EN Winter 2026/27 Nesting Habits #4

SCRUFFY LESBIAN ART

Nest is a space for contemporary art in The Hague. Since its founding in 2008, Nest has dedicated itself to exhibiting, publishing, and discussing the work of artists and thinkers.

AND LIKEMINDED SPIRITS

Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago,
Clem Edwards,
Angelica Falkeling,
Tomi Hilsee, Jojo Knowles,
Natalia (Nika) Sorzano,
Shreya de Souza & Sophie Soobramanien,
Jay Tan

11.12.26–21.2.2027

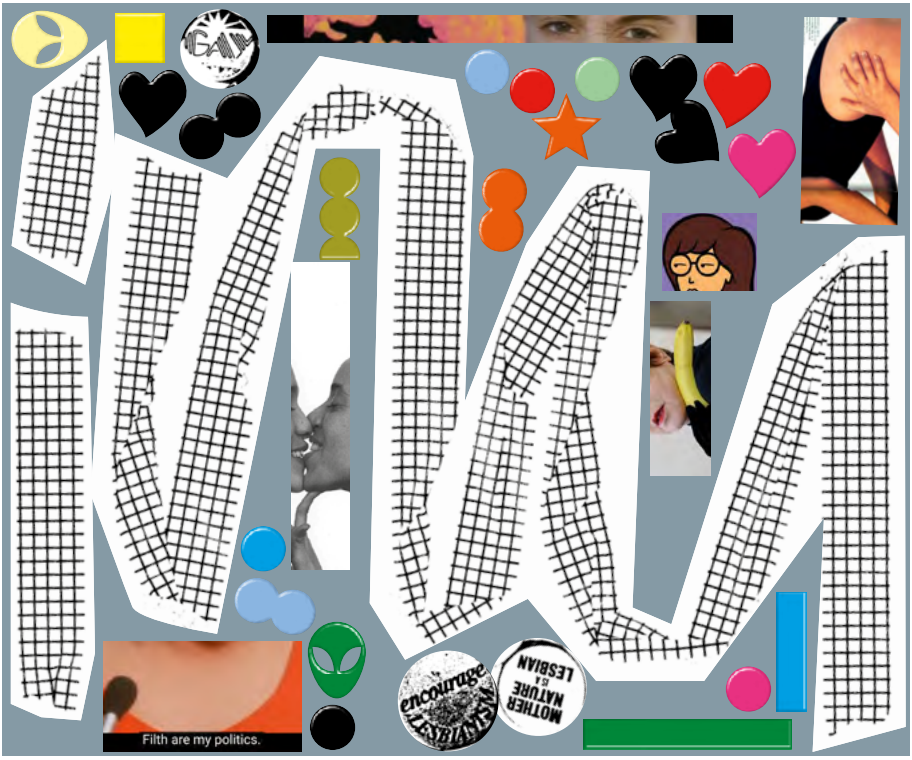
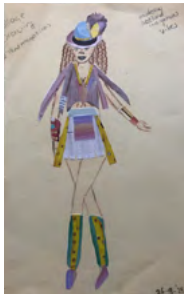


Table of contents

1. **Introduction**
   Laurie Cluitmans

2. **The Scruff, the Nape: the little hairs growing out after being shaved on the back of the neck that, when breathed on, lift in delight**
   Maia Kenney

9. **Scruffy Lesbian Art**
   Clem Edwards, Angelica Falkeling and Natalia (Nika) Sorzano







Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago, *World of Feliz* (sketch), 2025, collage and pencil on paper. Courtesy of the artist.

13. Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago, Clem Edwards
15. Angelica Falkeling
17. Tomi Hilsee, Jojo Knowles
19. Natalia (Nika) Sorzano
21. Shreya de Souza & Sophie Soobramanien
23. Jay Tan

Agenda and colophon

INTRODUCTION

Some time ago, curator Maia Kenney sent us a manifesto: the *Scruffy Lesbian Art Manifesto* (2025), written by Clem Edwards, Angelica Falkeling, and Natalia (Nika) Sorzano. In the text, the three artists reflect on an artistic practice grounded not in perfection or control, but in chance, reuse, tactility, and the everyday. They choose waste over gleaming high-tech surfaces; transience over botox; a riot of color over conceptual minimalism. The more we learned from Maia, Angelica, Clem, and Nika about what "scruffy lesbian art" actually entailed, the more urgent it felt to create this exhibition at Nest. These artists think beyond the tokenism that often lurks within identity-based discourse; instead, they break down boundaries and center the unfinished, the erratic, and the contradictory. Moreover, they recognise this same approach in other artists within their network–and even in historical predecessors – "likeminded spirits" who each work in their own distinct, "scruffy" way.

Manifestos are a means of raising issues, challenging specific norms and conventions in art, and defining a new artistic movement. In the case of *Scruffy Lesbian Art*, however, the aim is emphatically *not* to showcase a new art movement in an exhibition. "Scruffy" refuses to be captured by a system operating according to the rules of canon and capital. *Scruffy Lesbian Art* remains in motion, standing in opposition to the imposed notions of the slick, propriety and straightness, the perfect, and the digital. And in favor of life, of the joy of making and craftsmanship – as they put it: 'that recognises bodies, economies and hands in motion and how these are joined together in collages, performances, installations and sculptures. It thrives on imperfection, not for its own sake but because it is handmade. Taking time with a work yields texture–life has a way of getting in–and that is of high importance to the maker.'

We opened the year at Nest with the exhibition *Urning & Urningin: Language and Desire since 1864* (January–April 2026), curated by Philipp Gufler. While *Urning & Urningin* celebrated the importance of historical networks, intergenerational dialogue, and positive self-identification, *Scruffy Lesbian Art and Likeminded Spirits* forms a distinct network of its own – a 'tapestry of queer art,' as Maia Kenney calls it. *Scruffy Lesbian Art* is not a formalised style; indeed, were it to become one, it would immediately dissolve and reinvent itself to escape the straitjacket of definition. But once you start viewing things through the contagious lens of the manifesto and the work of Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago, Clem Edwards, Angelica Falkeling, Tomi Hilsee, Jojo Knowles, Natalia (Nika) Sorzano, Shreya de Souza & Sophie Soobramanien, and Jay Tan, you can no longer imagine a world without 'scruff.'

