READ MY
WORLD

Table of contents

4	WILLEMIJN LAMP	FATMA BULAZ	19	26	OLIVIER WILLEMSEN	CHADIEDJA BUIJS	34
12	LISANNE SNELDERS	MEREL WILDSCHUT	24	30	CANAN MARASLIGIL	THE PEOPLE OF RMW	37

THE RMW FESTIVAL PROVES EACH YEAR THAT IT IS NOT MERELY A LITERARY MEETING BUT AN ORIGINAL PLACE THAT USES LITERATURE AS A TOOL TO COMMUNICATE WITH CULTURES AND LANGUAGES AND MORE IMPORTANTLY:

PEOPLE.

The choice of the festival to focus on important geographies that are outside the cultural mainstream in Europe, together with its original approach to people and subjects, opens up possibilities for real stories and real human dimensions to emerge, to break stereotypes and to guarantee a view into other worlds that is genuine, unique and unparalleled in its raw truth.

Asmaa Azaizeh, curator RMW
2013 Palestina

Dear Guests!

This mini manifesto is a small memento of the magnificent festival edition of Read My World 2021. We are extremely grateful for your commitment on stage, but even more so for the support we received in between all the scheduled activities: in the garden, at the hotel, in the wings of the stage(s).

In this small keepsake to you, we have gathered our thoughts about the festival and the everyday world we find ourselves in. A world that requires gatherings with people like you: with sharp minds, who offer beauty to a world that on a daily basis gives us ugliness in the form of injustice. At the same time it is your voice that grants us the right ammunition ánd inspiration to keep battling these systems that are no longer tenable.

Your physical presence after months of digital correspondence is something we – as a team – look forward to annually. Even more so now that physical meeting is of vital importance.

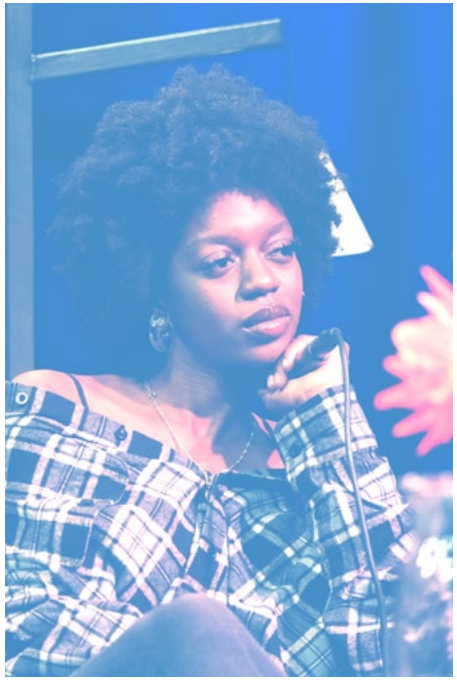
Personally, I think that within those three days of Read My World we try, every year again, to give ourselves, our guests and the audience a glimpse of what our ideal world would look like: a place that is boundless and where multilingualism and expressing multiple identities is a norm and not an exception. A place that is hospitable without condition and where the common denominator is the willingness to let the power of literature, poetry and performance move and disrupt us. I realise those are big words, maybe even big ambitions, but I do believe it is possible.

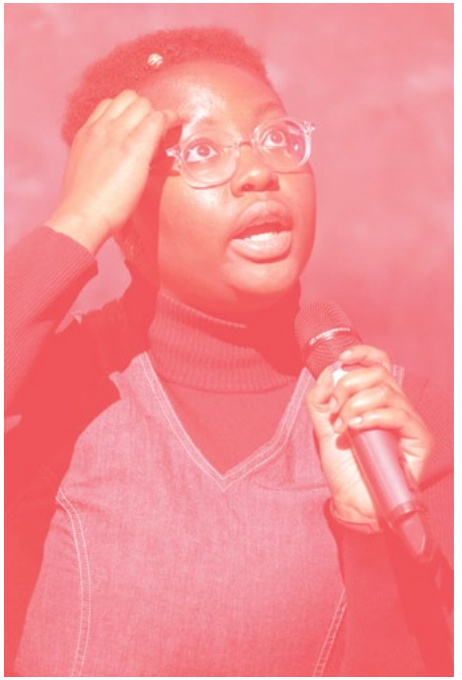
What I have encountered over the last edition and previous ones, in conversations with you- on stage and in the garden or at the hotel - is recognition in honest and curious exchanges that are comforting and healing. This is why we give you this Word is Bond* hoodie. May you wear this hoodie with pride, as a reminder of three beautiful days in Amsterdam at the Read My World festival.

With love, from the whole Read My World team:

Willemijn Lamp
Artistic director

* The slang term, interjection and phrase "Word is bond" is a statement, which originated in New York and is to reference telling the truth and facts. Word is Bond means what you're saying is true, correct or facts. You are bound by your word.





