

# PREFACE

## “A LOW SKY, AND THE SUN SMOTHERING SLOWLY IN MISTS, PEARL-GRAY, MOTHER-OF-PEARL”

\* TRANSLATED BY IRISH POET MICHAEL LONGLEY (\* BELFAST, 1939).

The Netherlands is a country of contrasts. Take the scenery for instance. Anyone who arrives at the national airport near Amsterdam, is immediately absorbed by the densely built-up surroundings where every square meter has its specific use. Hardly one hour away from the airport, in whatever direction you go, wide vistas of the seashore and the seemingly infinite polder landscape, dominate the view. The landscape is of an uneasy beauty: “A low sky, and the sun smothering slowly in mists, pearl-gray, mother-of-pearl”,\* Hendrik Marsman wrote in ‘Memory of Holland’ (1936), a classic of Dutch poetry. For a country that is so flat, the relief of the artistic landscape in the Netherlands is remarkable. Dutch Mountains wants to offer a view of the boundless creative imagination, full of curiosity and energy that this small country provides. The Netherlands has a versatile cultural infrastructure that forms the basis for innumerable cross-border liaisons. In 2008, SICA/Dutch Centre for International Activities published *From The Netherlands With Attitude*, a tour d’horizon of various artistic disciplines describing Dutch artists that had broken through internationally. Stimulated by the enthusiastic reactions, SICA is pleased to present a follow-up. This time we are putting more emphasis on the cultural interaction between the Netherlands and the world. What do Dutch artists and culture makers engage in outside the Netherlands, and what do foreign artists find here? This provides a wide range of stories and images, from, among other things, the boundaries of Dutch Design, to the influence of new social relationships on the meaning of dramatic arts. From the imperfect char-

acter of new towns, to poor hospitality, which just seems to be part of Dutch culture, but does not need to hinder successful residency in this country. Does this mean that the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence? In any case, English rain is apparently a lot more pleasant than Dutch rain, according to writer and artist Maria Barnas.

*Yvette Gieles, editor.*

# COLOPHON

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## PRINT

Spinhex & Industrie

## TRANSLATIONS

Skylines English Language services  
UvA Talen

## FEATURES

In this magazine are the personal opinions of the authors and do not necessarily reflect SICA's point of view

## COVER PICTURE

Hans van der Meer

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If you would like to order a copy, please contact SICA: post@sica.nl

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*Rembrandt and Van Gogh are of permanent importance in museum collections in Europe, Japan and the United States. However, in museums in the former Soviet Union, too, you will find Dutch old masters. There, curators work under difficult circumstances. Dutch experts support their colleagues with regard to the history of art. KOEN KLEIJN*

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# AFFECTION

## “I DIDN’T REALISE YOU WROTE SUCH BLOODY AWFUL POETRY, MR. SHANKLY”

**I melt in a way I cannot really account for as soon as I think of England, the English, their language and their Englishness. Like a lover who loses his mind and accepts everything his lover does, to me, the English can do no wrong.**

MARIA BARNAS

Sometimes I put my affection to the test. Last week I was walking through London in the rain. It was also a Monday morning, a morning on which I prefer to stay indoors. I like to start the week in the afternoon when the shops and cafés are open and the outside world does not remind me of which day it is. I prefer to daydream my way through the week, have a Sunday feeling on Wednesday and think the weekend is about to begin on Monday afternoon after a busy morning of intensive writing. A weekend that could last for an hour, a day or a year. I think of a weekend as a period during which you do no more than walk around the house, read the newspaper and not answer the phone. I don’t think I have had a weekend for years. I enjoy the idea, however, that I needn’t do anything if I really wanted to. It was most probably the most important motive for me wanting to make writing my profession: the fact that no one can tell me what time, when and how I should work.

You understand, I am fooling myself. I do that consciously. Possibly only a talent for denying reality helps me to carry on in this strange profession which consists of putting letters on paper, forming sentences, and including an extra space between the lines in the correct place.

It is important to be able to fool yourself as a writer. Not only so you can believe your own fabrications and stories. You never know if the book that promises to be a bestseller in the morning, will end up in the waste bin in the evening.

I think that my affection for English language and poetry started with song lyrics sung by Morrissey, of The Smiths. He sings lines I can listen to endlessly. As a twelve-year-old, in the mid

eighties, I read the back of the album as eagerly as I now read poetry by Anne Carson, Antony Dunn and Ken Babstock. In the song ‘Frankly, Mr Shankly’, Morrissey (I have always assumed that he is singing about himself) quits his job because he wants a career in music.

*Frankly, Mr. Shankly, this position I’ve held  
It pays my way and it corrodes my soul  
Oh, I didn’t realise that you wrote poetry  
I didn’t realise you wrote such bloody awful poetry, Mr. Shankly*

In the line ‘I didn’t know that you wrote poetry’, Morrissey sings eh in ‘po-eh-try’ with a high voice which makes the word poetry sound silly. He doesn’t leave it at that. Now comes the sledgehammer blow, sung in the same laconic voice, which makes the blow even more vicious than, if he had raised his voice as the Dutch would have done: ‘I didn’t know you wrote such bloody awful poetry’.

The fact that you could not only write poems yourself but you could also write very bad ones offered new opportunities. It meant that I could also try it myself.

I love the way the English can say the most awful things as if they were giving a compliment. The way the English refuse to show their emotions in public, gives even the most average man or woman more depth than a Dutchman, proud of wearing his heart on his sleeve.

