

Huizinge 3.6

Ina Fekken, Netherlands

The biggest earthquake in the province of Groningen, the Netherlands took place on August 16, 2012 . The epicenter was the little village of Huizinge. The earthquake measured 3.6 on the Richter scale.

The earthquakes in this region are not natural but man-made—and are getting more frequent, happening about 2 times per week.

In 1959, a natural gas reservoir was discovered near Slochteren. It turned out to be one of the largest onshore gas fields in the world, and is now known as the Groningen field.

I live in Groningen. Being a painter for quite some time, paper became the best material for me to express myself. I saw many possibilities. The fragility of the material is also directly linked to my themes. Before *kunstacademie* (art school), I graduated from an environmental studies program, and the mankind's influence on the earth is the underlying theme of my work.

Since 2016, I have been committed to raising awareness of the natural gas problem through my work.

The first artwork I made with this theme was a paper installation in the church at Schildwolde with the beautiful, monumental Juffertoren.

I have a preference for creating installations in churches. Churches are and were a refuge, a place for being together and reflection. Churches in my region are built on little hills, to protect them and the people from floods before dikes were built. The meaning of refuge is important: the man-made earthquakes in the Groningen field are slowly disrupting people's lives and buildings, including the area's medieval heritage.

The Dutch government is supposed to protect the people but not enough, because there is a lot at stake. The natural gas income forms a quite a share of the state budget. The government and big companies like Shell and ExxonMobil make a lot of money—approximately one million euro per hour—at the expense of the citizens of Groningen.

When I first visited the church in Schildwolde, it struck me that a bench was being placed in the choir. The location of such a bench signifies the importance of the people who ordered it. They occupy a special place where everyone can see them right in the center. I thought to represent this important place in a paper pattern. I came up with a pattern of drilling rigs because Schildwolde is in the middle of the Groninger Gas Field. At the same time, the newspapers wrote about the psychological problems resulting from the earthquakes.

The keywords that this work conveyed were: “enclosure,” “salvaged,” “trapped,” “veiling,” “hide,” and “decided.” My aim is to create works that look harmless and decorative, but are not upon closer look.

On the basis of this work, I was invited to take part in CODA Paper Art 2017. I used the same concept, but now in a different way.

The subject for my sculpture *Huizinge 3.6* was again the natural gas problem. I made a tube from cut out sheets of paper with the same diameter as the tubes that are used to transport the Groningen natural gas . Every sheet had a pattern of 5 drilling rigs, and I formed a tube of nearly five meters out of 128 sheets. The deceptively decorative form draws the visitor in, but the title and the pattern generate further thought. The fragility of the material is directly linked to the vulnerability of the subject.

The *CRACK* installation in the Westerlaan Church is a follow-up. The installation was made for *Kunstmaand Ameland*, a month-long art event in Ameland during November 2017. Under the balustrade in the church, I hung an ornate picture frame with cut-out words and phrases that are used in the media about the gas extraction problems. On the floor was a mosaic with different patterns of cracks of burned paper with condensed concentrations of fragile cracks on top. To "crack" is to break, burst, jumping, explode, collapse, bust, and break open. All apply to the processes that have to do with the gas extraction area and the people who live there.

In 2018, I will continue with the topic of natural gas problems. Somewhere in a church in the province of Groningen, I will make an installation to keep the issue alive, with paper as my main means of expression.

Ina Fekken
inafekken.nl