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Where is the creative anger in the Netherlands?

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On June 23, 2018, before dawn, American artist Domenic Esposito placed a giant 400-kilogram steel spoon in front of the doors of the pharmaceutical company Purdue Pharma. The employees of Purdue Pharma had a conscience kicked in that day: the painkiller Oxycontin produced by this company has now led to more than 500,000 opiate deaths in the United States. The 'Purdue Spoon' represented a heroin spoon. Addicts to the painkiller Oxycontin often end up turning to the cheaper heroin or fentanyl, resulting in an overdose. The spoon made the news and the artist - whose brother struggled with a painkiller addiction - had started a 'Spoon Movement'.

More than three months earlier, on March 10, 2018, another artist had also made himself heard. Nan Goldin – herself struggling with an oxycodone addiction – surprised the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York together with about a hundred members of her protest group PAIN (*Prescription Addiction Intervention Now*). They threw numerous empty pill bottles with 'Sackler' on them into the water belonging to an Egyptian temple on display in the 'Sackler Wing'. Then they sank to the ground where they lay like 'corpses', dressed in black. Goldin called on the New York public via Instagram to also participate in this lying down demonstration. She successively focused her artistic protests on various museums worldwide that had accepted money from the Sackler family. The Sacklers are the owners of Purdue Pharma, and like to profile themselves as arts philanthropists, but have long managed to keep their name out of the opioid crisis.

The above examples of artists' actions come from the recently published book *The Painkiller Empire. The secret family history behind the opiate crisis* of investigative journalist Patrick Radden Keefe. It is a courageous and masterful investigative

journalism book about the opiate crisis in the United States and the criminal role of the Sackler family in it. There is a lot of interest in the book about the opiate crisis. I was struck by the way artists moved. The images are powerful, crushing, and effective. It is art that moves you.

Looking at the Netherlands and abuses here - from the Benefits Affair to the housing crisis or the polluting company Tata Steel - I wonder why such art protests do not occur here. Our country has committed artists, very good ones in fact, but their work is usually safely exhibited in art galleries or museums.

Certainly, there are plenty of protests against all kinds of things, but imagination rarely plays a strong role in this - in fact, the imagery is usually poor, sometimes even deformed, such as the pieced together gallows on Dam Square in Amsterdam. Even when the cultural sector is hit hard by government policy, such as the corona crisis, the highest possible protest for creatives seems to be a place at a talk show table.

Is it due to the Dutch emphasis on verbal assertiveness as the most important value for expressing your anger? I think of Spain, of the incomparable 'Flo6x8' movement, in which flamenco artists sing, stomp and dance, taking part in public debates. With 'flamenco mobs' they interrupted parliament and the banking system, among other things. They turn their anger into creativity. And that affects more than the umpteenth angry tweet from this or that artist.

In his beautiful book *The third part of the soul. About thymos*, Hispanicist and philosopher Peter Venmans dusts off the concept of 'thymos' to explain this creative anger. Thymos, coming from Plato, stands next to reason (logos) and desire (eros), and is a militant part of the soul that wants honor and recognition. The resulting anger can turn into destructive violence or powerful creativity.

Of course, it's easy to say, as a columnist from the sidelines, spouting philosophical language to call for more creative anger. After all, the demonstrating artists run a personal risk. Domenic Esposito was arrested, Nan Goldin received intimidating letters from the Sackler family's lawyers. And yet I am eager to see artists who dare more, who also let us experience what art can and can do outside the doors of the theater or museum in these politically turbulent times. Who bids?