‘Recht door zee’ (straightforward) is a Dutch expression the English have never heard of. “That seems rather rude” an English friend said to me when I was trying to describe the character-

istics of an honest friend, who I find to be ‘recht door zee’. “And awfully boring”, he added.

Now that it is obvious that I am more than a little prejudiced, I will carry on with my blind passion for English culture. To return to my walk through London, it was raining. Raining as it only can in England. It was raining cats and dogs. That really is different to ‘pijpenstelen’ (pipe stems), as we describe rain in Holland. The animals shake their wet coats while falling down from the sky. Stems just fall straight down. To me, English rain has to do with the Thames and the beautiful book Peter Ackroyd wrote about it.

He wrote a hefty portrait of this river, which lies next to my bed like a bible. He describes each town on the Thames. History, stories, geography, everything is covered. I read a short piece every night. Before I go to sleep, I plunge into this river of words that, to me, visualizes England in its most ideal form. Even if there was a Dutch version of this book, about the *Maas* or the *Rijn*, I would not be impressed. Apart from the fact that I would call the author of a biography about the *Linge* or the *Lek* an epigone in advance, I would never want to know everything about any river but the Thames.

My affection for this river and England in general, has a very personal reason. I lived in England from the age of five till I was twelve, in a small village in Oxfordshire. I went to the river Thames with my parents and my brothers on beautiful summer days. Alongside the water there was The Rose Revived, a child-friendly (which not all of them were) pub, where you could watch fat trout. With a friend from school, who lived near the Thames, I played Tarzan and Jane swinging on lianas, in a weeping willow. We jumped into the water shouting primal cries. You see, I have memories of a beautiful childhood, which I will not bother you with any longer.

Well, just a little longer, because I now remember the Sunday afternoons in Henley where the rowing races were held. We had strawberries and cream and we wore straw hats with ribbons while watching the boats. Even though, in retrospect, I colour memories in as joyful and carefree, straying beyond the lines of reality, I say: yes, I was happy. Yes, I was perfectly happy.

My bookcases are full of English literature. Besides English literature I have a tiny shelf of Dutch books. I only go to the bookshop myself to buy poetry; most of my Dutch books were gifts. Very few Dutch authors can tempt me to read more than two or three pages. Gerard Reve and Nescio can. Always. Multatuli, Hermans, Komrij, Grunberg and Starik can sometimes. Except for these heroes, it is as if I can ‘hear’ Dutch authors write. I can see the construction of the plot coming miles away. Something else that does not contribute to my pleasure in reading is that, actually, I want to escape from the Dutch environment they are describing. They want to be honest, ‘recht door zee’, and therefore struggle with the literature, that, by definition, is an island of insincerity in a sea of beautiful lies.

It is no coincidence that in every English family there is someone with an imaginary friend, while these friends do not exist in Holland. Even if a Dutch child would come up with a friend like that, people would laugh at the child and correct it immediately.

In England it is quite normal to see a child talking to thin air, or roaring with laughter at a joke he has just shared with his imaginary friend. ‘Stop being so silly’ is a warning I have seldom heard in England. Pretending and losing yourself in your imagination is appreciated and encouraged. There is a plate at the table for the imaginary friend and he is also given something to eat.

I let myself be carried away more easily by English voices, or voices translated into English than Dutch ones. I know I am reading a construction but when I am in the middle of *The Little Stranger* by Sarah Waters, or *The Curious Incident of the Dog by Nighttime* by Mark Haddon, or *Black Swan Green* by David Mitchell, or *Little Bee* by Chris Cleave, I forget that I am reading a book thought up by someone. I can lose myself in the surroundings the book offers. I can temporarily forget my own world, including everything I know and think, and be in a different reality.

All right. It was raining while I was walking through London and raindrops were splashing on my face. Everything in my situation could have upset me. I was dragging along a large suitcase, it was unmistakably Monday morning and my woolen coat was getting wet and heavy. My clothes underneath were soaking. I was cold.

I realised - and I risk losing my already shaky credibility with this confession - that I like the rain in England and hate it in Holland, and there is nothing I can do about it.

Maybe it was water from the Thames that dripped down my neck. It was English rain. I could not suppress a smile. ◀

*Maria Barnas is a writer, poet and visual artist.*



MASTERPIECES RUIMTE EN HAND . MARIA BARNAS

# BURNING IMAGES IN THE MINDS OF THE WORLD'S PUBLIC

**All is not well with documentary photography. These are hard times for newspapers, weekly and monthly magazines, so the page allocation for substantial series of photographs is decreasing. The need for serious photographic reports informing the public about the situation in the world and shedding light on the background to the news has not diminished, however, nor has the wish of photographers to tell their stories.**

PIM MILO – PHOTOS: JOËL VAN HOUDT

Joël van Houdt (1981) studied Photography and Design at Bradford College in England, and then Photography at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague. After finishing his studies in 2003, he realized that it was virtually impossible to find a permanent position at a newspaper. A photographer wanting to work for a newspaper does so as a freelancer, whereby assignments can be obtained in two ways: as a pre-defined or a self-defined assignment. Van Houdt wanted to photograph North African refugees trying to reach Europe for the newspaper Trouw. The newspaper didn't want to buy the series in advance, however, or offer any financial support; Van Houdt persevered at his own risk. In a period of a year, he tried to cross from Morocco to Spain illegally three times. In between, he was in the Netherlands to earn some money with freelance work. The first time, he was cheated and lost the money for the crossing. This was many times more than what 'regular' illegal refugees would pay, as Van Houdt was a photographer as well as a European. The second time, the ship sunk after only a few tens of metres. At the third attempt, he succeeded in making the crossing from Morocco to Lanzarote in a ramshackle fishing boat together with 28 other persons. The trip lasted 36 hours, for 35 of which Van Houdt was seasick. Talking was impossible; the monotonous drone of the ship's engine drowned out all other sounds and deafened the eardrums. Making the report Entering Europe cost him six months and more than €30,000 in expenses, not including lost income.

