



Disengaging Culturalism: Artistic Strategies of Young Muslims in The Netherlands

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English Summary

In this dissertation I examine how young Muslims in the Netherlands engage in artistic strategies that disengage from the culturalist logic of the Dutch dominant integration discourse. I investigate artistic production of young Muslims in the Netherlands from two main perspectives, as an exit strategy from the dominant discourse and as a process of authorship that yields emerging subjectivities. In relation to the first perspective, I show that exit strategies appear in two main guises: volatile and stable. Artworks that attempt to opt out of the dominant discourse, but that show symbols and themes whose meaning has become overdetermined in the dominant discourse present more volatile forms of exit, while artworks that stay away from any images and themes that can be brought into connection with culturalist logic perform a stable exit. While volatile forms of exit are susceptible to being made legible within the culturalist logic of the dominant discourse and thus to be incorporated within it, stable forms of exit resist this kind of incorporation, although this limits their potential to effect a form of political emancipation. Stable forms of exit often remain ignored within artistic institutions precisely because they are not legible in relation to the dominant discourse.

The political efficacy of artistic work that performs a strategy of exit is dependent upon artistic mediators who introduce the artists and their work to artistic and cultural institutions that operate within a culturalist interpretative framework in order to critique its parameters. The mediators attempt to translate the art within this framework while at the same time trying to keep a safe distance from it. Through this type of manoeuvring, artistic mediators transform the strategy of exit from the dominant discourse into a strategy of resistance against the dominant discourse that often requires a level of accommodation to it. The mediators thus have recourse to a combination of strategies to critique the dominant discourse with artworks that aim to opt out of its logic.

The second perspective that I examine is authorship, which brings to the fore the generative dimensions of exit because it looks at the artworks that are produced and the subjectivities that are developed in this strategy. These subjectivities are analysed as liminoid phenomena that problematize the binary logic of the dominant discourse that is structured around classifications such as *allochtoon* – *autochtoon*, Western – non-Western, religious – secular, modern – backwards, etc. Authorship is

understood as an embedded practice that is situated in a field of forces that impact upon it. These forces include material and environmental factors that the artists are confronted with, significant others such as supervisors, but also the larger socio-political arena.