

## Group 1 : Janus

Keywords: hospitality, complexity, "attentive", sharing, humbleness, building bridges, love/self-love, vulnerability, open dialogue, your true self, empathy, open mindedness, compromise, tolerance, nature, survival, attentiveness, courage

Methodology and key questions:

- Action/Anarchy?
- Can we use art to connect, and what is the role of empathy in this?
- Is generosity value based or value biased?
- How can generosity break down barriers?
- Can generosity be dangerous?

Group 1 demonstrates its interpretation of generosity through action: in addition to a short, theoretical approach, they cast their ideas in a video in which an art carpet by Koen Vanmechelen plays a leading role. Can generosity connect different worlds? Their proposition is clear: generosity can break down barriers; according to Group 1 it is able to bring different values and cultures closer together.

That they use art to make their statement is remarkable. The underlying question is also evident here: what can be the role of art in connecting people and communities? In doing so, art takes on the role of creative communication in an attempt to find a common language.

Despite the accompanying text, with which they tried to describe the contours of the concept of generosity, group 1 resolutely opted for action to communicate their thinking. That action came about following an evening of brainstorming, during which the boundaries of the imaginable were repeatedly reached and perhaps even crossed, questioning the desirability, necessity and decency of their nightly actions.

With their action group 1 opted for surprise and not simply for what was expected of them. They dealt with rules in an unconstrained way, diving into a mischievous anarchy with a smile and taking a calculated risk in the process, dancing on the narrow tightrope between respect for Vanmechelen's work and pure, unabashed provocation.

In the work they produced, they exposed themselves, made themselves vulnerable, each with her or his own background, both culturally and geographically. The bottom line of their statement was that art can indeed save the world, if presented with respect and not out of mere provocation. The latter was only possible because they did not brutally, inconsiderately force art on other cultural communities, but because they showed caution and respect. Their movements, demarches and words scanned the contours of the communities to ensure they were not being offensive. Art as a tool for open dialogue - not to impose ideas on others - but as a generous invitation to meet and come closer together. Moreover, art itself can be generous, it shows the 2 facets of a concept, it highlights a conflict... It opens dialogue.

It triggered the discussion of how and why this type of generosity is or can be possible, and how this interrelates with the concept of freedom. Where are the limits of this generosity? Is an ultimate sacrifice also generosity? Or must one dare to think of oneself in order to be generous?

The TT wondered whether the action of group 1 would have had the same effect or would have been possible at all if the context of the action had been different. Would it also have been perceived as a generous invitation? An image of a chicken in association with a mosque, could that not be experienced as insulting, as a provocation, as daring, as a challenge, as creating a feeling of unease or even as being downright dangerous? In this regard, the context of the action requires reflection. In all contexts, can other opinions and reservations count on our willingness to accept them, on our openness. How open and tolerant is the recipient? Some ideas seem incompatible but sometimes prove to be a necessary condition for opening doors for deliberation and conversation.

When we look at generosity as an act of "giving," we must realize that even that can involve a danger. Well-intentioned generosity can also be offensive. The TT thinks Group 1 can dig deeper into the boundaries of generosity and how they relate to notions of love, self-care, or diversity. To what extent is generosity a conscious action, and doesn't the purpose behind a generous gesture help determine whether or not it is about generosity? How can perception and intention be aligned? Do values determine perception or do they distort perception?

Is generosity always considered intrinsically humane? Can you find generosity across all cultures and communities? What about religion, politics, economics, society, are they generous? Is Pfizer f.ex. generous? Does generosity accept diversity? There is a paradox in generosity: it is easy to see the benefit when it comes to sharing love, knowledge or care. But it can also be used as a weapon. Moreover, as humanity and as Homo sapiens, we have not been very generous towards nature and we are now seeing the consequences of this for our planet.

Generosity & freedom, it can be healing but also destructive... how can we implement these concepts in our society?

**ARTWORK: Janus**  
**By Koen Vanmechelen**

The intriguing gift of this group had a clear and straightforward message. Thinking the Unthinkable results from acting in the world and daring to do the unimaginable, opening a portal to what was once deemed impossible. In ancient times, this idea was embodied by Janus, the god of new beginnings, gates, transitions, duality, doorways, passages, frames, and endings of conflict. Generosity via art respectfully shared in a context once considered too antithetical can create a wormhole for the benefit of all Mankind. An unexpected door out of the cage we accept as our reality.

Janus, 2004  
Tapestry  
240 x 240 x 2 cm  
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