## NO NEED FOR SUBSIDIES?

The Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Archi-

ecture in Amsterdam recently appointed a curator to give a new stimulus to documentary photography in the Netherlands. A newspaper wanting to put a documentary photographer on a project for a longer period of time should be able to ask the Foundation for financial support. If the newspaper agrees to publish the documentary, the Foundation could contribute financially. Even before the curator was appointed, Van Houdt could have applied for a work budget or a publication subsidy, but he hadn't heard of this possibility. Earlier in his career he had considered applying for a scholarship at the Foundation, but he was put off by all the paper work this required. Teun Voeten (1961), photographer, journalist and anthropologist has visited many different parts of the world, from Iraq to North Korea and from Bosnia to Ruanda. He disappeared for two weeks in Sierra Leone: he was robbed, assaulted and chased by rebels. Usually, experience and common sense help him avoid life-threatening situations. But sometimes things go wrong, as in Bosnia in the early 90's when he was shot in the leg. Voeten has been able to make a living for himself during the last twenty years, and, as he says himself, has adopted a slightly arrogant attitude as regards this: "I don't need any subsidies". This has recently changed: decreasing budgets, competition from the Internet, more people possessing a camera, and, most alarmingly, an increasing lack of interest from the media in socially relevant topics and reports. Twice this year, Voeten applied for a subsidy, and both requests were granted. So it seems obvious there is a serious interest in the type of documentaries he makes.

Dutch photographers are not alone in their experiences. One

**"I DON'T NEED ANY SUBSIDIES"**

PREPARING THE CROSSING OF THE OCEAN

of the world's best photo journalists, Stanley Greene, did all he could to go to Afghanistan for a month, but he couldn't get the required eight thousand Euros together. No magazine was willing to provide the funding. At the same time, photos of the newly-born twins of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie fetched twenty million dollars. No one, therefore, can maintain that the media have no money for photography. The Pitt and Jolie photos were shot by Brent Stirton of Getty Images. This is the same photographer that won the Visa d'Or in Perpignan with a poignant report about slaughtered mountain gorillas in the Virunga National Park, which won the first prize at the World Press Photo in 2008. About this Stirton says matter-of-factly:

"Photojournalism is education for change, Jolie-Pitt is about finance for change."

## SEEING HELPS TO MAKE A CHOICE

Stanley Green is one of the 'concerned photographers' who is associated with the Noor Photo Agency that was established in Amsterdam in 2007. It brings together photographers with a mission. The members of the collective apply themselves to long-term projects. Yuri Kozyrev has spent the last seven years in Baghdad. Kadir van Lohuizen easily gets his teeth into a subject for 18 months. Greene spent many years in Chechnya, and focussed on the aftermath of the hurricane Katrina for a long ▶

# BURNING IMAGES IN THE MINDS OF THE WORLD'S PUBLIC



ATLANTIC OCEAN 2008 - HEADING FOR EUROPE



“WE NEED MORE STORIES AND  
MORE PICTURES”

ARRIVING IN EUROPE

time. Jan Grarup returns to Chad and Sudan time and time again. They are united in their desire to show a complete picture and the need to tell the stories that the media, in their pursuit of the issues of the day, do not readily publish. The main goal of the agency is to give photographers the opportunity and the scope to devote themselves to long-term projects. The fact that the traditional media have less room for documentary photography doesn't mean that there is less need for it. At an assembly of photojournalists from all over the world on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of World Press Photo in October 2005, Jan Pronk, the then Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Sudan, begged: “Please come to Sudan. Please come and

document Darfur, burn the images in the minds of the world's public and their leaders.” This appeal is still urgent: “Seeing helps making a choice. Journalistic photographs help many to become and remain subjective in the real sense of the word.” To quote Howard Chapnick from his essay *This Critical Mirror*: “Please, keep watching. We need more stories and more pictures.” ◀

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# BURNING IMAGES IN THE MINDS OF THE WORLD'S PUBLIC



ARRIVING IN EUROPE

# BURNING IMAGES IN THE MINDS OF THE WORLD'S PUBLIC



ARRIVING ON THE SPANISH ISLAND 'LA GRACIOSA' JUST NORTH OF LANZAROTE, ONE OF THE CANARY ISLANDS.



NECO NOVELLAS - PHOTO: LEO JANSEN

# WARM SOUNDS FROM A CHILLY COUNTRY

**Farida, Maria di Fatima, Haytham Safia, this is only a random selection of musicians, living in Holland, and making music that has nothing to do with Holland. In the Netherlands, world music has become increasingly important during the past years. More and more foreign artists seem to be active here, in addition to the great number of Dutch artists of foreign descent. Isn't it remarkable that so many Mediterranean and tropical sounds come from this chilly country of ours? Singer Izaline Calister, musician Neco Novellas and Lilian Vieira, singer of Zuco 103, don't think so.**

