

## The Past Bubbles around Us: Mime Archives in the Public Domain

Postdoctoral research project by Marijn de Langen, PhD

This postdoctoral research project focuses on the development of principles for the sustainable unlocking of a unique archive in the Dutch performing arts sector, namely the Dutch mime archive.<sup>1</sup> The research project explores three central questions: 1) How might we unlock an archive whose central theme is the *embodied knowledge* that has its origins in physical practice?; 2) How might we develop principles for unlocking the archive in response to ongoing demand from students, teachers and the broader national and international professional field?; and 3) Which innovative forms of knowledge circulation are best suited to making visible the potential of the archive to other fields of knowledge, outside the arts?



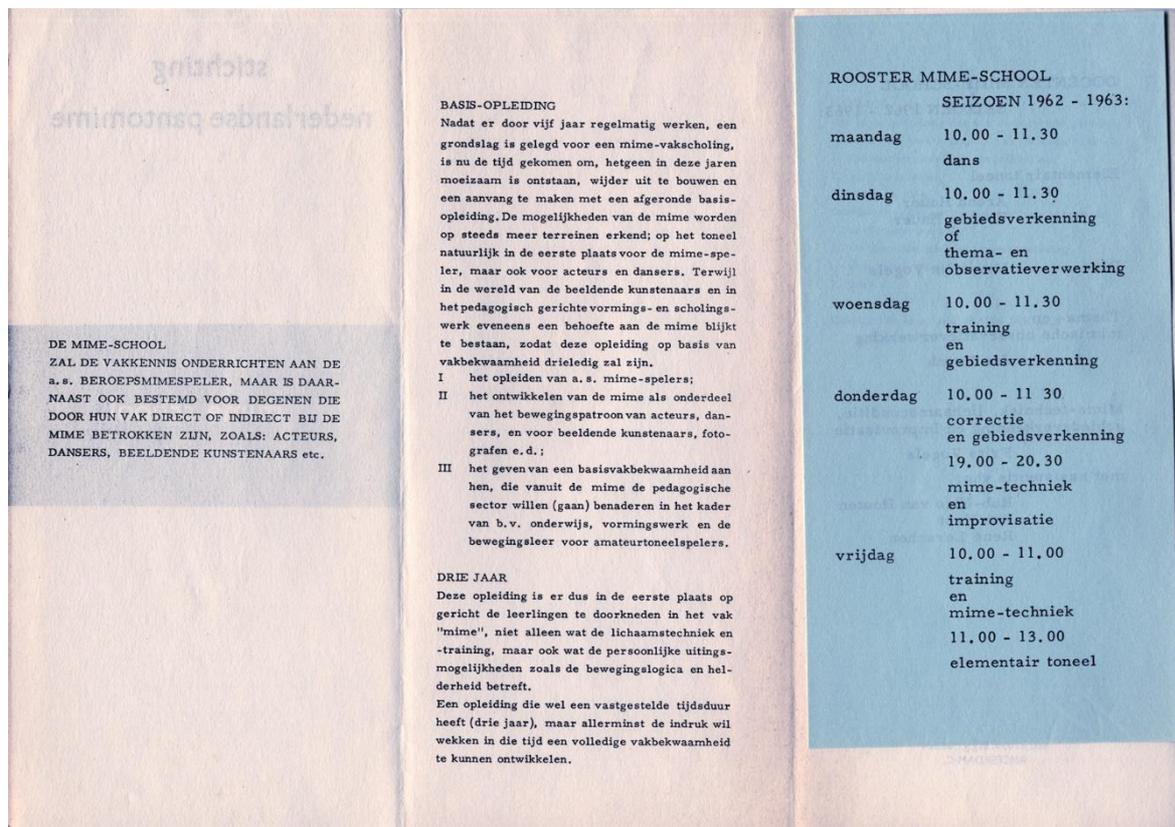
Still from *Moving Statics: The Abstract Kinetic Art of the Dutch Mime Will Spoor* (Arthur and Corinne Canthril, London 1969)

