
Silence Please Science Please

2017

Martijn Sandberg has realised a site-specific artwork: an acoustic wall in the interior of the newly constructed Gorlaeus Bèta Campus of the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences FWN, University of Leiden.

The artwork consists of connecting white coated perforated aluminium panels, covering the surface of the wall in the hall, vacant space and first floor of the building. The artwork is twenty metres long and seven metres high.

Artificial light shines from the round holes in the artwork, causing images of shadow and light to emerge for the eye with nuances and graduations in tone, depending on the diameter and closeness of the perforations.

A sequence of words appears in the pattern of circles when the artwork is viewed from different sightlines. The words may be read in succession from left to right - but also from right to left, from above to below, from below to above and in diagonal reading order. A refrain, an unceasing canon: 'Silence Please Science Please'.

The artwork appeals to the imagination and offers material for contemplation. Silence plays a key role in creative processes, such as the practice of art, music and scientific research.

Sound proofing and reducing noise is an essential characteristic of acoustic panels. 'Reverberation' is linked to the functional character of an acoustic wall.

In the artwork's figuration there is an 'echo' between 'Science Please' and 'Silence Please', if we compare them to each other in terms of sound, form and equal number of letters. The credo 'Science Please' is an expression lending itself to shout instead of 'Silence Please' and vice versa.

The scientist works in silence in the laboratory, wrapped in a haze of mist from bubbling pipettes and glass tubes. Undisturbed and in complete dedication, research is carried out with the attention and concentration necessary to the preparation of geometrical analysis, understanding signs, the measure and essence of things, at micro and macro level.

The multiple ambiguities of the artwork show the setting for the laboratory, a background for scientific research, with the enlightened 'sign' as writing on the wall: 'Silence Please Science Please'.

Title: 'Silence Please Science Please'

Artist: Martijn Sandberg

Location: Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (FWN), Gorlaeus, Leiden

Measurements: (lxh) 20m x 7m

Material: acoustic wall, perforated aluminium

Concept and design: 2014-2015

Realisation and completion: 2016-2017

Project assistance: Christa Rinzema, Atelier Rinzema

Commissioned by: University of Leiden

Architect: Inbo Architecten, JHK Architecten