JOS SCHURING

Neco Novellas is a singer from Mozambique, who has been living in the Netherlands for years. "Although budgets have been lower during past years, the Netherlands actually provides good opportunities for musicians. Firstly, the attitude of the public is very open and sympathetic here. Compared with Portugal, where I lived for years, that is a big difference. What also counts is the enormous theatre infrastructure. Each village has its own fully equipped theatre. Everywhere in the big cities, you can find lots of bars or clubs where you can hear live music." Lilian Vieira, the Brazilian singer of Zuco 103, a successful band worldwide, thinks that the artistic climate in particular has improved. "We travel a lot, and every time we are here, it strikes us that the atmosphere has become so much more lively here. You do notice, though, that people have less money. Salsa bands, consisting of ten to fifteen people, with a swinging brass section, are less frequently seen on stage." Singer Izaline Calister, from Curacao, thinks that, for her, life as a musician has become more difficult in the Netherlands, among other things because of the increasing number of Dutch-language songs. "I have the feeling that the public is a little more inward-looking. Besides, because of a reduction in subsidies, ensembles, such as Fra Fra Sound, Ronald Snijders and Rumbata, are facing cut backs. But at the same time more and more musicians are active here. Of course, first and foremost, musicians are people who make music passionately; they often have a very strong drive. It is a pity, though, that there are fewer jazz clubs. They often included world music in their programmes. Now, I have to resort more and more to theatres for concerts. That is also nice, but a little too formal for our type of music. That is why a lot of

musicians are focussing their attention on foreign countries, simply to increase their market, but sometimes also in search of new musical adventures."

## CLASSICAL, WORLD MUSIC AND EVEN JAZZ

When talking about world music in the Netherlands, the name of the Rotterdam World Music and Dance Centre (WMDC) crops up more and more. WMDC is a collaboration between the Rotterdam Conservatory and the Foundation for Art-education Rotterdam. WMDC is a meeting place for music and dance from all continents. It provides professional training courses in the field of world music traditions, music and dance, research in the field of world music education and talent development. Calister: "WMDC is an ideal breeding ground. Two members of my band are doing solo projects, and they were both very eager to present them there." Novellas: "In Mozambique, I met some Dutch people who told me that the artistic climate in the Netherlands was very good. Then I heard about the Rotterdam Conservatory, where you can study classical music, world music and even jazz. When I was in Lisbon, I went there to have a look. I was pleasantly surprised, and thought the combination was very inspiring. I saved for a few years and raised funds, and I arrived in the Netherlands in the autumn of 2001. I really liked the set-up of the conservatory. When I left my classical singing class, I saw conga players jamming. That's what I found terrific. The first three years of my studies completely focussed on classical singing. In 2004, my brothers came over as well. I have learned an awful lot here. There are so many cultures. In Rotterdam, I learned a lot about Arab music, flamenco, but also ►

# WARM SOUNDS FROM A CHILLY COUNTRY

“WHEN I LEFT MY CLASSICAL  
SINGING CLASS, I SAW CONGA  
PLAYERS JAMMING.”



LILIAN VIEIRA - PHOTO: JOHANNES ODE



ZUCO 103 - PHOTO: JOHANNES ODE

about music from India.” Lilian Vieira, too, studied at the Rotterdam Conservatory. “It is a fantastic place, and, at that time, it was the only conservatory where you could study world music. This has attracted quite a lot of people from all parts of the world. The fact is that the Netherlands is a rich country. A lot of things are happening here in the field of jazz, classical music, pop music and, therefore, also world music.”

#### EMBRACED BY THE PUBLIC

Novellas agrees with Vieira: “My brothers, who also play in my band, agree that the Netherlands offers many great opportunities. From here they have the possibility to get work in Luxem-

bourg and Denmark. Of course, this is caused by the cosmopolitan character of cities like Amsterdam and Rotterdam. By the way, Lilian herself shows that you need not be born here to be able to grow as an artist.” Vieira: “I was surprised that when I came to the Netherlands, I soon managed to make a living by playing music. I really feel embraced by the Dutch audiences. Dutch people are really very inquisitive. The musicians here, too, influence each other, resulting in more and more interesting cross-overs. But you will see this anywhere. As far as Zuco 103 is concerned, we draw much inspiration from music from the north of Brazil, where Moroccan music is becoming more and more influential. This eagerness to find inspiration every-

