

## Column HALf6 – How will we act?

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The central question of this Half6 is 'How do we act?'. I think that is a question about what is important to us. What is important to me, to my colleagues or to someone else, and with that, what do I need to do to stand up for what I think is important?

To paraphrase Priscilla, how do we act in a field where we spend a big portion of our brain capacity on panicking about paying our rent? Or, interpreting Simone's words, how do we act in a field where the artists, as raw material for their work, are greatly undervalued, and undervaluing themselves? How will we act in a field where every aspect of our work has to scream diversity and inclusion in order to get government funding, yet elsewhere in the artistic chain an implicit norm of white elitist work is still quietly silencing real artistic diversity? How will we act in a field where the raw material, the passion of the artist, is shamelessly capitalized, and the artist often left like an empty coal or copper mine: exhausted and burned up?

Things like the Fair Practice code ( <https://www.beroepkunstenaar.nl/tools/faqs/faq-fair-practice/>)

and the true valuing of diverse, different work are slowly creeping into the field, but how long until it is truly fair and diverse? How much more do we have to work 'for exposure', or 'because it's important'? How much more performances do we have to see, often made by white people, in which people of color are used and reduced to talk about their color, instead of being able to express their own artistic fascination? How long do we have to wait?

Thank god we had to stop, and think. Listen to each other, and listen to ourselves. Question ourselves: when this is over, how will we act? What is important to me?

I agree with Simone. We have to stop waiting. Stop blaming 'them', 'they' and 'the field'.

We ARE the field.

WE are the ones silently agreeing to work 'for exposure'.

WE are the ones quietly endorsing casual or implicit racism and gender bias.

We have to stop waiting, start talking, and start acting.

And maybe it feels overwhelming to fight a dragon as big as 'the field'. Maybe it feels like you don't matter enough to make any impact, so you stuff your frustrations away by saying things like 'It's just the way it is'. But your voice matters. 'Small' does not mean 'insignificant'. The spark that lights a forest on fire never thought it would. But when conditions are just right, or in this case, wrong enough, every single spark can light 'the field' on fire.

I think Priscilla has a good point. It starts with questioning yourself. 'What am I doing?', 'Why does this feel weird?', 'Why am I working so hard yet still struggle to pay my rent?', 'Why is my authenticity not recognized?', 'What is my raw material that I invest?'.

Then talk to each other, 'How much do you get paid?', 'How do you correct peoples casual racism or gender bias?', 'Let's not work for less than 30 euro per hour.'

But the most important thing, and I say this as a note-to-self, is to speak up to your teacher, employer, director or maybe even the minister if you think something is wrong.

We shouldn't accept the norm, if the norm is wrong. The fact that we've been doing something wrong for a long time, does not mean we should continue doing it. So, let's go for fair practice, fair pay, fair chances. Let's make a neutral and safe, or at least equally unsafe environment, so our shared artistic passion can flourish in a field where we dare to speak, dare to express ourselves, dare to learn, dare to act.

Yes, I'm afraid of being confronted with my white innocence, and yes, I still want to do work that excites me even if I don't get payed enough. But let's not give in to the easy way out by playing the victim of 'the field'. Let's step up and speak out. Point out someone else's error, and admit our own faults, one by one. Every single one of us matters, every action matters. What we say matters. What we do matters. So let's do what is important to us. Let's act.