" A CONVERSATION DOES NOT NEED TO BE A DEBATE, BUT CAN BE A MEETING. "

WIND

The wind. That is what I remember from the first edition of Read My World Festival. And the rain. The former Shell canteen was in the midst of being repurposed and turned into a restaurant and conference centre. The gentrification of the north of Amsterdam was about to start, but had not fully erupted. So there we were, sat in a tent in someone's garden – through lack of a building to gather in – with the canvas flapping in the wind. However, we did not care, because we felt something special happening right then and there. We felt that it was the start of something new.

Over the course of those days I learnt that something that takes longer isn't always better, and that 'what is good' could last a bit longer. That there are writers who feel writing is a necessity of life, not because they feel the inner need to do so, but because what is within them must relate to what is affecting them from the outside. I also discovered that a conversation does not need to be a debate, but can be a meeting.

That day, I became a crew member on board the RMW. There were captains, but they did not keep themselves confined to the aft deck. They helped raise the sails. We moored somewhere annually, accepted some new passengers and had a crew-change. We did not sail to hunt for treasure, but instead we sailed to have conversations and take home memories. We hauled, sailed sharply to the wind and in due time we had the wind in our sails. Possibly because there was a changing wind, but mostly because we kept our course.

Lisanne Snelders
Editor

" THE FACES I LOOKED UPON – ON THAT STAGE – WERE UNKNOWN TO ME, BUT I FELT SO DRAWN IN AND FASCINATED BY THEM.

" AND YES, THIS NEXT SENTENCE IS ALSO ONE THAT REMAINS NECESSARY TO EXPRESS: I FELT THIS WAY BECAUSE THE ARTISTS ON STAGE LOOKED LIKE ME. "

RIGHTFUL PLACE

For me, Read My World is the way to encounter everything that inspires me, knowing that I would not have the opportunity to do so if the festival did not exist. For me – and for you as well – Read My World festival builds the bridges that we might have dreamt about in our own inner circles. Those bridges that we might thought would not have a real chance of becoming reality. In other words - and yes I know it sounds like a cliché - Read My World brings together those that would otherwise not meet everyday life. It does so shamelessly, with an activist heart and right in the centre of Amsterdam, all because of its relevance to the current unjust and unequal society we live in. People get the opportunity to tell the stories they may otherwise not share, and those stories in turn spark a light in others to create.... Or create even more.

The first edition of the festival I got to attend was the 2017 'Black USA' edition. Being both a festival fanatic and a literature lover, it felt comfortable and all around good to be able to be there. It was the opposite of the feeling of 'loneliness that I had often felt in the past, being in what seemed a sea of middle-aged white' people. I am sorry white people, this is still something that has to be said. The

faces I looked upon that stage – were unknown to me, but I felt so drawn in and fascinated by them. And yes, this next sentence is also one that remains necessary to express: I felt this way because the artists on stage looked like me.