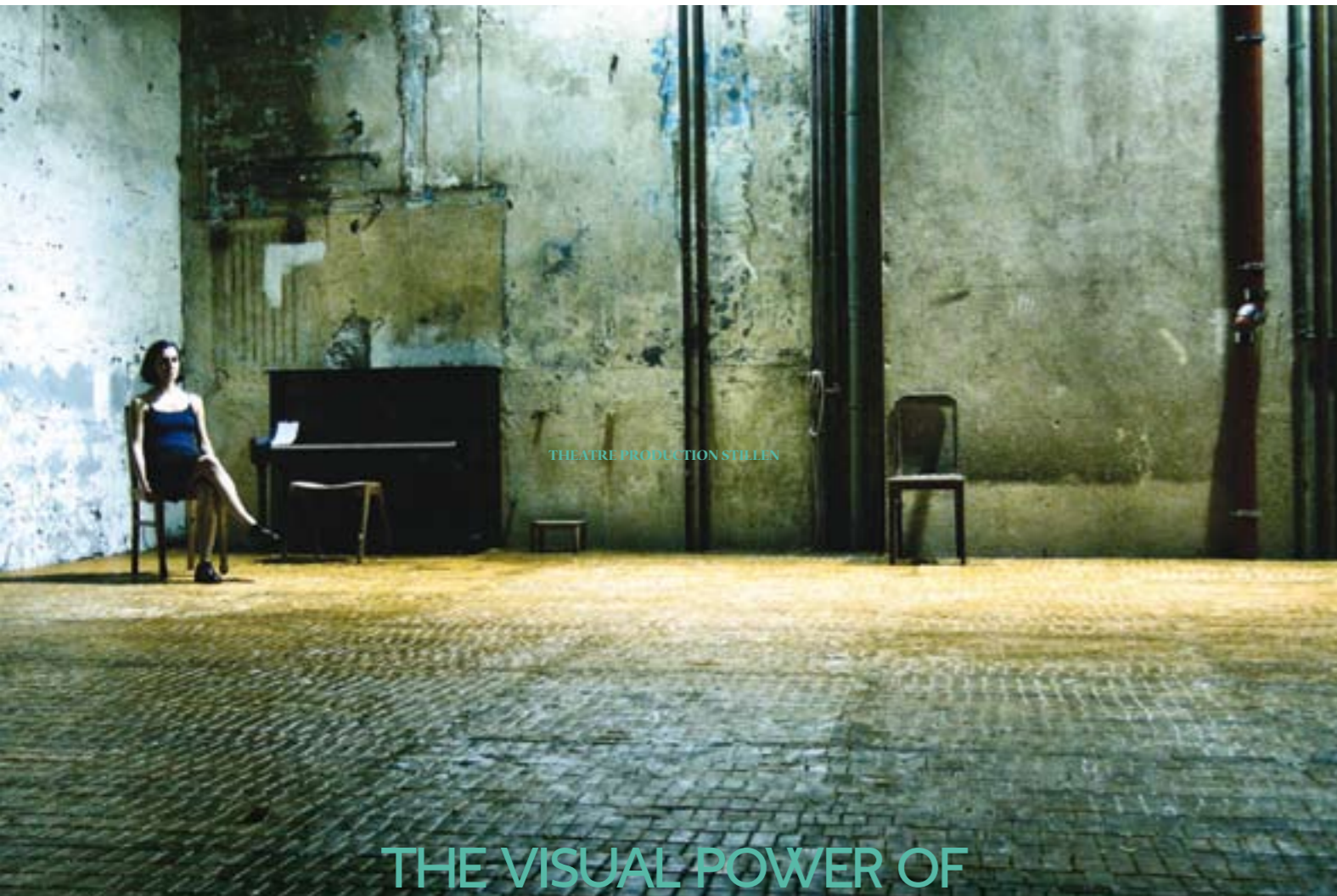
where, and to enter into all kinds of collaboration projects, is clearly present in the Netherlands, which is obviously the result of the great number of nationalities in the big cities. After all, as a musician you have to be inquisitive. You cannot make it on your own, you will fade away.” ◀

[www.worldmusicforum.nl](http://www.worldmusicforum.nl)  
[www.dutchblendworldmusicguide.com](http://www.dutchblendworldmusicguide.com)  
[www.muziekcentrumnederland.nl/en](http://www.muziekcentrumnederland.nl/en)

# THE SPECTATOR IS THE HERO

**A new generation of Dutch theatre makers is quietly capturing Europe. They are in their early thirties, have developed their signatures at summer festival circuits and are internationally oriented instead of focusing on positions in the artistic establishment.**

SIMON VAN DEN BERG



## THE VISUAL POWER OF DRIES VERHOEVEN

While Ivo van Hove and Johan Simons were working their way up to the premier league of European star directors, theatre makers such as Jetse Batelaan, Lotte van den Berg, Boukje Schweigman and Dries Verhoeven developed a whole new theatre genre, elaborating on the work of Micky and the Dogtroep from the 70s and 80s: experience theatre or visual location theatre. They searched for ways to appeal

to their audience more directly and created a form that is hardly theatre. The audience becomes the central character and watching is the subject. Verhoeven seems to be the most self-willed of them all. His performances – if you can call them that – move towards installation and performance art, but most of all, they create an exceptional intimacy. His work can be seen at festivals throughout Europe and

only recently he won the Young Directors Award at the Salzburger Festspiele.

### URBAN LONELINESS

Dries Verhoeven (Oosterhout, 1976) was originally a scenographer. His designs are often dramatic installations: barefooted actors on pieces of broken glass in *Pasolini* (2003); a ‘crying’ bar for the story of a lawyer who fell upon hard times in *De Val*

(2005); a stage floor full of bars of glycerine soap and a splash of water together with the meditation about loneliness in *Stillen* (2007). But he became especially well-known for of his own projects.

Together with Roos van Geffen, he made the performance *Hartstocht* (2004) where visitors were driven around in a Volkswagen van blindfolded. In a mirror on their laps, they could see the sky and the ‘ceiling’ of the city passing by through the sunroof as a never-ending skydive. In *Uw koninkrijk kome* (*Thy kingdom come*, 2005), Verhoeven really showed how radically he wanted to minimize theatre form. Two visitors are seated in a caravan opposite each other, separated by a soundproof partition. Each hears a voice stating the ‘thoughts’ of the other person. The voice that you hear manipulates your acts, interprets what the other person does and hence brings a suggestive, seducing dance, which gives you a strange intimate relation with a total stranger. *U bevindt zich hier* (*You are here*, 2007) is his largest project up to now. Verhoeven built a labyrinthine hotel with a separate room for each visitor, with a bed and a mirrored ceiling. The moment you lie on your bed wondering what is going to happen, the mirrored ceiling starts to move upwards. Slowly the other rooms with their occupants become visible, an eloquent image of urban loneliness.