Laurie Cluitmans, director Nest

The Scruff, the Nape: the little hairs growing out after being shaved on the back of the neck that, when breathed on, lift in delight

Maia Kenney

Somewhen between February 2025 and today, I read these words: "Eden is like that, so rich in comfort, it tempts me to cause discomfort; I am in a state of constant discomfort and I like this state so much I would like to share it."[1]

And I read these words: "Michelle had nevernever-never been kissed like this. Michelle had always thought that kissing was like coming upon a golden trunk lodged in the ocean floor. She tried to tug it open but never could and this was okay because she still beheld the luminous trunk in all its splendor."[2]

And I exchanged these words on Whatsapp:

Clem **Sooo hot and scuffy and amazing artists we v excite (10:08)**

Clem **We're def open to curator too (10:08)**

Clem **V flex (10:08)**

Clem **We have an idea of six artists ... who u will die for ...!! (10:08)**

Clem **Six to ten (10:09)**

Clem **But also not absoluteky needed – there arent't that many curators that want to fuck with unmarketable lesbians hahaha (10:10)**

Clem **Stopppp (10:10)**

Maia **My application (10:10)**



Clem **U would want to?! (10:10)**

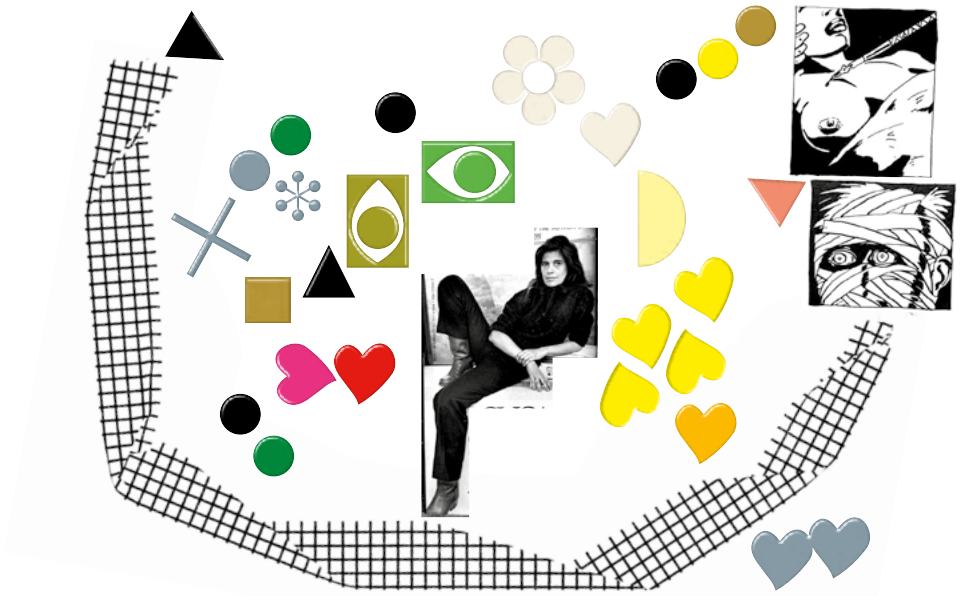
Clem **Fuck with us (10:10)**

Clem **Hahahaah (10:10)**

Maia **I would litcherally die to (10:10)**

Clem **Everyone knows ur a lesbian (10:11)**

Clem **Mate (10:11)**



And I read and reread these words: "We don't need to dominate the material, we don't need to dominate shit', says Natalia (Nika) Sorzano over dinner with Angelica Falkeling and Clem Edwards."[3]

Nika Sorzano speaks the words above as the first sentence of *Scruffy Lesbian Art,* a text she co-wrote with Clem Edwards and Angel Falkeling, and which also gave this exhibition its *raison d'être* and title.[4] These three artists, friends for some time, wrote this text which we eventually agreed was a manifesto to call forth the artistic-political practice they'd identified as scruff.[4] Scruffy lesbian art: a mode of art making that is DIY, that uses imprecision (89º angles, for instance) and wonkiness (tape and visible hot glue) as a precision tool to create a *thing-y* object. It's collective: each work a revolving door of friends, contributors, people who stopped by for coffee and left a stain on the tablecloth that then gets cut out and sewn into a tapestry. And just for the record: the lesbian part is not mandatory, but Scruffy Lesbian Art turns queer and butch and trans sensibilities towards the transformative powers inherent to materials. Scruff refuses to dominate, is yielding and leaky, and also hilarious and abject and sharp-tongued and does not, ever, beat around the bush ;)

Anyways, Clem sent me this steaming-hot manifesto and asked me if I could help the three authors and the mostly Rotterdam-based artists they had identified as scruffy to find a place for it to land. It was very clear to me that a Scruffy Lesbian Art group show would be a riot (*riot,* n.: a hilarious person; a public disturbance or rebellion; a wild display of vibrant color and texture). It needed a space that would take the scruff in – in all its contradictions – and let the artists lead. I immediately asked Nest, which returned to its renovated location at the beginning of this year with the beautiful ode to queerness that was *Urning & Urningin: Language and Desire since 1864* (curated by Philipp Gufler).

I was at the time still very much mourning the idea that my own queerness would forever

be a spring-fed well beneath a rotting wooden plank, weighed down by bricks and overgrown with yellowed grass. Sad! I thought –or maybe hoped – it would be enough for me to dabble in lesbianism by working with these artists and the world they inhabited, and then go home to straightness at the end of each day.

I'm thanking my lucky star chart that this miserable state of yearning was disrupted. And that there was no option for me to dabble, but rather to fledge: to observe, from up close, the evolved (i.e., mutated) form of artistic practice that is Scruffy Lesbian Art as whatever it is that I am came into view. And no option to emulate its practitioners, nor guide them, but rather to just be in a state of transition and recognition ("everyone knows ur a lesbian! / mate") and learning. For the first time, authentically and fully caught up to myself.

