

XXX CROSSINGS

IBRAHIM EL-SALAH
DAVID HAMMONS
STANLEY BROUWN



Welcoming Remarks:

Salah M. Hassan

EENWERK

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Due to unforeseen circumstances beyond my control, I am not able to be with you this evening, to welcome you to the opening of our exhibition *This Way Brouwn*. But here are few words to introduce the exhibition and its concept to you, as well as to express my gratitude to everyone who contributed to making this exhibition a **reality**. **This is for me “a haunting dream that come true!” (And I will tell you why later!).**

Allow me to start with **an anecdote** that will give you a background to the exhibition and the journey leading up to it.

My journey leading up to this exhibition is **spiritual** in every sense of the word. And this is almost **ironic** (for me to say) as someone who has spent a lifetime espousing **dialectical and historical materialism** as a mode of explaining this world!

My friend David Hammons is the one who triggered my initial interest in Stanley Brouwn. Stanley is a Hero for David Hammons. David never met Stanley until his passing, but he has always been eager to meet him and to exhibit with him. David actually makes very personal works as homage for Stanley Brouwn! I have seen it!

Every time I traveled to Amsterdam since the early 2000, David Hammons would request that I find out for him the contact information of **a black artist called Stanley Brouwn!** and I would check around but many young Dutch people in the arts never knew Stanley, or heard of him, and

for the few who did, they never knew he was **black**. This is despite Brouwn's immense contribution to Dutch conceptualism and his association with *Fluxus*, or the avant garde projects of the *Art and Project Gallery and Bulletin* in Amsterdam.

One afternoon in early 2008, while working with the **legendary Irma Boom** on designing a book that involves David Hammons, I asked Irma and Julius about Stanley Brouwn, and both said "Oh we know of him, and we have a mutual friend who could find the address" Rudi Koch - and for sure they did!! I gave the information to David and he was very happy, but not sure whether he contacted Stanley, but for sure David and Stanley never met!

Fast forward to the present, and during a recent visit to Irma office with dearest Fariba Derakhshani, to discuss design for the project *Three Crossings*, Julius gave me a tour of his new and beautiful space Een Werke, and a revelation hit me! This is the perfect place for Stanley Bouwn. **Koolhaas's** name aside, the building looks like it is almost designed by Stanley Brouwn, measuring the distance between two Amsterdam old buildings, and inserting his own minimalist grey cube to fill the gap. I am almost certain if we measure the width and height of the gallery it will fit perfectly with **Brouwn's own steps** and not the **metric system**. So Julius the building is already haunted by **Stanley Brouwn's spirit** as if he was meant to be in this space. Besides, since its establishment, Een Werke's space has been inhabited by works of two legendary black artists, **Steve Macqueen's Remember Me**, and **David Hammons' African American Flag**. They have already **marked the territory** to welcome **Stanley Brouwn!!** Nothing explains this coincidence! Only in the **realm of spirituality we find the answer!** So thank you Julius for hosting this exhibition, and for being so welcoming from the moment we discussed it as a possibility. Thanks for your time, your design's vision, and for the hard work you put in making this exhibition a reality! **May the spirit of Stanley Brouwn haunts you forever, makes you walk, make you measure distance and spaces and produce more great exhibitions!**

As I mentioned in the brochure, this exhibition was conceived a few months prior to the sudden passing of Stanley Brouwn on May 18, 2017. At the time, a meeting with him was planned a few days earlier. Had he been alive, we are certain this exhibition would be conceived differently with his vision and interventions in mind. He was welcoming and ready to enter a dialogue regarding the concept and theme of the proposed project. Hence, this exhibition (is not part of the 5 O'clock traffic or jumping into the wagon posthumously). It is a modest homage to Stanley Brouwn's remarkable career, his profound contributions to contemporary art, to conceptualism, and to black modernism in the years since he moved to Amsterdam in 1957. Starting in 1962 and until his passing, Stanley Brouwn had consistently insisted that his biography and art work not be printed or reproduced in any publication related to exhibitions of his work.

