

LOKI PROJECT

MUSICIAN | CRAFTSWOMAN | ARTIST

Loki Project is the nomer under which multidisciplinary Dutch artist Lieke Dijkstra will release her forthcoming album 'Game of Life'.

LOKI PROJECT on

[Spotify](#), [Instagram](#), [Website](#)

METHOD | Some artists defy pinpointing and pigeonholing so naturally, that perhaps not their work, but rather their artistic identity and method are the best starting points when reflecting on their oeuvre. Lieke Dijkstra - who makes music under the artist nomer *Loki Project* - is a prime example of such a creator. Her creative working method requires true faith in and surrender to a process-led approach, allowing the internal to be expressed outwardly. On her approach, Loki remarks: *'To me, the process of making something is pretty manic. I don't decide what something is going to sound or look like beforehand- I think that's limiting to creation. It essentially comes down to having this blind faith in the process; taking a leap of faith. And then daring to do that again and again, as there are elements you will encounter that you did not foresee. I think artists rely on their 'hunting' skills so to speak, and endurance. They favour insecurity over security and take the risk of not knowing what they might catch today. But that they are capable of catching, today and tomorrow, is what is important. Without faith most artists can't maintain the mindset, and we will favour stability and security over the unknown. Creation, however, takes place in the realm of uncertainty.'*

BACKGROUND | *Prioritising feeling over perfectionism.* This is the credo that drives Loki's experimental creativity. In her late teens, after having a restless youth, she decided to leave her hometown. She travelled and visited many alternative communities, in order to gain more insight into different ways to live. This quest eventually led her all the way to the Sahara, where she made a documentary about community living. This turned out to be a formative experience. A young, somewhat naive girl from the Dutch countryside with nothing more than a hand-drawn map and a deep sense of curiosity: *'I was alone in the Sahara with an outdated map, a bankcard that didn't work and a solar panel that wouldn't charge my phone. But there was no doubt in me at that time. I believe my curiosity and a deep longing for life was bigger than fear itself. Out there I realised there was more to life than finishing your studies. It felt as though I had stepped out of a high speed train and was surrounded by dunes, only dunes.'*

After buying herself a guitar at age sixteen, she discovered the instrument in a self-taught approach: *'It was the most liberating thing: melodies felt like inventions because feeling was translated into sound - suddenly I could free myself through musical composition, sing new thoughts and find new paths within myself. It really made sense.'* With an opera singer and theatre maker as a mother, and an entrepreneurial father, she learnt that if you want something to happen, you have to show initiative. This protagonist-like approach combined with her multidisciplinary and self-taught pure creativity is what makes Loki a truly unique individual and genuinely exciting emerging artist.

SOUND | Creating songs that are a world of their own, Loki's sound is characterised by a certain minimalism, within which an explosiveness unfolds. The production of the music is in service of the authenticity of the feeling carried out by the composition, which often brings across a paradox: lightness yet also something more dark is to be found. Repetitiveness - in a mantra sense - too is an oft-found element in her music, again inviting the listener into the song and the journey it embodies. Loki's music is furthermore characterised by four elements: a guitar used as a base, a bass, layered vocals and lesser-known instruments such as the Ghuzeng harp, or a hammered dulcimer. When asked how one might define her music, genre-wise, she jokes: *'dramatic meditation music'*. In any case, it is soulful in the original sense of soul music: spiritual yet often political, and always human in the most fundamental way. Inspirations include artists

such as Björk, Loverman, Kate Bush, Adrienne Lenker and Nick Hakim. Loki: *'The purpose of my music is to heal people and make people who may be similar to me feel heard.'*

CRAFT | Lieke's musical work, whether in recorded or live form, often is accompanied by objects and other visual adornments she has created. Whether these are ceramic masks, or paper kites - her music videos and artist photographs are often adorned with and brought to life by self-crafted sculpture objects that are portable, movable even - as though they were created as a set design for life itself. One of her many creative outlets is kite-crafting. Loki: *'What I look for in materials is a clear language that conveys its characteristics. Natural materials are materials with which the artist or craftsman must somehow collaborate, unlike materials such as plastic, that can be made to do whatever one envisions. Natural materials defy being forced; teaching one a lot about time, patience, flexibility, possibilities and limits. Take bamboo: if I pull too hard; it cracks, I cut too deep; it's no longer usable. I like its straightforwardness, elasticity, resistance, strength and vitality.'*

'When I was deep in my clay practice, I was relating to the malleable, heavy, and once baked, solid characteristics of the material. Kite-making offered a different lens; embodying a certain sense of poetic longing. When it comes to my kites, I'd rather see them in the sky, than on the wall of a gallery. The work wants to move, be touched by the wind; in that sense you could say the work has succeeded when the piece develops a longing (language) of its own. I think the kite symbolises a personal process of letting go; now the release of the album is near, I have to let go of these songs that once felt like they were mine.'