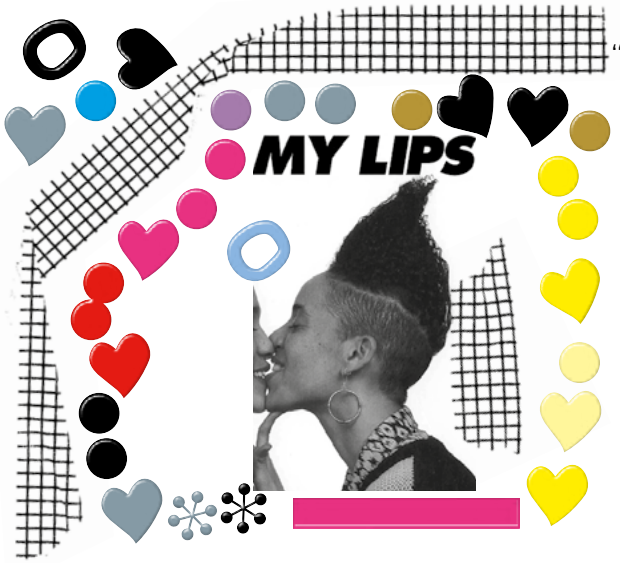
And that's why I began this introduction not with my words but those of others. And why I'm doing something corny like coming out in a curatorial text (who even does that?). Such a rite of passage, though mine to claim, is a drop in the bucket of queerness. And I have not even mastered[5] it, which leaves me in a state of tense pleasure.



Lifelong gardener and writer Jamaica Kincaid again: "Eden is like that, so rich in comfort, it tempts me to cause discomfort; I am in a state of constant discomfort and I like this state so much I would like to share it." They are words I found through a different book called *Unthinking Mastery* by Julietta Singh, which thoroughly parses the word 'master', and examines how its derivatives have penetrated Western culture through language. Yes, she means this as a colonial word of ownership. It's used to exalt people with higher university degrees, with bedrooms in big houses, with jobs in ancient universities, with the power in hetero family structures. To describe a form of domination that cannot be negotiated out of, *except* in kink, which has very strict conditions under which mastery is desired. Left unchecked, it leads to certain things. Most ironically, perhaps, a total lack of knowing.

Back to discomfort, to the tension. To exposing others to one's own feeling of flux and disruption. The complacency of 'Eden' (in Kincaid's case: literal paradisiacal gardens; in ours: the neoliberal logic of comfy existence) cannot tolerate a state of awkward unwieldiness and uncertainty. It is this state, which can be bodily or social, or material or economic or political, which begs to be shared somehow.
I think that the scruffy artist is one who recognizes in their own eagerness for discomfort a path to making. They do not seek to lighten their burdens, but to share in others', to create kinship through resistance to society's insidious embracing of mastery.

But how does scruffiness work, then?
If you've ever been foraging, say, mushroom picking, there is this moment when your eyes suddenly adjust to the forest floor. It goes from barren and crackly to lush and full of edible fungi. Looking for scruff is very rewarding, because you really do start seeing it in many forms. I'm kinda proud of this metaphor, so to take it a little farther:
I grew up spending summers in Poland, in the poorest region of the country, where there are colossal monocrop pine plantations used for logging. Over the thirty years since my grandparents moved to that



region from the city, the planting and harvesting of these 'forests' has decimated the soil that nurtured mycelial networks, perennial wild blueberry bushes, native medicinal herbs, and thereby the beings that thrived there. Once they teemed with food and eaters. Now they are silent, except in the tiny patches of old growth oak that have survived along the borders of various companies' holdings.

But scruff sees the whole forest as not just a dead zone. It re-enchants even the most abject, dried out husk of a place, reading loss as a story of many paths. While the discerning artist might pick just the edible berry, the scruffy one bypasses the berry for the seed that passed through a digestive tract or that didn't germinate or is waiting to when the logging goes away. It's a way of working with material – any material really – that recognizes its aliveness.

What I love about scruff is how funny it is. Clem, Nika and Angel: "alongside DIY solutions and everyday materials, scruffy lesbian art enacts humour and joy that is highly pleasurable for an audience to experience but is sometimes misread as *just for fun.* Playfulness is a strategy scruffy lesbian artists use as an invitation to talk business." Memes, naughty jokes, dorky gags, lesbian insider lore fluff you.[6] Humor is a disarming tool: it works to entrance you; it lowers your guard to force you into a dance of implication. You're laughing, but now you're also in the shit.

Scruffy lesbian artists "are highly knowledgeable on the ethics of material practice and the geographies that their materials have travelled. They don't deny their willingness to *buy* an art material, nor do they gloss over the contradictions of that willingness in order to be assimilated into the market. Political purity is a conceit, and they know it." This is, again, not intended to be a comforting thought, as in, "oh, all material is of equal value", or "so does that mean I have a carte blanche to use store-bought reels of 3D printing plastic and Styrofoam?". Well, no, but you can use them – preciousness about materials is not scruffy. I think probably the only cardinal rule set out by the scruffy artist is that you can't outsource your making process.

Every artwork – and even the exhibition design – in *Scruffy Lesbian Art and Likeminded Spirits* folds together through the ways of working I've described. Some thematic fascinations recur as a guide through the show and



influenced the selection of artists. You're invited in by a massive tapestry by Angelica Falkeling, depicting friends at a dinner party some time back; some of the artists in the show were there.

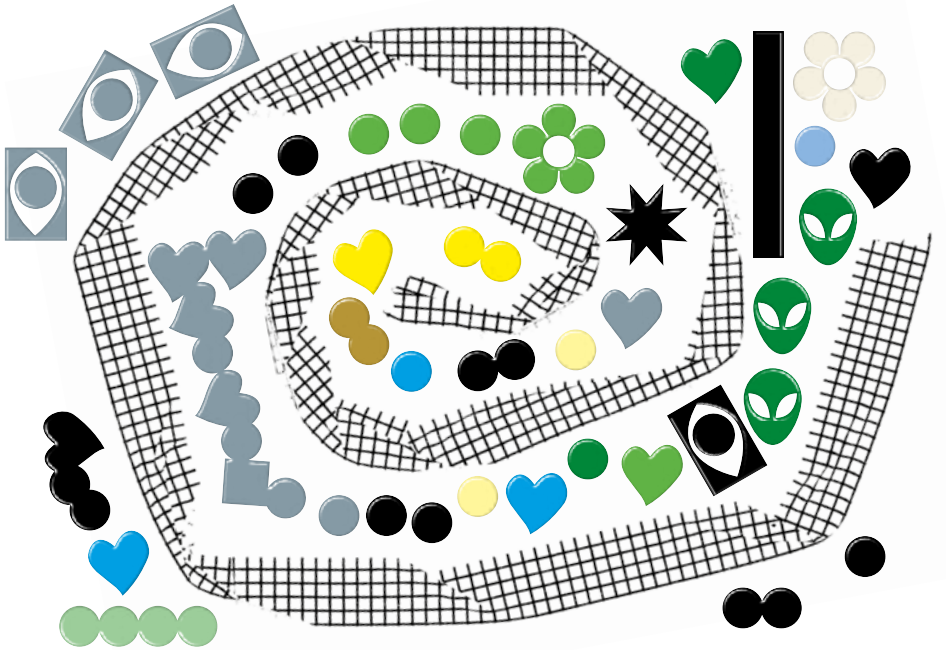
First a love for animals. That's simply expressed in Angelica's drawings of her dog, Fifi, whom the share with curator Kris Dittel, having adventures around Rotterdam. And complex and painful in Jojo Knowles' de-Disney-fication of the dolphins, exposing their forced involvement in military maneuvers by the United States, Russia, Israel, Ukraine... And transitional and sexy in Nika Sorzano's *Swampy Yearnings*, where homosexuality and nonbinarism in animals turns a swamp into a cruising spot.

