

# PAUL MIELKE

I am a researcher and maker working through a re-examination of historical matters and image materials. In my work I question contemporary claims and existing assumptions in the fields of national identity, social legacies and their effects in political discourse. The practice mainly works through gestures of deconstruction, reconfiguration and appropriation of national symbols or familiar documentary imagery. With a background in both graphic design and conceptual artistic thinking, the work is characterised by both informative accessibility as well as attention to detail in production of spatial installations, video and printed matter. I seek to conduct research through studying existing collections, individual biographies and archives. Through a collaboration with these communities, associations and people experienced on either artistic practice or research, I want to communicate the stories contained within to new audiences.

## WEBSITES

Personal website

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

## SOCIAL MEDIA

[instagram.com/paul\\_mielke](https://www.instagram.com/paul_mielke)

## EDUCATION

- 2022 - Tech Week Quartair, Den Haag  
2022 (Netherlands)
- 2021 - Plastic Justice European League of  
2021 Institutes of the Arts
- 2020 - MA Non Linear Narrative Den Haag,  
2022 Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende  
Kunsten diploma
- 2012 - BA Communication Design  
2017 Fachhochschule Mainz diploma

## EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 Graduation Show Royal Academy of Art The  
Hague, Netherlands From Friday, July 1 to  
Tuesday, July 5, the Royal Academy of Art  
(KABK) proudly presented a new cohort of  
graduated visual artists and designers.  
[Group](#)
- 2022 Please ( ) elaborate Online exhibition  
Spanning a range of media, exhibition  
formats and disciplines, the show pieces  
cover a multitude of subjects in order to  
unravel and demonstrate their complexities.  
As such, Please Elaborate is not only the  
title of the exhibition, but also the question  
the recent graduates often asked  
themselves in the process of making their  
works. In doing so, they responded with  
thoughtful and engaging comments to  
contemporary issues of gender equality,  
post-truth politics, sound pollution, global  
warming and neurodiversity.  
[nln.allinthisogether.online/](https://nln.allinthisogether.online/)  
[Group](#)
- 2021 Plastic Justice Exhibition at the Plastic  
Health Summit Theater Amsterdam  
Amsterdam, Netherlands During the Plastic  
Health Summit on 21 October 2021, a  
selection of works were presented which

examined the impact of invisible micro-plastics on the environment. Visitors of the conference at Theater Amsterdam included an international audience from NGOs, local government organisations and scientists. The event was a great opportunity to have elaborate discussions with professionals from the field and receive some first-hand knowledge from experts at the forefront of the fight against plastic pollution. [plasticjustice.eu/](https://plasticjustice.eu/) Group

2021 Plastic Justice at the Leiden Law School Leiden University Leiden, Netherlands At the invitation of Leiden University, the Master Non Linear Narrative presented a selection of Plastic Justice research projects from 3 to 13 December 2021. The exhibition was open to non-academic public, on display at the Kamerlingh Onnes Building. The production and exhibition design were executed by Louise Rietvink and Judy Wetters. [plasticjustice.eu/](https://plasticjustice.eu/) Group

## PROJECTS

2022 Gestures of Good Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands [graduation.kabk.nl/2022/paul-mielke](https://graduation.kabk.nl/2022/paul-mielke) Gestures of Good focuses on the wreath as an object at the centre of nationalised acts of commemoration: Performances which are constitutive for Germany's identity, as signifiers of a recurring thematisation of and 'coming to terms' with the past. The project questions whether this 'culture of remembering' is subconsciously reinterpreted as an achievement rather than a duty by German society. A video work composed of a series of historical photographs shows the repetitive nature of these wreath-laying ceremonies to suggest a possible growing indifference towards the individual occasions. The corresponding publication compiles personal memories of affective news imagery and presents details from archival books and magazines to juxtapose hues of German heritage.

## PUBLICATIONS

2022 Facts Not Filters Catalog Royal Academy of Art The Hague Main eds.: Lauren Alexander, Niels Schrader The Hague, Netherlands [www.kabk.nl/projecten/nln-facts-not-filters](https://www.kabk.nl/projecten/nln-facts-not-filters) 'Facts not Filters' was a research collaboration project between the Master Non Linear Narrative Master Non Linear Narrative programme at the Royal Academy of Art, The Hague and Free Press Unlimited held in the academic year 2020-2021. Inspired by case studies highlighting the need for press freedom all around the world, seven (groups of) students examined the complexities of culturally rooted and geographically specific nuances related to regional news reporting and distribution. Their artistic results were diverse works using physical structures, video or audio highlighting media functions and threats press freedom is exposed to.

