the agenda. Until now, SKOR only submitted the special projects to the Advisory Committee and not the regular projects; starting in 2009, all projects will be submitted. Since this will add a considerable burden to the agenda of the Advisory Committee, the number of meetings will increase from 4 or 5 to 6 or 7 a year. The composition of the Advisory Committee will be revised.

The position and use of freelance advisors will change. They used to be selected because of specific qualities (background, knowledge, social environment) that are insufficiently present within the office. This specific knowledge and expertise will henceforth be acquired through calling in talented persons from outside whenever specific projects, publications or symposia are conceived and designed. This will require extra effort on the part of the permanent staff, which can be met with an additional 1.5 fte. This expansion can partly be realised by extending the hours of part-time staff.