Scruffy techniques abound, and an overall unruly material kinship comes slinking up as a fascination with contested places and infrastructures. For example, wending through the space are five sewage drains by Clem Edwards, who casts little worlds and jokes onto manholes and grates in fine bronze, replete with tiny dots of bronze sand. Jay Tan's world is inhabited by digestive biscuits trying to make sense of human systems. Meanwhile a film and set from frequent collaborators Sophie Soobramanien and Shreya da Souza zeroes in on the artists as scruffed subjects to show the process of making art. More desire to see the self comes through in Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago's world, an absolute riot of self portraits in the form of dolls dressed to the teeth. And plain-faced erotic desire is there – Angelica's knitted strap ons make it clear that sex is lesbian and needed too.

All these works are enclosed under one sky made by Tomi Hilsee, a designer and DIY builder from Rotterdam, who translated scruffy processes into a drop ceiling made of materials found on the streets and at Nest from old exhibitions. They disrupt the grid of the Nest space, while at the same time creating a bridge between unruly artworks and an art institution. Which brings me to my last points and circles to the discomfort I wanted to embrace throughout the making of this show.

Scruff is an expansive mode that spreads amongst artists and makers backwards and sideways; it has not been formally defined by art historians or institution-backed curators (the usual authorities); and it has many more practitioners in its ranks than Nest has room for. What is the nature of an exhibition that comes from a brand new manifesto? Whose participant artists are used to co-organizing scrappy shows in shared studios or even the occasional bathroom? The artists participating were wary of representing a group or a movement, and it's antithetical to scruff as it is to any DIY movement to have a formalized definition, or worse: a canon, anyway. It's therefore a loose smattering, this show, with many more artists and thinkers not included than are participating.

Throughout the process, every conversation I would have with one of the artists would involve them running over to their bookshelf to pull something down to show me. Or they would refer to some Gaunt (gay aunt) who informs their work or makes them think along complex political-scruffy axes. Obviously not only scruffy artists do this, but I bring it up because, again, these are not practices that are known to have continuity, longevity, legacy. And yet in the spirit of queer kinship, each of the artists are transparently



beholden to the ones who came before, lesbian or no. Artists like Til Brugman and Hannah Höch (who sapphic-shacked up in The Hague one hundred years ago), the entire community of Papaya Kuir (with whom Nika has been working for years), Divine (my personal lodestar), Adrian Piper. Valerie Solanas, Alice Sparkly Kat, Theo Cuthand. Monique Wittig, Sylvia Wynter, Jackie Wang, Sophie Lewis, Kris Dittel.

Beyond the usual practice of putting books on a shelf, how to bring these Gaunts in, to show the continuity of this mode, which has always existed as a footnoted, DIY movement that is not properly archived or acknowledged? I think this is something for another exhibition, an expanded scruff retrospective where the contributions of the artists' scruffy Gaunts are proudly displayed. Where this whirlwind story, and the curatorial methods that me and my dear curatorial collaborator Eva Burgering needed to employ to keep up with it, can really land.

Finally, to Nest and its endlessly generous team – Eva, Laurie, Zoë, Amy, Odine, Ana, Tobias, Amit – and the stars in its constellation (Bart, Quiller, Gitte, Eirini, Boris, Josef, Maarten): thank you for joyously letting scruff take over the space, for letting it get freaky. But also for helping repair the tapestry of queer art, one patch at a time.

Baby gay out—

1. Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden (Book)*. Straus and Giroux, 1999.

2. Michelle Tea, *Black Wave*, excerpted in *The Material Kinship Reader*, ed. Kris Dittel and Clem Edwards (Eindhoven: Onomatopee, 2022/25), 142-143.

3. Natalia (Nika) Sorzano, Clem Edwards and Angelica Falkeling, "Scruffy Lesbian Art [Manifesto]", 2025.

4. Now's a good moment to dog-ear this text and go read the manifesto. Come back when you're ready.

5. Julietta Singh, *Unthinking Mastery* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2018).

6. Porn term sorry.



‘We don’t need to dominate the material, we don’t need to dominate shit,’ says Natalia (Nika) Sorzano over dinner with Angelica Falkeling and Clem Edwards.

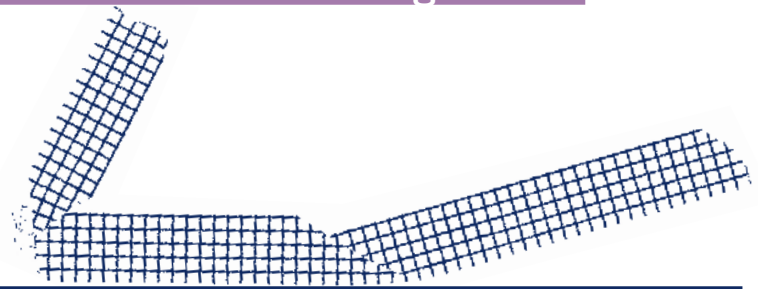
We are discussing how to articulate the aesthetics we call Scruffy Lesbian Art.

