

(CONFERENCE)

Galerie Rodolphe Janssen
Rue de Livourne 32 Livornostraat
Brussels, Belgium
27 November - 20 December 2014

A gallery exhibition challenges the artist to negotiate the intersection of freedom and responsibility - presenting to a self-selected, generally open-minded audience is a privilege to be handled with care.

When considering what to say – and for whom – there is a paradox:
the artist, completely free, does not need a platform to be heard; yet those who are not, do.

Amongst the voiceless, none lack access to an audience more than the incarcerated.

Which raises the question:

Could providing them the freedom promised by an exhibition prove to be rehabilitative?

In April 2014, American artist Z. Susskind entered the inner rings of Belgium's Andenne Prison to lead three workshops with inmates inside. He spoke no French – they, no English.

The purpose was to demonstrate the exhibition as an art form in itself, one particularly conducive to collaboration and broader statement-making than the sole artist achieves with a singular work.

By engaging those in prison in intellectual discourse and bridging the depths of their insular existence to the world outside, he hoped this project would be emotionally therapeutic and psychologically liberating.

The art-appreciation context provides a viable, apolitical arena in which to stage a meeting.

Susskind spent months campaigning to organize an opening night conference in Brussels amongst inmates, prison officials, advocates, artists, gallerists and the viewing public.

Ultimately, this could not be realized.

This winter, however, the inmates he worked with are curating three exhibitions within Deurle's Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens. arranging works from the permanent collection, works from other artists and works of their own.

The silenced conference presented here formally acknowledges the impediments to necessary discussions with the absent and overlooked.

The artist would like to thank the organization Art Without Bars vzw asbl (www.artwithoutbars.be) for its invaluable collaboration and support.