### CORNY AND TOUCHING

Verhoeven talks about the his need to visualize essential social themes. “In the end I want to discuss the need for community, which we lost when we abandoned the church. Family ties have loosened, we travel a lot and further from home. The new individualised world, however, still bears traces of togetherness in unexpected places. Everyone gets the IKEA brochure in their letterbox.

Corny, but it’s also quite touching. Apart from the football stadium and the disco, the theatre might be one of the few places where we can experience a sense of togetherness. *U bevindt zich hier* originated when I was lying on my bed in my bedroom and realised that the girl next door was only about 80 cm away from me. We spend eight hours a day together like that, but we don’t know each other. The installation functions as a model of the world. You need a certain sensitivity

to understand that. My performances are actually training courses in sensitivity. By offering people a pleasant experience, I hope to communicate the lack of such an experience in our daily lives.”

### REFUGEE BECOMES GUIDE

The term experience theatre, created to describe his work, does not appeal to him anymore. “The form language of experience theatre rapidly becomes ineffective. When you have had such a physical experience ten times it does not have the same impact anymore. You know what to expect. Touching, in fact, is very easy. If I blindfold you, whisper to you from a distance and touch you with a feather, then this triggers the feeling of being a child. The question is what it serves; it should be about the content.” From that point of view it is easy to see a pattern in Verhoeven’s work. After projects such as *Uw koninkrijk kome* and *Sporenonderzoek* (*Trail tracking*) focusing on form, Verhoeven uses his language more and more to express his social commitment like in *U bevindt zich hier* and especially in *Niemandland* (*No man’s land*). In *Niemandland*, each visitor was taken for a walk by a refugee through a certain part of the city where the theatre audience usually never comes. A refugee becomes a guide, but no real contact is made. “I want to discuss social problems but want to give a polysemic, poetic answer. To me the spectator is the hero. I want to know what he or she observes and listens, I want to confuse and move and then set them thinking. I prefer showing the complexity of matters that seem to be simple at first, instead of giving a solution. The only thing I want to achieve is that people start looking more carefully. Even if I had a solution, making a performance for twenty people is probably not the best method.”

### CONFUSING AND QUESTIONING

Verhoeven’s next project goes even further. “I am going to do something in Sri Lanka. Or better: I am going to try and establish contact between Europe and Sri Lanka. My idea is to make a link between two internet cafés, one here and one there on the beach. You enter an Internet café in Holland and it starts when you answer a spam mail. I want to think about ways to convey the physical experience of Sri Lanka – the smell,

the warmth, the water. I want to start something between 20 people here and 20 people there, two cells at a large distance moving simultaneously. You have to get the feeling that together you are a generator: the more you type, the closer you get to Sri Lanka.

I was there last winter at the invitation of Neil Butler. He is a festival programmer in Edinburgh but he is also a fanatical surfer. He always visited the same hotel in Sri Lanka, which he even bought. He was there during the Tsunami on Boxing Day 2004. He had to run for his life, he has terrible stories and the village where his hotel was, has completely vanished. In order to help the population there, he established an arts centre, with the aim to make Europe visible there and make Sri Lanka visible here. I want to ask the question how and why we commit ourselves to those in need on the other side of the world. Why did we give millions to victims of the Tsunami, but not to Darfur or Rwanda? How do you want the money to be spent there? After the Tsunami the strangest things happened. Schools were built in villages without children, people brought loads of duvets to a tropical island. I find the marketing of developmental aid very interesting. And at the same time their relationship with water and death. To me the central question is: how can people there establish honest contact with you when they depend on you for money and donations?”

### BEYOND PERFORMANCES

Verhoeven is aware that his theatre form is exclusive. “I am thinking about how to make it bigger. Not necessarily for a mass audience but I want to see if my form works for an audience of two hundred people. That is starting to happen and I am very happy about that. Furthermore, a story originates beyond the performances. *Niemandland* starts with twenty people under the blue Departures notice boards of the Central Station in Utrecht carrying a name-board with a foreign name on it. It is a confusing image, questioning hospitality. This could also affect the train passengers who happen to pass by, or people who see a picture of it in the newspaper.” ◀

[www.driesverhoeven.com](http://www.driesverhoeven.com)  
[www.tin.nl/en](http://www.tin.nl/en)

# THE SPECTATOR IS THE HERO



THEATRE PRODUCTION YOU ARE HERE

# NEW TOWNS ON OLD AND NEW LAND

**What do Washington, Almere and Islamabad have in common? All three are New Towns, cities that have been carefully conceived at the drawing board. Whereas the design for the American capital dates back to the end of the eighteenth century, both Almere and Islamabad are products of the twentieth century.**

SANDRA JONGENELEN



Architectural historian Michelle Provoost is the director of the International New Town Institute (INTI) in Almere, which was founded last year. “New Towns are always associated with areas undergoing major economic development. Sometimes the reasons for building them are political or military. In Italy, for instance, there are medieval New Cities that are literally called *Città Nuova*.” Provoost also explains that the decolonization process of the last century led to the construction of new cities. Karachi, the capital of Pakistan during the colonial regime, had to make way for Islamabad, which started to be planned and built in 1958. The same goes for Dodoma, which took over from Dar es Salaam as the capital of Tanzania in 1978. In addition to being an architectural historian, Provoost is the author of various books.