SCRUFFY LESBIAN ART,
by Clem Edwards, Angelica Falkeling and Natalia (Nika) Sorzano

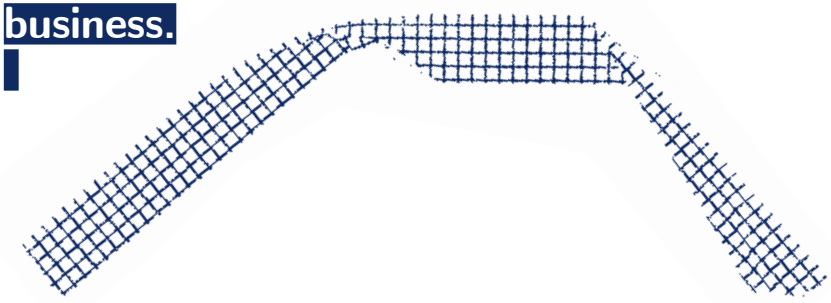
We know that Scruffy Lesbian Art may appear unfinished, partially broken, shredded, messy, dirty, slanted, stained, rusty or off-kilter. Straight lines, sharp angles and symmetry are absent and wobbly lines, 85 degree corners and asymmetry reign supreme.

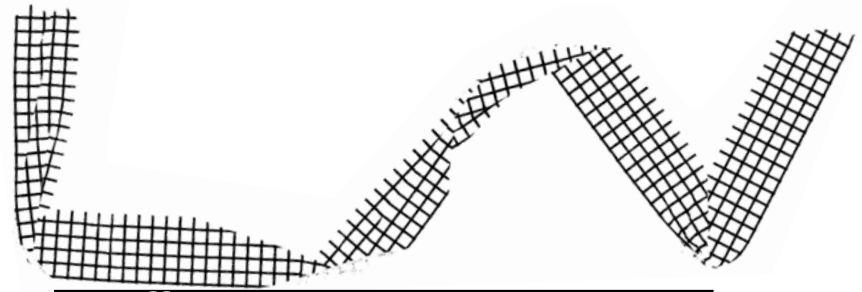
Scruffy Lesbian Art is a way of working with the material world in one’s art-making that recognises bodies, economies and hands in motion and how these are joined together in collages, performances, installations and sculptures. It thrives on imperfection, not for its own sake but because it is handmade. Taking time with a work yields texture – life has a way of getting in – and that is of high importance to the maker.

Scruff artists tell stories spatially. Combining the autobiographical and fictional, they build universes and scenarios. Soldering and sticky tape are both legitimate options. The scruff artist draws stick lines on the large stick to emphasise its stick-ness, they glue the dead fly from the studio to the found plastic comb because it looks pretty, and they spend 8 months recreating a photo of their friends as a massive tapestry just because it was a fun night out.



Alongside DIY solutions and everyday materials, scruffy lesbian art enacts humour and joy that is highly pleasurable for an audience to experience but is sometimes misread as just for fun. Playfulness is a strategy scruffy lesbian artists use as an invitation to talk business.





Scruffy lesbian artists are against mastery and domination. They make excellent researchers, and are highly knowledgeable on the ethics of material practice and the geographies that their materials have travelled. They don't deny their willingness to buy an art material, nor do they gloss over the contradictions of that willingness in order to be assimilated into the market. Political purity is a conceit, and they know it.



Desire, a gravitational pull or drive, brings these artists into contact with the fragilities and strengths of their materials – and with life – highlighting the materials' influence over bodies, movement and space. Just as the material expresses its desired or naturalised form, it is conversely shaped by the impressions of bodies, spaces and, ultimately, other matter.

Contrasting materials are brought together, cement on textile, for instance. Less obviously, dog hair becomes a painting's frame and door knobs dangle with acrylic nails. Like queerness, such formal and textual patchworking pulls from different aesthetic meanings and associations to create non-normative connections. These connections subvert received ideas of gender, sexuality and desire.

Scruffy Lesbian Art embraces the abject and the irrelevant. Dusty corners of a room and cigarette butts from the streets are delighted in. Old works and ideas are re-ignited to take new lives, (dis)identities and representations. And Scruffy Lesbian Art welcomes the audience to performatively use their body – to kneel down or crane upwards, to touch, crouch and zoom in to establish new connections between the works and our senses.

Scruffy Lesbian Art is an invitation to come in closer and appreciate what nourishes us. Since grief, joy, pain and love are all part of life – and so is art.

On pp. 13–23 **Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago, Clem Edwards, Angelica Falkeling, Tomi Hilsee, Jojo Knowles, Natalia (Nika) Sorzano, Shreya de Souza & Sophie Soobramanien, Jay Tan**



Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago, *World of Feliz: The Parade of Unity*, 2026, pencil on paper. Courtesy of the artist.



Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago, *World of Feliz: Confidence*, 2026, paint and glitter on canvas. Courtesy of the artist.



Clem Edwards, studio photo, 2026. Courtesy of the artist.



Clem Edwards, studio photo, 2026. Courtesy of the artist.



The work of Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago is an ongoing journey where she translates personal experiences, her Colombian roots, the Muisca rebel goddess Huitaca, sexuality, and self-discovery into form, color, and performance. What began as darkness and pain transforms into something vibrant and powerful: art as healing, a testimony, and a celebration of who she is. What you see in the exhibition is the *World of Feliz*. It's her brand and a universe of co-existence with herself. Born as her graduation project from Rietveld Academy's Fashion department, *World of Feliz* is hot as wildfire right now. Her designs for head to toe looks are at queer festivals and runways, strutting thru Amsterdam. And here at Nest is this world's expansion pack, a dizzying series of self portraits, each a version of Feliz Aaliyah that make up who she is.

Her self-portraits burst forth from drawings, sketches, stories, cardboard and silkscreen into little handsewn dolls Barbies, 3-D printed figurines and clay sculptures. Some broken, some unfinished, some still a sketch. Some silkscreened along with family photos and pics of 90s R&B angels (Aaliyah!) onto the beautiful laces and fabrics she finds and refashions herself.

Working intuitively with second-hand and sustainable materials, Feliz Aaliyah transforms vulnerability into resilience, ritual, and living expressions of identity. Her work is a celebration of self-acceptance: "The courage to be who I am, in my own way, in my own world."

Artist and writer Clem Edwards is attracted to functional, everyday items: hardware and fittings, trash and natural debris, and to text fragments such as memes and lines of poetry. Their intricate, often tiny handmade sculptures are enchanting by design, drawing you in to look and wonder. Until you realise that the enchantment is a trap, a way of drawing your attention to the materials and systems that hold our worlds up.