Herein, National Socialism is considered as an omnipresent setting rather than a closed chapter, still graspable in everyday life, economy, or family history. This collection interrogates the notion of West Germany as 'liberated', as well as the unification of West and East as an alleged redemption moment: A 'finally right', another 'becoming good'.

2022 Put Another Wreath Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands video loop, part of the series of graduation works entitled 'Gestures of Good' Performative remembrance and commemoration occasions are at the centre of Germany's national identity, formally documented by state - institutions. Contemporary political discourse however, while ostensibly still revolving around and thereby often instrumentalising 'learnings from the past', appears fundamentally disjointed from contemporary issues and rarely leaves the national domain. Historical photographs of wreath laying ceremonies between 1945 and today were manually sourced, mainly from the German Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv) and the president's website. Centred around a turning wreath, the animation introduces the prop and intends to make conscious how these occasions function in the nation's external portrayal.

2022 1st of May on Dam Square Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands video, 5:45 min, part of the series of graduation works entitled 'Gestures of Good' Within the year-long cycle of wreath laying ceremonies, specific dates and central memorial sites recur. Other occasions don't fit into or are not deemed worthy of the rehearsed and unquestioned militarist spectacle. There is an anti-fascism that is 'worth remembering' - in a country where 'crimes of the past' can be researched on any corner and which appears naturally short on stories of resistance - ultimately raising the question for whom we are commemorating. ☒The memorial site becomes an inaccessible stage on

which the wreath, momentarily a product of living material, finds its first and last application. The video was recorded on the afternoon of 1st of May at Dam Square in Amsterdam, which functions as one of the main sites of Dodenherdenking (Remembrance of the Dead, 4th of May) and Bevrijdingsdag (Liberation Day, 5th of May). The timing of the performance is based on a wreath laying of Federal President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on 22nd of June, 2021 to commemorate the victims of the German invasion of the Soviet Union 80 years ago.

2022 Left Side Left Blank Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands  
Moiré wreath ribbon, fringes, part of the series of graduation works entitled 'Gestures of Good' Commemoration wreaths include a ribbon in flag colours, even in case the choice of flower colour is not meant to reference anything specific. In presidential use the left side of the ribbon, usually the side of the sender's message, is left blank, presumably to guarantee high versatility. It's "in stock" status speaks of the all-time availability of state grieving (for some) and might at the same time signal a certain indifference to the specific occasion.

2022 Life in the Post – Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands  
publication, RISO comcolor & four-colour print, archival books and magazines, posters, wall hanging, flowers, part of the series of graduation works entitled 'Gestures of Good' The publication and its corresponding collection of materials function as an ongoing tactic to understand how 'remembrance culture' functions – in correlation with a German public's addressing of its history. It intends to make conscious a web of relations, the local conditions and narratives that make possible this conception of and belief in 'good remembrance'. It is based on three groups of assumptions:  
– The notion of business as a neutral actor with a strong contemporary lobby, contradicted by a visualisation of continuities between modern wealth

and use of forced labour or expropriation during the Nazi era (as in the case of BMW) – The shifting self-perception of German society, from a public sphere of the “repressing defeated” to one of the “commemorating liberated”, which is built on an exchange of apology and forgiveness and thus homogenises, neglects and reconsolidates its “victim position” - The portrayal of German unity as a national peace achievement and overcoming of post-war trauma; in reality accompanied by xenophobic outbreaks of violence and nationalist excesses as well as an erasure of the GDR legacy and thus of socialist relations of commemoration

2021 The World We Enter Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands 2-channel video, angled screen setup, 9:55 min The video project 'The World We Enter' investigates and traces the spread of microplastics through air. It connects their behaviour to aeroplankton organisms, such as the nematode. Some of these microscopic organisms are capable of travelling both in a live stage and a state of suspended animation which allows them to withstand hostile conditions and makes them frequently the colonists of barren environments. The video ends on a speculative note, positing the further discovery of a fusion of organic and non-organic material and shows how the proliferation of “aeroplastics” is becoming an increasingly worrying and urgent invisible problem.

