

# Art is not essential

Interview SARAH SCHUG / Photography JOKE DE WILDE

“IF YOU WORK A LOT AND ARE NOT INCREDIBLY STUPID, SOMETHING WILL COME OUT OF IT. FAILED ARTISTS DON'T PUSH THEMSELVES TO THE END”



Andy Warhol once said: “An artist is somebody who produces things people don’t need to have.” Belgian artist Rinus Van De Velde takes this sardonic sentiment even further.



#### I CONSTANTLY HAVE TO CONVINCE MYSELF THAT ART IS IMPORTANT

There's no real necessity for art in our society. That's why I have to lie to myself every day and force myself to go to the studio. I'm not helping anyone. When you work in a hospital, you need to show up because other people depend on you. I constantly have to convince myself that art is important. What pushes me to go to the studio every day is mostly something very personal. I feel this quite unstoppable urge inside me. Sometimes I try to take a day off and have a coffee, read a book, watch a movie. But I get bored very quickly and I end up working in my studio again; it's the only place where I can stand to be for more than one or two hours.

#### THE BELIEF THAT ART CAN BRING ABOUT CHANGE IS A MISCONCEPTION

Art is not essential. Food and shelter are. Nobody really needs it and you cannot change anything with it. Being an ambulance driver, that is something meaningful. You can easily imagine a world without art, but not without hospitals. The belief that art can bring about change is a misconception. Rothko thought that looking at art could have a transcendental effect and make you see a higher truth. Others think they can pass on political messages with it; but I think they should just change professions and go into politics. You can only change something if you address the masses. Even movements like Entartete Kunst couldn't achieve much because they were only known among a small group.

#### I REALLY DON'T THINK OF MYSELF AS A TALENTED ARTIST

Art is hard to define but, for me, the closest definition is a sentence by Werner Herzog: "Art is about articulating your dreams." The only difference between an artist and a non-artist is that the artist is able to articulate certain feelings. I don't believe in talent: I didn't draw very well as a child. It's more about will and learning by doing. I have a talent for pushing myself rather than drawing, and I really don't think of myself as a talented artist. If you work a lot and are not incredibly stupid, something will come out of it. Failed artists don't push themselves to the end.

#### TOO MANY ARE IN IT FOR THE WRONG REASONS

The art business has grown a lot; the scene used to be so much smaller in the '60s and '70s. There are so many galleries now, a lot of media attention, big prizes, the image of an artist's fancy life... but it's a kind of fraud. That's not what it's all about. I don't like to generalise, but if there is such a thing as the 'art world', one of its problems is the fakeness of people. You can tell if someone is a real artist or just pretending to be a part of the art world. Too many are in it for the wrong reasons. They're attracted by exclusivity, the money, the parties. These things tend to attract phony people. I like those who are passionate about art.

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 RINUS' work will be exhibited in the group show Beyond Tradition at Garage, Rotterdam  
 From 4 May to 14 July

[rinusvandevelde.com](http://rinusvandevelde.com)