For Clem, working with materials also means recognising our mutual implication. Used plastic, metal, wood and found objects can generate something new, while also exposing how closely we remain connected to labour extraction, environmental destruction and gendered and racialised violence. This tension runs through their interest in infrastructure: the mass-manufactured objects and hidden systems that keep our cities running.

What does infrastructure make disappear? When everything works as it should, sewage, water and waste vanish, safely categorised and processed beneath our feet. But we are only one blockage away from noticing the pipes and grates... And the floodwater, the fatbergs, the wedding rings and alligators, and sometimes the shit. At Nest, Clem presents a new work of five bronze-cast wastewater drains and sewage grates, based on standard measurements of drains they discovered in the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK. Jokes and found materials adorn these objects that, deliberately, do not function. One drain is encircled by a small stone wall that blocks the flow of water; on another, an abandoned beach scene unfolds, complete with bronze sand and lounge chairs. Clem uses jewellery techniques including lost-wax casting, engraving and stone setting, denying the grates of their usefulness and turning them into



Angelica Falkeling, sketch for *Halloween Party Tapestry*, 2026. Courtesy of the artist.

objects of pure ornament. They are twinkling medallions, perhaps a nod to Paris' Art Nouveau bronze and cast iron infrastructural elements like lamp posts, grates and metro arches. Again, the enchantment invites you in to look closer – until your nose wrinkles in inadvertent disgust. Is that an anus?

Angelica Falkeling was born into a working-class family, where moving towards a different life meant leaving parts of their rural and working-class heritage behind. In their work, they imagine what the folklore and visual language of this forgotten world might have looked like if it had been passed down rather than lost. Angelica has a background as a seamstress and tailor. Textile craft techniques are the ground from which their spatial collages and installations grow: patchwork, knitting, embroidery, tailoring, dyeing. Fibre arts are for Angelica a decorative, material and relational practice, so they often collaborate with others and host events in communal spaces. Angelica collaborated with Kris Dittel on *Life With Fifi*, an all-ages book that explores a single day in the life of their co-guardianed Pomeranian-Chihuahua mix, Fifi. Two drawings from the book are shown at Nest, presented in handmade textile frames: *Fifi Drops into the Canal* and *Shoarma Queen*, in which Fifi visits the popular snack bar Jaffa in Rotterdam.

In their practice they connect vulnerability, hard and soft materials, and skilled and unskilled labor as joint sequences in their installations. A good example of this is the many-metre-wide wall hanging *Halloween Party*. After a convivial evening with friends, Angelica spent months–spread over years–recreating a photo of the scene in a knitted collage. A few of these friends are also showing work in *Scruffy Lesbian Art,* but we won't tell you who... Angelica enjoys regularly learning new skills, to support themself as an artist, but also to avoid becoming an artist-as-outsourcing middleman. They use DIY-aesthetics, cable ties and plastic recycling techniques to develop methods that solve problems on-site and in exhibition settings. For example, with Nest's installation team, Angelica made new metal stands to hoist their strap on sculptures and flesh them out into the space.

Tomi Hilsee is a friendly neighbourhood architect who likes to cram as much love into a situation as possible. Their work moves between art, architecture and building, and is interested in the relationships that allow us to make things together. Rather than starting with the question of what to build, Tomi is more interested in how we build: how bodies, materials, responsibilities, politics and affections come together to shape a space. A choreography of paying attention, if you like.

For *Scruffy Lesbian Art*, Tomi, a friend, collaborator and fellow Rotterdammer of some of the artists, is constructing a *scruffy ceiling* that invites us into a world of scruffiness. The drop ceiling is made entirely from found materials: materials from old Nest exhibitions that were left in storage, as well as construction waste found on the street. It also brings together materials and spatial ideas from Nest's previous exhibition, *Creation Myths and Other Beginnings*, designed by Zoë Hollander. In this approach, materials are neither thrown away nor simply treated as raw materials. Instead, they become



Tomi Hilsee, design for *Party Office for the Political Party for the Potato* at W139 in Amsterdam. Courtesy of the artist.



Jojo Knowles, *Cetacean Intelligence Mission*, 2026, sublimation printed beach chairs. Images from the collection of the United States Navy Marine Mammal Program. Courtesy of the artist.

part of the group of artworks that have gathered and taken up residence inside Nest.

Although built through improvisation, the ceiling grid asks to be taken seriously with its clear rhythm and structure. But at the same time, it refuses to be a boring 'recuperation' of play and reuse. The ceiling, made by Tomi and Nest's technical team, holds and connects the artworks, while allowing them to exist in their own way beneath the scruffy sky.

The structure is based on the idea of "something that guides you but without an arc". This comes from the support and conversations shared with friends (and newly made artistic co-conspirators) which have shaped the way the structure was made. These ideas, and the way material relates to one another, reflect a shared understanding: however silly they may sometimes be, the people involved have a lot of ideas about how to live in the world in an ethical way. The result is a space with its own spatial language. It feels less like a polished architectural solution and more like a generous invitation to make do with what is there, connect things and figure it out together.

Jojo Knowles uses humor and emotion in her work to scrutinize taught frameworks of discrimination and exploitation. An important concept for her is the abject, which in her work is often expressed in disgust as a political force against patterns of discrimination. She looks for that which makes us (humans in Western societies) "disgusting" in order to foster empathy... Can we be de-domesticated as we try to mend the relationships we have created with domesticated animals?

She also asks this question in her latest work, *Cetacean Intelligence Mission*. Jojo wonders what it means to use (marine) mammals for human warfare and traces the folklore-ish reality of military dolphins. Used in Navy warfare since the 1950s, the United States Navy Marine Mammal Program started when the US-American Navy was studying dolphins for torpedo engineering. When they noticed all the other abilities of these sea creatures, notably their echolocation and exceptionally acrobatic swimming, they started training them for warfare. Dolphins and sea lions are to this day trained to hunt for drones, detect and mark sea mines, guard harbors and ships, handcuff enemies and hunt for equipment. They are allegedly even used for suicide strikes using strapped on mines. They are trained through the withholding of fish and positive reinforcement by feeding. The official US Navy website states: "The animals are natural hunters, we just change what they're hunting for. "To this day, humans have not been able to create sonar technology that matches the level of dolphin echolocation. Technology is in other words no match for nature, until we, in true human spirit, start exploiting it to pillage and attack. Jojo's installation turns this whole absurd tale on its head, approaching the topic as if through dream logic. Semi-mystical, semi-classified, semi-pugilistic: what are the dolphins doing out there? Do they know they're at war?

