

(Alleen het gesproken word geldt)  
Welcome, ladies and gentlemen, to the Marx Lounge.  
Welcome, Mr. Jaar.

I am proud that you have chosen Amsterdam as one of the cities in which to exhibit The Marx Lounge. It means a great deal to Amsterdam to be chosen by an artist of your reputation and fame.

One of your views is that all art is political. This exhibition certainly is. It confronts the visitor with your notion that a gap exists between the intellectual revolution that is currently under way and the world outside. It is a gap between new knowledge and the world, which seems receptive only to the ruling, dominant paradigm.

Some ideological gaps only *appear to be* deep, others really *are* deep and yet other ideological gaps prove to be beyond comprehension. Someone recently told me a story that made the gap between the two perhaps most conflicting ideologies impossible suddenly incomprehensible. It touches upon the theme of your exhibition, and does so in two ways.

The story I was confronted with tells a part of your story: the fact that we need to find additional or new perspectives. The story I was told has provided me with an additional perspective. Further, it involves the ironic connection between the two conflicting ideologies that play a major role in your exhibition: capitalism and Marxism.

As most people know, Karl Marx had Jewish parents. So did Frederik Philips, the Dutchman who, together with his son Gerard, founded one of the largest Dutch multinationals: Royal Philips Electronics. I had not known that *they* were Jewish. What I also did not know is that Karl Marx and Frederik and Gerard Philips were related. Frederik's father, Lion Philips, was married to an aunt of Marx. Frederik and Karl were second cousins. Marx was 12 years older than his cousin, and the story says little about their relationship. We do know, however, that Karl maintained a warm relationship with the Philips family, particularly with Frederik's father Lion.

Marx was a true intellectual, a very well read and erudite writer, philosopher and political scientist. These are not always among the wealthiest of people. Although his parents had money, he had a poor relationship with them. In one of his letters to Lion, Karl writes, 'I have quarrelled with my family, and I am not entitled to my wealth as long as my mother lives'. He thus had little money, three daughters and a wife – a somewhat older woman of nobility. Marx found a sponsor in Lion Philips. But what he also found was that the family offered him 'a hospitable home' in which he 'could carry on intellectual discussions with tolerant, liberal cosmopolitans', as he describes it.

It appears that the father of Marxism – the foundation for socialism – wrote a portion of *Das Kapital* under the roof of one of the figureheads of capitalism: the Philips family. He signed a first edition and presented it as a gift to the family who had helped him to achieve his iconic work.

The names of Marx and Philips both would eventually spread throughout the world; they would achieve international fame, but represent two extreme opposites. This would eventually cool the ties between the two families, which receded to the background.

It is a wonderful historical fact. And it probably amounts to little more than that. Nonetheless, it bears a fascinating contradiction. Consider this story a gift from Amsterdam.

I read in one of your interviews, and I quote you: 'I am always amazed at this, all these possible paths, contradictions that we face in our daily lives, and that is why I always quote Emile Cioran, a Romanian poet and writer that I admire deeply, who wrote about his normal state of mind, as always being "simultaneously happy and unhappy, exalted and depressed, overcome by both pleasure and despair in the most contradictory harmonies"'. End of quote.

It is the contradictions that make life fascinating, that keep it dynamic and that make you realise that there is no such thing as a single truth. This is an important role of art. With your wonderful exhibition, you certainly do justice to this role. And I hope you'll find many more Amsterdam contradictions. Cause contradictions are the magnetic poles that keep this city attractive.