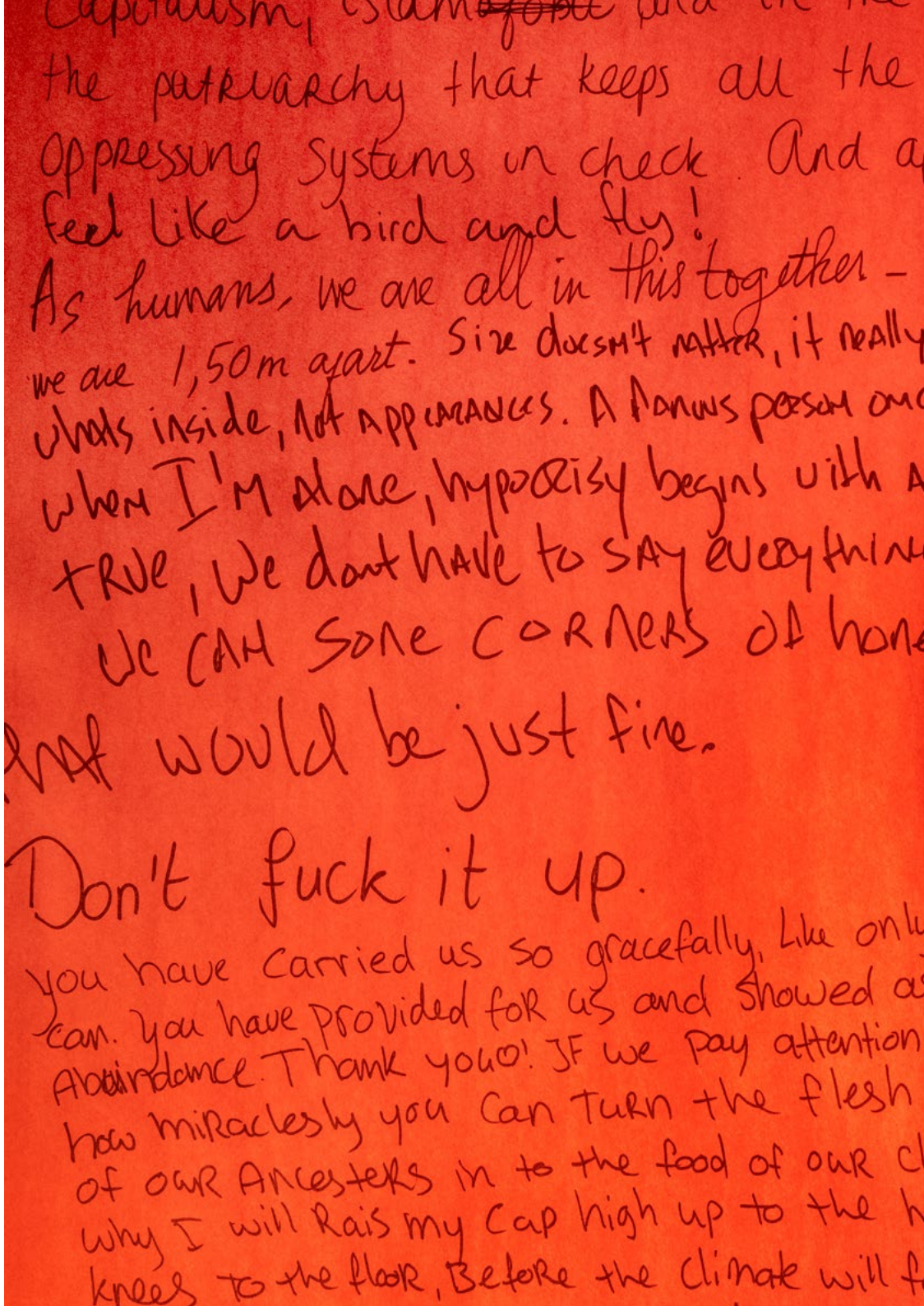
During the following years I would attend the Read My World festival as a staple in my events calendar, until I became part of the editorial team in 2020. Now came the opportunity to have some influence to decide what would and could be interesting to people like me, but of course also 'people like you' (my dear white countrymen and -women). It was a case of putting together a dazzling programme that would enthuse young adults to push towards action. That 'action' could be: a chat with a publisher, having somebody else that you trust read your manuscript or just having an inspiring literary night out in Noord Gestoord ("Nutso Noord").

A warm and comfortable atmosphere at Read My World festival isn't just beneficiary to the visitor and literature lover, but also crucial to the entire team that is connected to the festival and its organisation. Here is some of the feedback we have received: Read My World is a festival that is 'tailor-made for me', said a friend who – for once – did not feel like the odd one out, unlike many of her other literary nights out. Another friend summarised the festival being a place where 'big political issues are touched upon through very small and personal stories'.

It is beginning to dawn on me what the importance of this experience is to the visitor. People want to be confronted with something that speaks to them. They want to be in a place where they can feel and love. A place that acknowledges their pain and gives that pain its rightful place in the literary world. Something like that can only happen when speakers, writers and musicians from all over the world gather in one place.

To me, Read My World is a way to see the world prosper in an equal and just way! That does not only enlarge and enrich only me, but also you: the listener, the writer, the visitor and the volunteer.

Fatma Bulaz
Editorial team



A LETTER TO MY ANCESTOR

RECEIVED WITH CARE

This was my first year at Read My World. By way of an Instagram call, I accidentally became the festival's new social media manager and to be honest, I didn't know what I had gotten myself into. Knowing the festival vaguely, without not having had any previous encounters with it as an organisation, the new job was daunting. However, I could not have pictured a more warming environment. Rarely have I been received with such care. After the initial staff meeting it became clear to me: this is a tight-knitted, passionate and driven team and everyone working here shares similar ideals.

The Read My World festival is put together with the utmost care and attention. For someone like me, who is a newbie in the cultural sector as well as the world of literary festivals this was a dream start.

It was my task to manage the social media channels, something I enjoyed doing very much: there was so much beautiful content to share. I am not only talking about the programmes and productions which were equally educational and entertaining, but also about the people, our amazing audience, and the entire atmosphere; it was a three-daylong party. I secretly long for that first weekend of September. Luckily there is a new date and are looking forward to the tenth (anniversary) edition!

Merel Wildschut
Social media manager

A MOVEMENT

The word ‘festival’ – as we have known it for centuries – comes from the Latin word ‘festivus’, meaning ‘party’. To me, Read My World is actually not a festival. Nor is it a party, in the way that we know partying: an awkward start, the nice middle part and the wet-toilet-seat ending, after which the lights turn on and we are all forced to return home.

