

A Prayer to Mnemosyne

This Work is a quest to put together a fragmented past. It is a journey that began in 2009 as an application to the Ruskin DPHIL program and continues today using the Georg Tillmann collection as a memory theatre. I soon realized that what was in the collection was of great importance, but I also realized that how, where and when it was put together fascinated me. From the beginning I loved to discuss the idea of a collector gene with friends in the field of genetic research. The gene, especially when applied to the collection as key, was very intriguing. The past, unfolding as I started to dig, had issues. There were only some pieces of a very big jigsaw puzzle. The Tropen Museum was closing. There was no record of my great grandparents living at the house they were supposed to have lived in and the collection was first stored. The record had gaps. Although he had made these great collections, there was very little written about him and there was nobody alive who knew him, or so I thought. My great grandfather had also never been to Indonesia. The past was more and more fragmented the closer I looked. This was reflected upon my own perceptions of self and identity. On one autumnal day, during my short stint at the Ruskin, I went to Amsterdam to interview Itie Van Hout. She mentioned a man who proved to be a great link: Werner Muensterberger. Itie did not think Muensterberger was still alive, but soon after in London, Jonathan Hope, whom I met at a dinner party given by a friend of my mother's, suggested that perhaps he was. I wrote a letter to a Werner Muensterberger

whose address I found in the white pages. He was living ten blocks from my mother in New York. I met Werner in his apartment on 68th Street and documented our conversation on video. Soon after he died.

Werner had catalogued the collection, knew my great grandfather well and had hidden in the Tillmann attic after my great grandparents had fled. He told me of my great grandfather's mistress who worked at a dealer around the corner from his house on Prinsengracht. Werner explained to me how my great grandfather had spent a massive amount of money to be able to leave Amsterdam along with his mistress, eventually ending up in New York after a journey that took them to Lisbon and then to South America. Muensterberger made contact with this woman when he arrived in New York after the war, some years after Georg's death in 1941.

The first part of my artistic practice for the project was to make a Wayang Film. In the film "Longan", I tried to enter a space of the spirits bringing my great grandfather out to play in Java, a place he had never been. I imagined myself on a quest like Orpheus following after Euridyce but never being able to see her. Georg had never been to Indonesia, but its culture and his interest in it, carried him through those terrible years in Europe before he died. I somehow wanted to bring his spirit there to rest and to make my past whole.

A Patola from my great grandfather's collection was given to me when my grandmother died. It had been returned to her in 1995 by the Tropen. For me it holds a great amount of information and in the same time can

dance in the wind. As a bipolar person, I have periods of mania where I make connections between things in webs that enable me to make sense of them. This makes me think of a collector's gene and the genome as storage space. I began tracing the path of the Patola as a sort of weaving DNA. I had been inspired by my great grandfather's essays on the "Ship of the Dead".

Itie Van Hout had introduced me to Georges Breguet who brought me to Tenganan where my intention was to make Gerinsing with my great grandfather's favorite instrument, the cello as a main motif. He had brought his cello when he fought for Germany in the First World War, and he enjoyed getting together with his friends Albert Schweitzer and Richard Strauss at a church in Hamburg to play Bach during the German banking crisis leading up to Hitler's rise to power. The Geringsing took 3 years to make.

I was very interested in Georges' work in the village in the 1970's. I saw the Patola technology and symbol of life to be DNA, so I asked my friend Sadegh at the textile restoration studio outside of Haarlem to take the dyed Gerinsing threads and build a DNA double helix out of them.

Georges also introduced me to Umbu Charma from Rindi in Sumba. In reference to my great grandfather's Meissen collection, which was stolen after the war, the people of Rindi made an ikat with a porcelain motif. We also made an ikat covered entirely with the Patola motif. We made a selfie ikat using my profile. The collection was a primary design source for these weavings.

In Tilburg, at the textile museum and lab, embroidery was applied to certain Ikats from Sumba. I made a map of the maritime silk route and the passage of the Patola motif with memory systems of Giordano Bruno and a diagram by Palladio of the theatre at Vitruvius. On others, I inserted quotes from my great grandfather's story written for his grandson and a letter from my grandmother to myself.

Georg had a great German Porcelain collection which was stolen from a warehouse after the war. I commissioned an Ikat from Rindii with the "porcelain motif" and then had an embroidered piece made that was stolen later in Tilburg.

While I was rehearsing the film with Slamet Gundono in 2012-2013 in Solo, I began discussing Batik with the now deceased Sinta Ardiyanto who, along with her family, became great friends over the few years we knew each other. Jonathan Hope had introduced me to Sinta, and we became very close. I wanted to make intricate drawings of batik designs. Yiran Zhang who was studying at the V and A / RCA could do very technical illustration, so I asked her to help me tell the story of my great grandparents' experiences in the 1930's, how they were happy in Hamburg, had to flee Germany to Amsterdam, how putting together his Indonesian collection acted as a sort of Logotherapy, and how the collection acts as a catalyst for creativity. Batik makers are telling the same story in Cirebon. Two of five panels have been completed. It will be two more years until the set is complete. Danar Hadid is soon to finish the first panel.

Always thinking of the intersection between practice and archive, I have been documenting my whole process, happiest when the subtext becomes the dominant thread in the narrative. This process also sheds light on the makers of this art Work which clearly was not made with my own hands.

The project has made me realize how collectors and collections are valuable in understanding ourselves by learning how and why we put things together in particular patterns. Constellations are formed, and these star systems allow a certain inheritance of consciousness from ancestor to descendant.