2021 Once, back then. Already. Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands "There was this spirit, a vision of a richer, interconnected world in which we would move faster, better, with ease alone. A belief in an evolution, a history progressing in a straight line, no, exponentially. It was beyond our contemporaneous imagination, a curve so steep that we didn't need to explain how it could ever be achieved." The publication is based on a process of tracing and overwriting blurred images from personal memory, mainly from the

late 1990s and early 2000s. It invites the viewer to rediscover continuities and question modes of media rendition that lead to an embedding in collective emotion and memory, as opposed to an affective quality of the seemingly mundane (with their respective local, Western or international validity). The collection of images from news and popular culture, of political figures, consumer goods, toys and other objects simultaneously comments on a contemporary culture of referencing and 'Nostalgia-Bait'.

2021 Retail for Reference Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands  
An ongoing investigation into the manual copying, duplication, recombination, deconstruction and counterfeiting of 'hype' fashion items

2021 Royal Code Royal Academy of Art The Hague The Hague, Netherlands  
The collection, based on panels inspired by the work of Aby Warburg, presents a giant online map of imagery connected to European Royal Families which can be navigated by zooming and toggling filters. These additions (layers) to the images represent investigations into these perfect-to-detail photos and paintings like focusing on a colour palette, shoes or the setup of the portrait, highlighting the referencing and relations of these staged depictions.

2021 Tales, Truths and Territories Free Press Unlimited The Hague  
In collaboration with Erica Gargaglione & Elvi Kleyn, Free Press Unlimited and the pan-Caucasian news platform JAMnews, for Facts Not Filters  
The cooperation began precisely when war broke out again in Nagorno-Karabakh in the Caucasus region on 27 November, 2020. It continued until 19 November and, already during the fighting, it was referred to as a "social media and drone war", being only the latest stage in a conflict deadlocked for decades, with century-old trauma still unleashing its force of agitation. Through our interviews with editor Margarita Akhvlediani and an observation of JAMnews, a local Armenian-,

Azerbaijani-, Georgian-, Russian- and English-language online news platform, we gained detailed insights into the work on the ground. Particularly striking and central to the story was a completely divergent reporting and the resulting “multiple truths” on the belligerent sides, in Azerbaijan and Armenia/Artsakh. The work – unexhibited due to the pandemic – consists of two stacks of ceramics depicting the territorial changes of Nagorno-Karabakh, within a conflict strongly linked to claims of homelands, to territorial gains. They represent the two realities, overlaid with a series of maps of the frontline. These graphics were created using information by JAMnews and an analysis of Twitter channels, the content of which is also visualised in a timeline on the associated website.

2017 Colonial Networks Hochschule Mainz: University of Applied Sciences Mainz, Germany Starting out with a look into the ‘Panama Papers’, the infographic weaving visualises links between the information networks of the colonial era and today’s overseas data connections. Structures of data and capital flow are based on an imperial legacy, at the same time, they allow for monitoring and control of information by institutions of the empires’ successor states. At the end of this examination pointing into many directions of further research, one might ask how “artificial territories”, such as special economic zones, constructed in international waters or as coastal embankments, enable neo-capitalist structures and further complicate legal control.

2016 Flags of Convenience ArtEZ University of the Arts Arnhem The installation deals with the practice of “flagging” in international cargo shipping: a ship can be registered in a country other than the one in which its owners or operators reside. In legal terms, the vessel becomes a kind of national space or moving territory, where different laws apply, making it possible to undermine social and environmental standards. The effects of this tactic are

represented typographically and grouped in three main themes at the bottom of the basin. They refer to the states of Panama, Liberia and the Marshall Islands, some of the main providers of ship registries (more than 39% in terms of worldwide carrying capacity), which has different individual implications for these states and reflects local histories of conflict. Their flag colours are visualised on the water surface but blend into an oily carpet over time.