Read My World is múch more than that. It is a movement that has offered me a (different) perspective on new worlds over the past nine years. It is as if the earth itself is being rediscovered by me, whilst I sail it. The first few editions I had attended as a visitor, but during the last five years I have been responsible for (among other things) the design of the online space as well as finetuning all the programme texts. In these last few years it has become clear to me that – whilst we were in the approach to finalising our programme(s) – we are not organising a party or festival with a clearly demarcated start and finish, but I was in fact rediscovering worlds, new voices and concepts on playing fields that were not equal to mine. And in my hunger for knowledge I was still continuously enriching and expanding my view of the world.

To me, Read My World equals special encounters in all these fields, where I get to feel the freedom, understanding and space to weigh my vicinity and relation to different topics. In spite of the current Covid era, that dammed our physical movement between the different stages and rooms that normally hold the Read My World festival, our programmes offered more than enough perspectives – in both the approach to, as well as the ending of, the festival – to travel further in my mind. And maybe Read My World is just that. Not a festival, but an never ending journey through my own mind and those of others, with a suitcase filled to the brim with odd, mysterious, inspiring and most of all confronting books from all over the globe.

Olivier Willemsen
Writer

PART OF THE NARRATIVE

“With Care” was the theme of the 2021 edition of the Read My World Festival. An organic continuation of almost a decade of programming literature and urgent stories, with care. Read My World hasn’t waited to be in a pandemic to think about “care”, I have seen and experienced this care first as an audience member, then when I joined the team as a programmer in 2018 for the edition focusing on Turkey. As a writer and literary translator with Turkish and Muslim heritage growing up in Brussels, I spent years trying to bring a counter narrative to what was being told about the place where my parents migrated from. I worked on a variety of projects introducing writers from Turkey to audiences in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the UK. It

READ MY WORLD HASN’T WAITED TO BE IN A PANDEMIC TO THINK ABOUT “CARE”

hasn’t always been an easy journey, especially when expectations from my country of birth were merely focused on narratives of oppression and silencing, or plain orientalism. While I don’t deny the existence of such stories, I also know of many more that deserve attention. What is true for Turkey is also unfortunately the case for other geographies. In my journey as a writer and translator, I’ve been looking for spaces where complex and nuanced narratives could exist. I found a few along the way – such as the Free Word Centre in London where I spent months as a resident, until my path crossed with Read My World in the city I chose to call home. Here, I didn’t only find a welcoming space, I found one fostered with care. And one way of expressing this care is creating the adequate space for translation to happen on and off the book. Working with translators, shaping new possibilities for translation to happen not only in the written text but also on the stage. Giving the space to writers and artists to break boundaries, not fitting into an imposed language, but empowering translators to become part of the narrative, creating that much needed space for stories to exist as they were imagined. And allowing them to touch people’s hearts, souls, and minds, in a new context that will not judge, but listen. Always, with care.

Canan Marasligil
Editor

THANK YOU

Thank you for being a haven - a place where we can stop and go - shape-shift as we like, without hesitation or fear of judgement.

Thank you for being the best gate-keeper of your kind with ever growing humility, wisdom and grace. Thank you for sharing your stories, and for being the place where I can bring my sisters, mothers, queer friends, soul seeking acquaintances, adopted brothers, my 85-year-old grandma, my lovers, and every version of myself.

You can be unruly and temperamental at times, but only when the streams try to contain you with ideas on how you ought to be. Thank you for persevering.

"THANK YOU FOR LISTENING TO ALL THE LONELY HEARTS AND BRINGING THEM TOGETHER."

Thank you for trying to look out for the Others and being a place of development, professional growth, and constructive criticism.

Thank you for listening to all the lonely hearts and bringing them together. For listening, through screens, on the phone, via secret chat applications, and across borders.

For being a mailbox, a writing workshop, a handkerchief, a stage, a letter, a difficult answer...

Thank you, Read My World, for bringing in so many invaluable voices, who are anything but new, but often unheard, untaught, unseen.

Thank you, for being boundless and at the same time unquestionable.

Chadiedja Buijs
Editor & Coordinator

TEAM & VOLUNTEERS

Tessa van Dooren
Ootje Bruinsma
Agata Chromcewicz
Naomi Sinot
Mahat Arab
Nina Woltz
Shevani Koning
Daan Brachel
Esther Euman
Lisa Rutten
Rhea Slootweg
Marjolie Mankoto
Justin Herben
Sultan Tütüncü
Sherelle Naipal
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Bram Giebels
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Marieke Holtes
Suze de Lang
Chana Begbie
Mario da Silva
Flavia Privitera
Marta Piscp

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Grace Ly
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IKRAAAN
Celine Melahrinidis
Fatma Aydemir
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Yaëll Cambell

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Curated by: Thamar Kempees
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Photographer: Jan Boeve
Translation: Marije Drogt
Graphic Design: Gavin Reijnders

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