Natalia (Nika) Sorzano transforms everyday mass-produced objects and found materials into artworks and installations featuring songs and performance-to-videos. Working in the realm of the fantastic and the macabre, she creates hand-built, sensory environments that explore



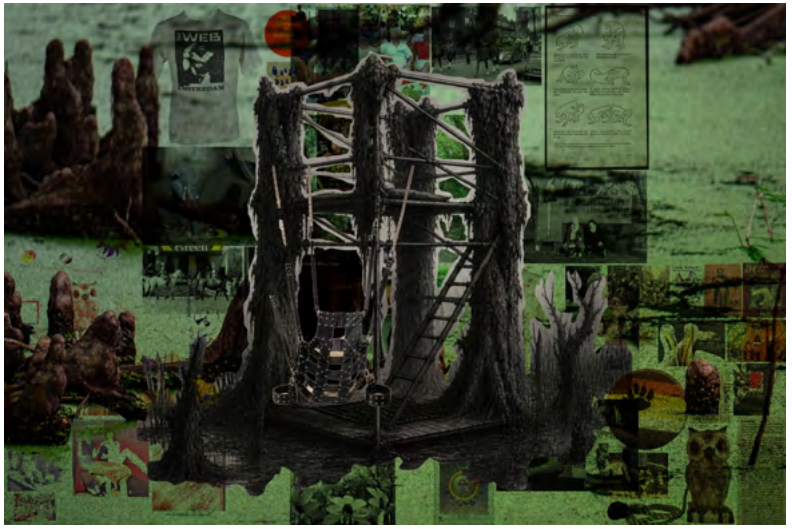
Jojo Knowles, *LA Party Goats* (sketch), 2026, crayon on paper. Courtesy of the artist.



Jojo Knowles, *Cetacean Intelligence Mission* (sketch), 2026, crayon on paper. Courtesy of the artist.



Jojo Knowles, *Cetacean Intelligence Mission* (studio shot), 2026, photo. Courtesy of the artist.



Natalia (Nika) Sorzano, sketch for *Swamp Yearnings*, 2026. Courtesy of the artist.

desire, identity and repressed violence, while questioning what is considered deviant or 'unnatural'.

Swamp Yearnings is a swampy wetland installation centred on outcast sex stories, drawing on local plants and animals as well as archival traces of queer cruising culture. It's born from Sorzano's previous work *El Hombre Caimán* (*Alligator Man*), an installation honoring the mythic experience of gender transition. The project, which centered on Patri, a friend and artistic collaborator from the collective Papaya Kuir, already touched briefly on the nature of queerness in animals and plants. Now, Nika digs into further into this research with archival investigation into lesbian and queer cultures at IHLIA in Amsterdam and fieldwork at Dutch zoos and natural history museums (Blijdorp Zoo in Rotterdam, ARTIS in Amsterdam and Naturalis in Leiden) to learn about the animals and plants that deviate from binary heteronormative kinships and sex. Blijdorp has records of gay penguins, flamingos and vultures, and homes an intersex lobster; ARTIS has a series of reports on same-sex pairing and breeding behavior in over 1,500 species; and Naturalis has a gallery dedicated to procreation and kinship in nature.

In *Swamp Yearnings*, trees bearded with mosses and mottled colors hold transformed archival findings: leather, metal, lube, textures, and imagery from queer and lesbian cultural memory in prints on fabric, collage, and layered sculptural forms. Central to this thinking is the abject: queerness has historically been cast as unnatural, opposed to what is deemed correct or normative. Queer archives therefore hold many stories of people living under the shadows, underground, desiring in the margins: invisibility as a condition of the outcast. The swamp holds a similar quality: murky, dark, a place where things happen unnoticed.

In their work, Shreya de Souza is interested in how knowledge is made and shared, how communities are built, and the freedom, disobedience and inclusivity that queer ways of being can offer. Sophie Soobramanien works with video, installation, writing and research. She is driven by a desire to learn from the people around her her and to rethink personal and shared beliefs that have been shaped and worn down by imperial, hyper-capitalist and white supremacist systems.

Using tools and tactics from the *Scruffy Lesbian Art Manifesto* (see p. 9), Sophie and Shreya collaborate on a video installation that muses on these tactics and connect them to their lives as artists. Dangle, stain, crumple, cite, patch: these words become starting points for videos, papier-mâché objects and textile scenography. By remaking and reusing earlier works, collected research and videos, they create something that celebrates their working relationship and the way they work together.

For both Shreya and Sophie, scruff is evidence of this relation. Being callous and clumsy is intentional: it shows how art making can be a stumbling and clunky process. By embracing whimsy and mistakes, which are often seen as unproductive and inefficient under late stage capitalism, they want to enjoy the process of making art and explore how production value can be 'unserious' and fun. This also means thinking about how those with the most financial capital often get to



Shreya de Souza & Sophie Soobramanien, collage of images of *Bread Buffets*, previous work-in-progress videos and the book *Alien Daughters Walk Into the Sun* by Jackie Wang. Courtesy of the artists.

decide what looks good, what has value, and what counts as 'high production value'. *Scruff Buffet* instead explores a way of seeing that is different from production value in the traditional sense. Scruff can be made backstage, without large grants or major institutional funding.

Sophie Sometimes when I'm making a film, I'm intentionally making decisions against what I've actively learnt and been taught makes a 'shiny film'.

Shreya What's a shiny film?

Sophie I guess I feel and see the increasing pressure and drive to smooth everything out, to erase failure, human touch, remove the traces and evidence of something having been made in the first place. It feels necessary to resist this.

Shreya So we're making a calloused film. Something bulbous and blotchy.

Jay Tan makes sculptures and installations with a focus on domestic mechanics and decoration. Their installations combine everyday materials with recontextualized personal and pop cultural references. Figurines of media personalities and biscuits, low-res video, moving parts and DIY crafts combine into a decorative language Jay calls "Aesthetic Rubble". This language helps them process the feelings that arise as they try to learn about large systems of knowledge, like Chinese religious practices, pensions, health care and taxes.

