

Albert van der Weide

In my 2025 proposal, the performer offers promising language. The performer stands for 10 minutes at seven different places on Nieuwstraat.



Photo Kathrin Wolkowicz

Reports:

Sandra:

We made some appointments:

- Nazli started, I was next etc.
- No discussions/talks in between.
- We keep a thin connection, like a guard.
- The guard keeps track of the time.

So Nazli started. I found her appearance modest. I didn't look at her very intently, more generally. Then I started as the sign holder. I didn't make eye contact with passers-by. I looked at them and thought, "Voor jou," and felt a secret smile.

About 50% of the people looked at the sign and me. I felt quite safe and connected to myself.

In the second round, I made a lot of eye contact. It was a busier place and about 80% of the people saw me. Two people were annoyed and asked in an unfriendly way, "What do you mean by that?". Three people looked at me very happily and hugged me without me asking. That surprised me. One person said, "Oh, are you here for me?", and made a sexual gesture as if he were taking possession of me. I felt connected to my surroundings.

The third round. My attention was focused both inward and outward. I played with inside/outside. That was fun and easy for me. I was happy that I could do this with Nazli. I always feel like I have to explain my presence. In this performance, I dealt with that and felt that I didn't have to. I slowly got used to that feeling and I like it, it's free.

Nazli:

Together with Sandra, we took turns holding up the sign that said "For you". We did this seven times in total, spread out across the street. Overall, it was a fun experience that I would like to do again to practise smiling and communicating with/without talking. I wouldn't look around, but just keep walking with the words "For you". Like someone who is completely focused on their destination.

What's in it for me? What do I offer passers-by? They wondered, so I decided to smile and make eye contact. That way, I gave them something to look at, to distract people in this busy street. When passers-by asked what "Voor jou" meant, I replied, for example, "To look at", or "I'm here for you", or "Whatever you want is for you". There is no definitive answer for the passers-by or for me. Standing there, it was difficult to just be human. In the end, I succeeded, and it was a satisfying experience for me.

At first, I was a woman standing in public space, looking at people. I felt uncomfortable about what people would think of me if I had the text with me. Fortunately, my perspective changed. Some people said "thank you" or blew me kisses. I was happy for myself and for them. Some people were suspicious, wondering what my intentions were. Perhaps they and I would spend the rest of the day thinking about that.

Someone asked, 'What is for you?', but my answer in English confused him greatly. That's understandable, but it made me feel a little uncomfortable. As a migrant, I wonder when I will learn the language. Hopefully, I will succeed at some point. Although 'Voor jou' is easy to say and it sounds almost the same as in English.

The performance was a good opportunity for me to spread a Dutch word in public space. It was a beautiful language project.

The locations where we stood were also significant. Sandra stood four times in places where there were several traffic signs. Carrying the sign took on a different meaning here. It only said Voor jou and nothing else.