

MEREL SMITT

HOW TO START A MOVEMENT



HOW TO START A *MOVEMENT* is a series of interventions and missions in which different individuals get the opportunity to explore, question and disrupt the protocols, dynamics and rules of (semi) public spaces, institutions and venues. The missions consist of instructions you receive and execute together or individually. You can receive these instructions through printed cards, digital channels, verbally and so on. Some of the missions are role playing games with specific roles and instructions, others are workshops, multi-interpretable assignments or instructions you can do on your own whenever you feel the need to raise your voice or respond to the harsh reality. With some you need to be physically present, others you can do from your home using the internet, your telephone or non-electronic mail. By creating different types of missions with different threshold levels it is possible for everybody to join the movement at some point to take back their power, claim their voice, and empower themselves by setting something in motion.

Merel Smitt is an artist based in Rotterdam. She builds immersive installations and creates interventions in the public space that interfere with our daily lives. Her work is research based, site-specific and the audience, knowingly and unknowingly, participate in various ways. You may come across one of her projects in situations or settings where you don't expect art to happen.

Her projects often result in multiple outcomes that can be seen together as a whole but can also be experienced separately. The output consists of installations, websites, fictional campaigns, score-books, audio-tours, walks, role playing games and so on. The impact of the work lies within the participants; they become aware of the way certain frameworks produced by political and social systems in our society influence our environment, behaviour and interactions. Her projects can be seen as methodologies to rethink protests and social movements, occupy spaces, raise voices, and set something in motion.

www.merelsmitt.nl

WRITTEN BY
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1

Take a close look!
There she stands.
On the coast.
At the edge of a cliff,
in the middle of the surf.
She's facing the wind,
breaking the waves,
feeling the spray.
Brave. Open. Fearless.
Without moving
she is standing there
so we can see her.
So, look! Look closely!
She's a strong woman,
she's an artist,
she's an adventurer
and she comes from the
land of water and tides.
There she stands.
Breaking the waves.
Taking up the fight
as the strong woman she is.
The artist, the adventurer.

2

Take a close look!
There she stands.
She is playing.
She is observing.
She sees everything
and everyone.
She guides and directs.
She cackles and betrays.
She loses and leads the game.
She plays.

You can walk through walls with her but you
have to let it happen.
She won't push you,
or teach you how or when.
She'll only show you
that it's possible.
She'll show you
what is necessary.
When she's still, you will move.
When she's playing, you will play.
When she's watching, you will see.
When she's guiding, you will conjure.
She is the game within you.

3

Take a close look!
There she stands.
She wants to start a movement.
With you.
As you.
Inside you.
That's what she stands for and
that's why she is standing
next to you.
Behind you.
Beneath you.
How to start a movement?
How to even start?
Look closely.
There is already
a movement.
With you.
As you.
And inside you.
As long as you keep moving,
you will move the world.
That's what she stands for.

Take a close look!
 There she stands.
 Not speaking.
 Not moving.
 Yet, she says a great deal and moves
 everything around.
 Because she stands where she stands.
 She stands up against it.
 Showing herself.
 As a woman she knows how to be patient
 like the water and silent like the calm
 depth of a lake.
 She listens to every drop of the ocean but
 swirls around with rage when impatience
 catches up with her.
 Her work is a manifesto of the sea.

Take a close look!
 There she stands.
 In front of the places she builds for
 you to dwell in. Places in which your
 expectations, imaginations and
 experiences can settle down.
 She creates the circumstances for
 that to happen.
 She holds you,
 and carries you.
 And to those of you
 who cannot (yet)
 accept her invitation,
 we say:
 it is important
 to look closely.

Take a close look!
 There she stands.
 Against efficient, effective and
 result-based thinking.
 Fighting the neoliberal art market by
 deliberately questioning its ideology,
 to intentionally create an uncertainty
 that is frighteningly powerful.
 And to those of you who don't know
 how to take a stand yet,
 we say:
 Follow the movement.
 Follow the experiment.
 Follow the unknown.
 Follow her and you will discover in Merel
 Smitt's work the subversive power of
 a feminist art practice in which the ego
 loses itself through collaboration and thus
 wins everything there is to win: self-
 empowerment, solidarity, joy, creation
 and the infinite vastness of

Take a close look!
 You can see it.
 You can experience it.
 Come close!
 Closer...

HOW TO START A *MOVEMENT* began in september 2018 and has welcomed 100 participants since. When joining the movement, participants engage with everyday life in a different way. They explore, in an intimate yet collective way, the dynamics and rules that we produce, follow and maintain on a personal, political and societal level.

A participant will normally go through four parts of the *MOVEMENT*:
part I: the individual training over the course of 18 days.
part II: the mission briefing of half an hour.
part III: the collective mission of 1 hour.
part IV: the collective debriefing, varying from 15 min to 3 hours.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis only part I and part IV could be executed: the individual training and the collective debriefing. All parts of the movement are designed to function as stand-alone interventions as well as a whole, this way the movement can always take place, no matter where we are or under what circumstances we are living.

The individual training (between **June 2nd** and **June 19th 2020**), could be completed from home, within the frame of everyday life, respecting the rules of a 1.5 meter society. Over the course of 18 days each participant receives 14 envelopes in their mailbox. Each envelope consists of instructions, readings, messages, material and traces from the movement with which the participant engages with.

At the collective debriefing, in a digital space on **June 19th 2020**, the gang meets each other to share their traces.

At the moment the experience is limited to a small group of people. A larger audience is reached online through following the process on Instagram (@merelsmitt) within the time-frame June 2nd and June 19th 2020.

There is also the possibility of receiving the publication of **HOW TO START A *MOVEMENT*** that will be published at the end of the summer. Please contact me at howtostartamovement@merelsmitt.nl if you are interested in receiving this.

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 & my peers from DAS Theatre.