Biscuits' Day Out is a series of miniature landscapes bringing together Jay's previous installations and models for future works. Everything has been reduced to biscuit scale and transformed into dreamlike versions of contested places: places in which political and social tensions have become commonplace and taken for granted. Pedestals support small scenes depicting in these places: care homes, airport duty free stores, and fences for lovers, and a bridge that leads to a diorama of the artist's apartment balcony. A compression of scale produces interacting realities as these works also double as a site for votive offerings. Previously, Jay's digestive biscuits were usually working pretty hard welding a pipeline, or dutifully climbing a mountain for pilgrimage. This time the biscuits are busy art connoisseurs or just out on a day off.



Jay Tan, *Pension Planning*, 2024. Photo: Gunnar Meier. Courtesy of the artist.



Gulong Gorge Glass Bridge, Qingyuan, China.





"The *Scruffy Lesbian Art* manifesto resonates with me and makes me wonder how the design of this issue of *Nesting Habits* should be affected by it. Although I have often found inspiration in anything intuitively-made looking, ultimately my interpretations are strictly executed with an assumed calculated randomness. Not being unable to leave decisions to chance reveals a tension between DIY aesthetics and a desire to showcase other conventions of graphic design. I asked the curator and artists to share with me a folder of images, lesbian pics, queer bait ladies, real butches and filthy mouths. The photographic images and stickers in the margins of this booklet are supposed to look as if placed wildly. However, all have a behaviour of their own, a light conceptual placing, so to speak.

Here's how, from cover to back: Cover The stickers wrap around the tape structure and title typography. Some create soothing or logical colour combos, whereas others are supposed to feel colored in randomly (which is nonsense of course). When cluttered together some stickers have adapted each other's color. Inside cover The stickers here are lined up in between the images behaving like words in a sentence, acting like a code, a secret language or morse code. Page 3 The stickers here attempt to look like a face from a Picasso painting. The pink and red heart are a mouth, the eye logos eyes, of course. Then, a cluster of silly yellow hearts interfere with that idea and makes it look bananas.

Page 5 Here, the stickers are placed like in teenage scrapbooks, adorning a funny picture or a statement of love/crush/I ❤️ Sean Mendez and he ❤️ me, or so... Page 6 The few stickers here are acting up wildly, like logos at the bottom of a piece of graphic design. Page 7 Stickers attempting to look like a snail. Page 8 The stickers pretend to act like a solid structure but are being interrupted by the Mickey Mouse and Bic mascotte icons. The structure aims to provide a wobbly home for the images underneath. Page 13-23 The stickers on these pages are aligned neatly, more so than on all the other arrangements up til now. They're rather stylized and can be categorized easily. The first one's rather cool, the next one is "Rainbow". The one on page 17 is also "Cool". The next one is "Evil". The one on page 21 I call "Fancy Dennis", after a Dennis from my highschool who'd often dress in sporty brands in colors like these (the Nineties). The last one on page 23 is "Techno Hippie". The stickers in black dividing the artist works are attempting to contradict the colorful rows of their opposing pages and add a sense of authority and structure. The stickers on the back cover are supposed to feel like leftovers; the ones you don't like. Like raisins after eating a bag of mixed nuts, or the apple flavoured green sweets when all the other orange, lemon, cherry and strawberry-flavoured were tasting much better." – Bart de Baets

Agenda Winter 2026/2027



VERWEND NEST

Free workshops for children aged 7–12

16 December, 13:30-15:00

13 January, 13:30-15:00

10 February, 13:30-15:00

Jojo Knowles makes art about bodies, nature, animals and all the things we find a little bit gross or strange. With humour, Jojo explores why we see some things as normal and others as weird. During the Verwend Nest workshops with Jojo, we give the things people see as strange, gross or uncomfortable a place in an artwork. We might, for example, make cutlery covered in human or animal skin, complete with hair and nails. We might also build a house covered in spots. During these workshops, your imagination can go in any direction: nothing is too weird!

AND OTHER STORIES

Wednesday Night Talks

Dates: 13 January and 3 February from 17:00 – 21:00

Every month, Nest invites an artist from the exhibition to talk about their work and share their favorite obsession, source of inspiration, or reference with the public.

FINISSAGE

21 February 14:00 – 17:00

For more information, visit the Nest website.

Colophon

This publication was initiated by Nest, space for contemporary art, on the occasion of the exhibition *Scruffy Lesbian Art and Likeminded Spirits* from 11 December 2026 to 21 February 2027.

www.nestruimte.nl

GUEST CURATOR
Maia Kenney

FOREWORD
Laurie Cluitmans

ESSAY
Maia Kenney

MANIFESTO
Clem Edwards, Angelica Falkeling and Natalia (Nika) Sorzano

FINAL EDITING
Gitte de Beijer, Eva Burgering and Maia Kenney

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Bart de Baets

DESIGN ASSISTANCE
Alex Rainer

FONTS
Offkey, Bureau Bernklau, St. Gallen CMU Sans Serif, Arial (Black)

PRINTING
Drukkerij Zoeterhage, Zoetermeer

This publication was made possible through the support of: Mondriaan Fund, Municipality of The Hague, Cultuurfonds Zuid-Holland and Fonds 21.

ARTISTS
Feliz Aaliyah Sánchez Buitrago, Clem Edwards, Angelica Falkeling, Tomi Hilsee, Jojo Knowles, Natalia (Nika) Sorzano, Shreya de Souza & Sophie Soobramanien and Jay Tan.

TEAM NEST
Amit Akbar (business manager), Gitte de Beijer (intern), Josef Braumann (technician), Eva Burgering (curator), Odine Burghouwt (education), Laurie Cluitmans (general director), Ana Francisca Costa (office management), Eirini Grammatikaki (intern), Carlo Hoekerd (host), Zoë Hollander (marketing and communication), Maarten Keus (technician), Jojo Knowles (host), Tobias Lengkeek (technician), Amy Mansveld (production), Boris Steiner (technician).

© 2026, Nest, The Hague.

RUIMTE VOOR KUNST
De C. Rebecqueplein 20b
2518 RA The Hague
The Netherlands
+31 70 3653186
www.nestruimte.nl
info@nestruimte.nl

OPENING HOURS DURING THE EXHIBITION
Thu – Fr 12:00 – 19:00
Sat 13:00 – 20:00
Sun 13:00 – 18:00

NEST IS CLOSED ON
December 24, 25, and 26
December 31
New Year's Day

Den Haag
mondriaan fonds
het cultuurfonds
FONDS 21