
I Will Survive

The site-specific artwork created by Martijn Sandberg for the LOC in Hardenberg is a real eye catcher, measuring 25 metres wide and almost 3 metres high. An imposing row of golden coloured steel arises from the ground in front of the entrance to the educational centre. Text can be discerned within it: I will survive.

"I wanted to give my work a positive message," Sandberg says. "It looks like a fence, but doesn't have that function. It is art. In this case, art that addresses the public."

Sandberg based his proposal to locate the artwork opposite the entrance stairs to the Mulopad on the active, exuberant character of the LOC centre in relation to the old Nijenstede graveyard next to it. He did not think that being able to look on to the adjoining cemetery from the stairs was macabre, on the contrary: "The contrast between life and death, activity and inactivity appealed to me."

The freestanding rails seem to materialise from the ground. Swellings have been soldered to the rails at carefully calculated positions. From a distance, they appear to form the words: "I will survive". For some people this arouses associations with the Seventies disco hit by Gloria Gaynor, others simply see encouragement in it. "It's a pep talk," agrees Sandberg, "and at the same time a contemporary reading of the Latin proverb 'Ars longa, vita brevis', or life is short, art long."

This relief text is not the only visual whim in the artwork. The square rails were turned during positioning, to create a three-dimensional image. No matter from what viewpoint you look, from the front, the side or even from above, there is never a surface that is quite flat. When the sun shines, it projects the text as shadows onto the ground. An apparently simple design, that on closer inspection reveals many facets. This is precisely what Sandberg attempts to achieve: "I make work that is not immediately consumable. You always have to get used to art. It should keep raising questions."

(text: Bertine Krol, adaption of online article 'You always have to get used to art', kunstinhardenberg.nl, February 2008)

Title: 'I Will Survive'

Artist: Martijn Sandberg

Location: LOC Hardenberg, Parkweg 1, Hardenberg/ NL

Measurements: (lhxw) 24.9m x 2.94m x 0.2m

Material: gold metallic coated steel

Concept and design: 2006-2007

Definitive design: 2007

Delivery: 2008

Commissioned by: Municipality Hardenberg/ NL

Advice and supervision: Kunst & Cultuur Foundation, Overijssel/ NL

Imaginary conversation

A: "What's that for?"

B: "It looks like a fence, but it isn't a fence."

A: "But what is it then?"

B: "If it has no use as a fence or doesn't serve anything, then it must be art."

A: "But what's written there?"

B: "Well, 'I Will Survive'."

A: "But who says that then?"

B: "Well, I see it and I just said it myself, but it is often said that art speaks for itself."

A: "I'm damned, now I get it. So if it is art, then art says 'I Will Survive'?"

B: "It's standing there. And in any case it was already standing there yesterday and probably tomorrow as well."

(text: Martijn Sandberg, imaginary conversation, December 2006)