The works featured in this exhibition listed below are part of the collection of the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven, and we are very grateful to its leader **Charles Esche**, and to its wonderful staff – Diana Franssen and Kim Sluiter- who welcomed our project, and never hesitated to lend the work, when other institution hesitated or refused our requests!.

As I mentioned in the brochure that accompanied Brouwn's retrospective at the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and MACBA in Barcelona (2005–2006), his work is mainly 'about

measurements and real distances, any image of his work could only be seen as a distortion.’ Therefore, we decided to abide by Brouwn’s wish, and honor his legacy by producing this booklet with blank pages. Brouwn’s work entitled *This Way Brouwn* was based on a series of public performances, which he initiated in 1960, when he asked strangers he met in the street to draw directions to various locations he identified, on papers that he stamped with the words ‘THIS WAY BROUWN,’ and collated as an artist’s book. This exhibition takes its title after this work, as it ushered the central ethos of his artistic vision; that is ‘a will to displace authorship onto the audience, this is the start, too of Brouwn’s fascination with walking,’ as eloquently articulated by Martin Herbert in his recent book, *Tell Them I Said No* (Sternberg Press, 2016). Or as Oscar van den Boogaard put it in *Frieze* (161: March, 2014), Brouwn ‘wants the viewer to become his work. That is only possible by letting the viewers complete his work in their imagination, over and over again.’

Before I end it is important to pay dues, and to express utmost gratitude, when it is most appropriate. Many people and institutions have contributed to the success of this modest tribute to Stanley Brouwn and to the larger project of *Three Crossings*.

The design of the exhibition is a collaboration between Julius and Tom Postma design and architecture firm, represented by Mika Mihaela.

I am so grateful to you Tom Postma for your unwavering support over the years. Despite his stature in the field of exhibition design globally, and despite his busy schedule, Tom never hesitated to collaborate with me, and over many years, provided his most elegant and efficient designs ever since our first collaboration at the Venice Biennale in 2001. This has ushered a lifelong friendship which I so cherish. To Mihaela Rodesou (MIKA) of Tom Postma design, I am so grateful for your efforts, diligence and eloquent designs and renderings, and for your patience, and for being so graceful.

To the legendry Irma Boom, I am so grateful for the designs that graced several of my publications over the years! Which actually made me “famous in a way” as I discovered over the years that many young designers I have worked with, pursued my friendship, to discover that it was not for my own sake, but to get Irma’s contact information, or simply obtain a copy of the now landmark publication **Authentic/Ex-Centric!!** I Despite your busy schedule, you took the time to design the publications for this project and to equally brand it! **XXX Crossings!** Thanks Irma.

Words can not express my gratitude to the Prince Claus Fund and its wonderful and most professional team. Starting with its Director, my sister Joumana El Zein Houry, thanks for inviting me to do this **Three Crossings**, to honor not only a Prince Claus laureate and my Sudanese hero Ibrahim El Salahi, but also to honor two other heroes of mine: Stanley Brouwn, and David Hammons. I owe Prince Claus a lot in supporting my projects, my career, over the years since the days of its founder Els van der Plas. I hope this project is one way to return the debt. So thank you Joumana.

To my dearest sister Fariba Derakhshani, I owe you a lot, and most importantly your friendship and unwavering support. Words can’t express my gratitude for your hard work in shepherding this project from its inception to this moment of its realization. Fariba, I appreciate the tireless

effort to ensure all goes well. I know of the late evenings train's journey back home to your village after hours of overtime! So forgive me for the headaches and sleepless nights. I am so grateful Fariba!!! To the indefatigable and hardworking team of Prince Claus Fund Hannah Vollom, Ginger de Silva, Sarah Smith, Dilara Kanik, and Akvile Dubakaite, I am so grateful to you hard work and efforts to ensure the success of this and the other two exhibitions.

Welcome again everyone, May the spirit of Stanley Brouwn haunts you forever, and may you walk in space and time measuring distances in your steps (not the meter steps) and walk to a bright future that brings us all as humans in peaceful harmony!!!

- Salah M. Hassan, Curator of Three Crossings