Public Art: Dynamics in Intentions, Production and Public Reception, 1945–Present

**Project Description & Methodology**
The changing intentions, production and public reception as to public art from 1945 to the present time are studied both as a reflection of and reaction to (deeper) societal changes like states reformulating their roles in the public domain and increased city marketing. Hence, the development of public-art policies and practices – as well as reactions to public art as expressed in documents and interviews – are analysed in detail for four case-study cities in two quite different institutional contexts: the Netherlands (Amsterdam and Rotterdam) and Flanders (Antwerp and Ghent).

This research includes literature study, (visual) fieldwork, archive studies, theory-based selection of public-art projects for thorough study, expert interviews and in-depth interviews with public space’s users, media research, and discourse analysis.

**Research Aim**
To provide insight into changing intentions, production and public reception regarding art in urban public space from 1945 to the present time.

**Research Questions**
A. How can the changing intentions with regard to public art be spatiotemporally identified at the level of public-art policy and practice (c.q. production)?
B. How can the changing public reception of public art be spatiotemporally identified throughout mediated reactions?
C. How are the dynamics in intentions, production and public reception regarding public art related to sociospatial changes?

*“Sluit Je Ogen / Verbeeld Je Kunst”* (2005) by Jan Christensen, Ghent  *Dutch for “Close Your Eyes / Imagine Your Art”*

**Current Project: Does Institutional Context Matter in Public-Art Practice?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Netherlands</th>
<th>Flanders</th>
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<td>Strong tradition of public intervention, yet a break from the mid-1980s onwards</td>
<td>Continuing strong laissez-faire policy and municipal autonomy</td>
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<td>Continuing non-regime judgement of taste (&quot;Thorbecke principle&quot;): ‘state at distance’ in the cultural domain</td>
<td>Continuing integrated and integral art policy: cultural domain with political primacy</td>
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In juxtaposition to Flanders, to what extent does the strong Dutch national incentives policy result in more, more dense, and more diverse local public artworks? To what extent is public-art practice a self-arranged sociospatial entity, and what does this say for urban futures? And does art go where institutional money goes?