The research will run from 1 September 2019 to 1 September 2021. Building on De Langen's 2017 PhD thesis *Mime Thinking: Dutch Mime as a Mode of Thought in and through Theatre Practice* (University of Utrecht), it will: identify archive-related questions emanating from the educational and professional field; identify the best examples and existing strategies for opening up archives (whether inside or outside the performing arts field); and conduct an analysis of relevant theorisation. During the research process, students, teachers and professional practitioners will work together to create a number of test cases that will allow for experimentation with potential principles for opening up the archive. These test cases may have a variety of formats, such as a digital presentation, an artistic research project, or a re-enactment. The

research will demonstrate the potential for foregrounding the critical relevancy of an archive, while positioning itself in the ongoing debate in the academic and artistic field around the development of a methodology for explicating and disseminating embodied knowledge.<sup>ii</sup> In so doing, the project will lay a solid foundation for future multidisciplinary collaborative projects.

The ATD regards this postdoctoral research as an important test case that has the potential for application in other study programmes and disciplines, whether at the AHK or outside it. For this reason, as well as having great relevance for education and the development of the Dutch performing arts sector, this research is first and foremost a response to a pressing societal issue, namely the question of how embodied practice-based knowledge can be positioned as indispensable cultural heritage that can safeguarded, nurtured and transferred, and activated in a broad context using up-to-date methodologies?

Conducted in collaboration with the Special Collections department of the University of Amsterdam (Gonneke Jansen, MA); the Media and Culture department of the University of Utrecht (Prof. Maaïke Bleeker; Laura Karreman, PhD; and Liesbeth Groot Nibbelink, PhD); the ARIAS research network; the Mime study programme at the ATD; and a large number of mime practitioners and performers).



Prospectus for the Dutch Pantomime Institute (Stichting Nederlandse Pantomime), Amsterdam 1962

## **New policy: postdoctoral research in higher vocational education**

In March 2018, the Social Infrastructure Agenda (SIA, an initiative of NWO, the Dutch Research Council) issued an innovative open call for the first ever funded postdoctoral research positions within the Dutch higher vocational education system (HBO). The Amsterdam University of the Arts (AHK) was allocated a drawing right for 2019, and again for 2020. Following an internal selection process comprising interviews and the assessment of submitted proposals conducted by an external advisory committee (members: Carolien Nevejan, Folkert Haanstra and Krien Clevis), the AHK board followed the committee's recommendation and asked Marijn de Langen to further elaborate her proposal for submission to the SIA. De Langen wrote her application titled *The Past Bubbles around Us: Mime Archives in the Public Domain* in collaboration with Prof. Marijke Hoogenboom, and in consultation with Jan Zoet (director of the ATD) and Loes van der Pligt (artistic director of the Mime study programme). In January 2019, the SIA approved the application and at the subsequent 2019 KUO Next ('Next arts education') conference De Langen presented her postdoctoral research from the AHK to a wider audience.

On 1 September 2019, Marijn de Langen will embark on a two-year period of postdoctoral research at DAS Research. This research is by definition practice-focused. It is also a precondition of funding that the postdoctoral researcher splits his/her time equally between research and teaching; the research will draw on the educational context, and vice versa. Alongside the educational formats already operating within the Mime study programme, for the period of her postdoctoral research De Langen will develop a number of new educational formats focusing on an ATD-wide circle of interested parties, be they students or teachers.

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## **Links**

Link naar pagina Embodied Knowledge in Theatre and Dance Research Group

Link naar pagina bio Marijn

Link naar projectwebsite postdoc (op termijn)

Link naar pagina over dit postdoc onderzoek op site Arias (op termijn)

Link naar SIA Postdoc regeling:

<http://www.regieorgaan-sia.nl/onderzoekscapaciteit/Hbo-postdoc>



Maquette, probably made by Onk Theater Overal, 1980s

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<sup>i</sup> Dutch mime is a radical form of interdisciplinary physical theatre that generated a wave of innovation in performing arts from the 1960s onwards in the Netherlands and internationally. It originated at the Mime study programme, which started in 1968 at the Academy of Theatre and Dance, a faculty of Amsterdam University of the Arts.

<sup>ii</sup> The subject is incorporated in the Dutch National Research Agenda and elsewhere.