GAME OF LIFE | Game of Life, the forthcoming album, is a collection of tracks that were recorded in an incredible array of places. Having moved home six times during the recording process, Loki says: *'Inevitably, the diversity of settings are reflected in the record. I recorded in a monastery in France, a windmill in North Holland, the old creative hub Kytopia in Utrecht, and a nursing home in Hilversum. On this album, I collaborated a lot with producer Gino Bombrini, who has travelled much in his life, and has the most impressive collection of curious instruments from all over the world. He is a sort of librarian of sounds, so production wise, there is much versatility.. The various spaces and sounds together formed the building blocks for the record, which in the end, became a symbol for emotional, spiritual and physical transition.'*

Single 'Game of Life', accompanied with [a music video](#) that features Lieke's ceramic masks, was released in January 2024 and was featured extensively with an in depth interview on Dutch national radio NPO Soul & Jazz Radio 2. The song came forth from a visual daydream in which Lieke found herself on a chess board - the same dream that led to the founding of community project *Tea & Dragons*. *'This dream was related to this coming-of-age phase; you grow up in this transient world and you start questioning the structures on which it is built; your parents, the patterns - and you realise you hold a certain responsibility in it. And so you ask yourself; How do you play this game?'* Other times, a song is birthed from a simple melody or loop, as was the case with *Sip of Me*, set in a tea salon, like the often frequented Salon Ruigoord in Amsterdam, where many magical spontaneous co-creations evolve. Steamy like a teapot, the track is inspired by Japanese jazz and field recordings of environmental sounds. Another example is *Come to My Dream*, a one-take, with lyrics that were completely written in the moment. *Fight* is a protest song, loaded with political and societal elements, translated powerfully by a female choir Lieke put together. *'During the time of this recording process I think I was aiming for a sound that is somehow familiar and soothing, yet at the same time haunting and alienating. I'm still obsessed with finding the right sound and I believe it's an ongoing search to find it.'*

COMMUNITY | As an organiser and orchestrator, Lieke furthermore runs a ceramic studio in Amsterdam, where she gives lessons and workshops. Her creativity does not limit itself to materials and sounds. She is also a creator of experiences, having built a strong community around her *Tea and Dragons* concept, under which she organises music

evenings and a mini festival. A self-taught musician that nevertheless is often found leading the jam, Lieke is deeply appreciated by her community for her curious talent for inviting, or tempting even - her co-musicians and her listeners on a journey.

Tea and Dragons is a collective of musicians and artists brought together with the aim of creating performances that focus on listening, rather than performing. The framework of these sessions is built around the ritual of making and drinking tea, an art that is symbolic of the jam itself; the ingredients slowly infuse the tea, and the participants infuse the jam. This process is a collective experience, where the audience and space is an ingredient as well as the performer. While the tea is heating up, no-one knows beforehand how it will turn out, and as you are yourself an ingredient, what you give is what you get. The name Tea and Dragons is representative of the two main ingredients: the tea, symbolising the centerpoint of collective focus and contribution, and the dragons, symbolising the power of the unknown. The magic of the concept lies in the fact that it tempts you to explore, play and seek out parts of yourself that are new and exciting. This is what gives the session its heat: the focus is highest when players do not yet know themselves what they will do, or sound like and it is at these moments that 'the dragon is in the room'. Lieke: *'Community is my biggest fascination: combining humans, to me, is just as exciting as combining materials. Community is fertile ground; physical being-togetherness of a group of individuals that differ so much from each other allows for magic, new solutions, inventions, connections.'*

SYMBOLS

Chess
The Crow
The Dragon
The Circle
The Flying Man
Half-Man / Half-Animal

Loki Project's forthcoming album 'Game of Life' will be released on
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