## PLANNED TOWN UNINHABITABLE

Provoost is fascinated by New Towns. “It has to do with the discrepancy between the great ideals of the designers and the way it often gets completely out of control. An urban developer would consider such a New Town a failure, but as an architectural historian I consider it a normal process. A designed town isn’t normal. Failure is. It is a phase the town has to undergo. Unfor-

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tunately, the preconception that a designed town is guaranteed to become an uninhabitable town often proves to be true. A town is conceived at a certain moment in time, somewhere in the fifties or sixties of the last century, for instance. At that moment, it is virtually impossible for planners to look into the future and anticipate unknown developments. Furthermore, the urban development plans of the past were not very flexible, and after a few decades, the town becomes a disappointment. The opportunities to adapt are missing.” She gives the example of Amsterdam-West, one of the current problem districts of the Dutch capital. This garden city was designed in the thirties according to a plan by Cornelis van Eesteren, one of the most modern and best planners of the last century. Provoost: “It was an ideal, spaciouly configured district, with mainly council housing. But eventually, everybody who was in any way able to afford it, preferred to live inside the traffic ring around the centre of town. The New Town mainly attracted low-income groups, among them many immigrants. No one could have foreseen that this process would take place. It’s not a problem, though. The area will certainly transform and gentrify in the future. And then it will finally become a normal, diverse town.” The reference to the Jordaan and the Pijp, two Amsterdam districts within the ring, is obvious. One hundred years ago, they were working-class neighbourhoods too. Now they are inhabited by relatively well-to-do people. In this way, Provoost immediately answers the question how long a New Town remains a New Town: “It is safe to say it took longer than fifty years. With the Pijp it took a century.”

## ONE-SIDED POPULATION

The best-known New Town of the Netherlands is Almere, where the first house was built in 1976. Contrary to other towns like Nieuwegein, Zoetermeer and Emmen, Almere is struggling with a label many people consider to be negative. The coming of INTI has to improve that pitiful image. “Almere wants to position itself as the centre of New Towns.” Part of this strategy is Almere’s nomination as the Cultural Capital of Europe in 2018. The town council still has to approve the proposal, but if they do, Almere stands a good chance according to Provoost, also because it presents itself as underdog and New Town. “It would be unique if a New Town could call itself Cultural Capital of Europe. It has

“NEW TOWNS ARE ALWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH AREAS UNDERGOING MAJOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.”



ALMERE, PHOTO NEW TOWN INSTITUTE

never happened before.” According to policy makers, Almere will have around 350,000 inhabitants in 2030; currently, it only has 184,000. This development is comparable to other New Towns. Many New Towns have a one-sided population consisting mainly of lower middle-class families. The pioneers who settled in Almere twenty five years ago, no longer have children at home. What do they need their front gardens for? They often move back close to Amsterdam. As soon as their children have left the New Towns, there is little to bind the parents to these places. Another symptom of New Towns is the lack of employment and cultural facilities. Almere does boast a theatre, but many people prefer to go to Amsterdam for an evening out, where there is plenty of oppor-

tunity to go for a pleasant drink afterwards. The same applies to Nieuwegein near Utrecht.

## BOREDOM AND DIVORCES

The reservations about New Towns justify the question to what extent they are a failure. “This is debatable”, is Provoost’s diplomatic answer. She is talking about the book *Lelystad*, in which journalist and author Joris van Casteren writes about his youth in the pioneering town of the same name, located in the same polder as Almere. “The boredom, divorces and vandalism coincide with the methodical construction of the town. But it goes too far to put the blame merely on the design of the New Town. It has to do ▶

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# NEW TOWNS ON OLD AND NEW LAND

“THE DUTCH APPROACH SERVES AS A MODEL, AND PEOPLE WANT TO SEE IT WITH THEIR OWN EYES.”



ALMERE, PHOTO NEW TOWN INSTITUTE



ALMERE, PHOTO NEW TOWN INSTITUTE

with a certain process. The problems of New Towns, which can also be seen in the French banlieues, are not unique.” What is also remarkable is the fact that inhabitants often do not use their New Towns in the way the planners had in mind. When van Casteren was playing football with his friends in one of the courtyards, one of the town planners who also happened to live there, called out: “Hey boys, this is not what it’s been designed for!” But elsewhere too, people do as they like without thinking. They open a church in a car park, or start a shop in their garage. In the seventies, the designers of Almere meant public transport to be a guiding principle; in practice, people primarily use their cars. In Almere, as well as in other New Towns, there are relatively many commut-

ers, there is high unemployment, no higher education, and poor general education. The INTI is currently investigating New Towns in Europe. Provoost: “Are they also struggling with this? What have they learned, and what lessons can be exchanged?”

## LARGEST POLDER IN THE WORLD

Between Birmingham and London lies Milton Keynes, designed in 1967. This New Town founded a large university at the outset and attracted many companies, which resulted in relatively fewer commuters and more high-quality jobs and education. Because the scientific institute attracts a great number of young people, the population is more diverse. The establishment of INTI

in Almere is also meant as an educational boost. The scientific institute is a co-operation with the Technical University of Delft, the University of Amsterdam, the Hogeschool of Amsterdam, Heritage Centre Nieuw Land in Lelystad, and the Public Library in Almere. On a European level, nine New Towns work together in The European New Towns Platform. Among them is Vataa, a New Town in Finland, which has been inspired by Almere. The Dutch city serves as a model, notices Provoost. “We often see delegations walking around here. People like coming here, also because Almere has grown enormously over the past years, and because everything has been well-documented.” Although there are hardly any similarities between Almere and the mega New Towns that

are being built from scratch for millions of people in China and Brasil, the town also attracts visitors from these countries. “They are primarily interested in how we have done the urban management.” For many foreigners, the technical aspects concerning the water management are also quite interesting. Almere was built on what once was the sea and is now the biggest polder in the world. How does such a land-reclamation process work? Also in Korea, New Towns are being built on New Land. “The Dutch approach serves as a model, and people want to see it with their own eyes.” ◀