Gestures of Good, 2022

4-colour Riso print, Comcolor print, digital print, magazines, cut-outs from various sources, dried flowers, cut flowers, straw wreaths, greens, 'Danish' cart for flower trading, Fc 588, Fc 577 and Fc 566 water buckets, Moiré wreath ribbon, fringes, TV sc, variable



Gestures of Good, 2022

4-colour Riso print, Comcolor print, digital print, magazines, cut-outs from various sources, dried flowers, cut flowers, straw wreaths, greens, 'Danish' cart for flower trading, Fc 588, Fc 577 and Fc 566 water buckets, Moiré wreath ribbon, fringes, TV sc, variable



Gestures of Good, 2022

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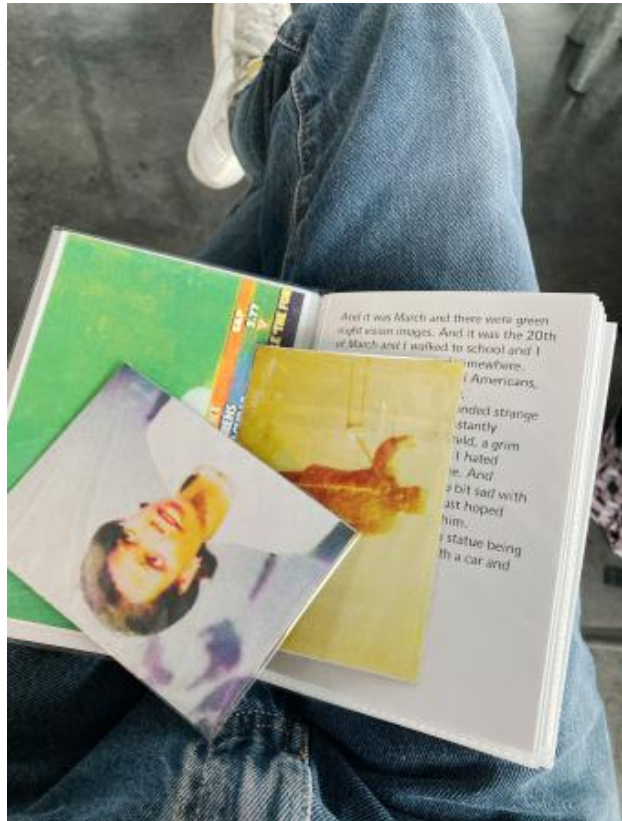




Put Another Wreath, 2022  
video loop, variable



Life in the Post -, 2022  
photo collage, digital print, 1782 × 841 mm



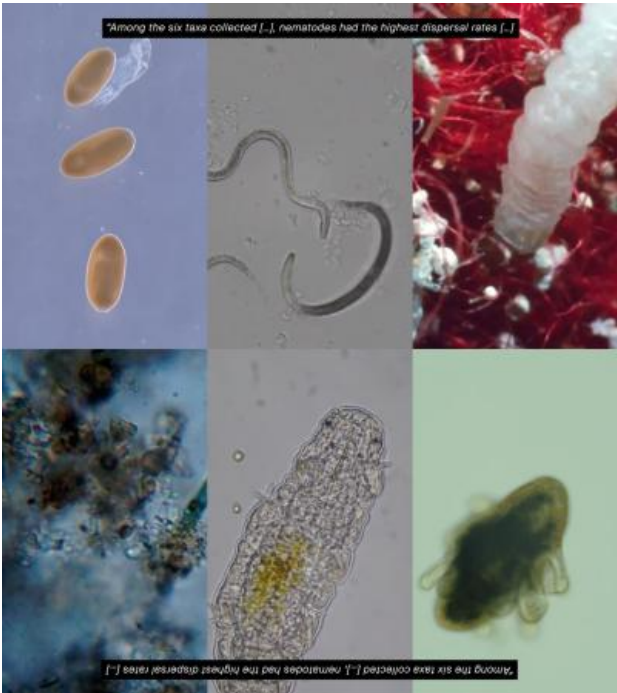
Once, back then. Already, 2021  
4-colour Riso print, digital print, plastic photo book, 150 x 100 x 25 mm



The World We Enter, 2021  
2-channel video, variable, 9:55 min



The World We Enter, 2021  
2-channel video, variable, 9:55 min



The World We Enter, 2021  
2-channel video, variable, 9:55 min