

## **Fossil Free Culture NL takes the stage and asks the Concertgebouw: What will be your role in history?**

***September 22, 2019 Amsterdam*** – Today artist collective Fossil Free Culture NL took the stage of the last cultural institution at the Museumplein of Amsterdam that accepts fossil fuel money. At the end of a Sunday concert, six performers took the stage and enrolled gigantic banners with a poem of award-winning poet Hannah van Binsbergen. Fossil Free Culture NL calls for *Het Concertgebouw* to stop accepting Shell as a member of their businessclub. This performance is an act of solidarity with the global Climate Strike on September 27 when millions around the world will walk out of their workplaces and homes to join young climate strikers on the streets and demand an end to the fossil fuel age and climate justice for everyone.

As the last notes fade away, two large banners depicting a poem are placed on stage at the Concertgebouw. Artist collective Fossil Free Culture NL (FFC-NL) invited award-winning poet Hannah van Binsbergen to compose this poem for their performance ‘Afterthought’. The first line, ‘We made way for a world without us’, conveys a possible future in which humanity consciously chooses extinction in the face of climate breakdown. The second line is the last thought of the last human on earth: ‘It will be like none of this has happened.’

Fossil fuel companies are leading humans to pave the way to their own extinction. With their performance ‘Dissonance Act 2. Afterthought’ FFC-NL invites the audience and the board of the Concertgebouw, which admits Shell as a member to their exclusive business club, to reflect on their complicity in the environmental crisis. “This is the most abstract of our performances so far, but the frightening possibility that it describes is no longer a distant abstraction,” says Maria Rietberg of FFC-NL. “Further human extinction as a result of climate change and ecosystem collapse is a real possibility if we do not take action now.”

Fossil Free Culture NL successfully campaigned for the Van Gogh museum to drop Shell as a sponsor in 2018, making the Concertgebouw the last public cultural institution on Amsterdam’s museum square still accepting money from the fossil fuel industry. FFC-NL laments the way the Concertgebouw grants Shell the chance to lobby the government, the royal family, and other influential people. With their campaign #FossilFreeMuseumplein, FFC-NL is now calling to liberate Museumplein entirely from the grasp of fossil fuel companies. Amsterdam could write history by being the first city in the world to declare a fossil free museum square.

“Our previous performance, ‘Season Opening’ (Dissonance Act 1) prompted some visitors to better understand the relation between these two institutions,” says Rietberg, referring to the performance on Friday September 13, where artists served black champagne to the visitors of the Opening Night. A lot of people still don’t realise that Shell needs the Concertgebouw more than the Concertgebouw needs Shell. Shell needs cultural institutions like the Concertgebouw to give it a veneer of social acceptability so that it can continue drilling for fossil fuels. “But for the sake of the planet, this social licence must be taken away. Therefore, Concertgebouw, what will be your role in history?”