# DUTCH DESIGN: DOES IT STILL EXIST?

## THE CONSUMER HAS BECOME A DESIGNER HIMSELF



CINDERELLA TABLE • 2009 DEMAKERSVAN • JEROEN VERHOEVEN

**Scandinavian style, Italian styling, Dutch functionalism. Until recently the shape of a product or graphical expression could easily be linked to a country or a region, but this is getting increasingly difficult. If countries do distinguish themselves, it has more to do with design mentality than with a specific form language. Dutch design is now conceptual or narrative. In fact, does Dutch design still exist?**

MARC VLEMMINGS

The big news at the Salone del Mobile this year was the launch of the Italian furniture label Skitsch. Although it is Italian, only one third of the almost thirty designers working for Skitsch are Italian, the rest come from other, mostly European, countries. The Netherlands are well represented, with six designers. In an interview for the magazine Items, Cristina Morozzi, the art director of Skitsch, explained what attracts her in Dutch designers. “Dutch designers are interesting at present because their way of thinking originates in craft, which leads to new ideas and forms.”

Conversely, it is true that Dutch designers, according to Morozzi, need Italian companies to produce and distribute their designs. “The problem is that the Netherlands do not have the industry to take new work into production. This is our strength, as Italy possesses an excellent industry that manages the dialogue with designers very well.”

What applies to Italy, is also true for a country like Finland, which is renowned for its design and good design schools. Its best-known designers have been dead for a long time, however. The Finnish industry, from Nokia to Arabia, relies heavily on foreign designers. Sometimes a change in ownership leads to a change in design. The design of products made by electronics company Braun was typically German when Dieter Rams and his predecessor Fritz Eichler defined the design policy in the fifties, sixties and seventies. But Braun has been part of the American Gillette company for many years now, and gradually the characteristic design has had to give way to a less pronounced, global style.

matter of national preference. The consumer has become a designer himself. This development is still in its infancy, but will lead to a change in the role of the professional designer. The designer will become a director of the designing process, and at best will only create the rough outline instead of defining the design from beginning to end. In fact, this development in graphical design, started years ago with the advent of the personal computer, which enables every user to express his own graphical ideas. We are now on the threshold of 3D-printing, enabling everybody to produce three-dimensional projects themselves. The advent of phenomena such as ‘design thinking’ and ‘social design’ leads to dematerialising of design. Designers are increasingly working on projects that do not produce a physical object or a graphical expression, but are focused on social themes such as sustainability, social cohesion and welfare.

Their way of thinking - design thinking - may lead to new perceptions in policymakers, politicians and managers, who often find it difficult to leave the beaten track in their search for creative solutions. Themes such as sustainability, social cohesion and welfare exceed national boundaries. National preferences play a less important role in this, as these themes often concern universal values. In the United States, design thinking has gained access to the business world, and the authorities are left behind, whereas the authorities in Europe are sooner inclined to take the lead in this. In the Netherlands, designers have been asked to think about new forms of customer service by banks and insurance companies. Those who have embraced design thinking are certainly not the lesser gods. Tim Brown, CEO of Ideo, one of the most prominent design bureaus in the

### THE DESIGNER AS DIRECTOR

There are more factors that are making design become less a

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# DUTCH DESIGN: DOES IT STILL EXIST?



STUDIO MAARTEN BAAS • REAL TIME • 2009

# DUTCH DESIGN: DOES IT STILL EXIST?

“THERE’S NO SUCH THING AS  
BRITISH DESIGN”

world, is highly pleased with this development, and says: “What excites the best design thinkers today is the challenge of applying their skills to problems that matter.”

## CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

Form also seems to be less important when it comes to physical products. An exhibition devoted to ‘design with a story’ (conceptual design) was held this year at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Surprisingly, the vast majority of objects on display at this exhibition, called *Telling Tales*, were made by Dutch designers like Jurgen Bey, Tord Boontje and Marcel Wanders. This was so obvious that critics in the British press asked themselves what was going on. With their conceptual design, Dutch designers appeal to a feeling that is shared internationally. Nevertheless, it was remarkable that so much work by Dutch designers was shown, because conceptual design is also made by designers from other countries. The personality of the designer is more important than his country of origin. Droog Design, for instance, is known as the trailblazer of conceptual design, but hasn’t been a purely Dutch affair for a long time. “There’s no such thing as British design”, was the recent headline of an article in the British newspaper the Guardian, in which the question was raised how British, British design actually is. The heading could just as well have been: “There’s no such thing as national design.” ◀

## DUTCH DESIGN STARS LEAVE THE NETHERLANDS

*The design schools play an important role in the internationalization of design. This was already the case in the thirties of the last century when teachers from Bauhaus, who were driven from Nazi Germany, founded ‘De Nieuwe Kunstschool’ in Amsterdam. This school had to close down in 1941, but strongly influenced design education in the Netherlands. Until the nineties this education relied on the model which was developed at the beginning of the last century by the German Bauhaus.*

*Today design students come to the Netherlands to study for a Bachelor or a Master degree. In particular the Gerrit Rietveld Academy and the Design Academy in Eindhoven are popular. Almost half of the students at the Gerrit Rietveld’s come from abroad. The Master studies of the Design Academy is, as far as students are concerned, almost completely foreign. Quite a few students from abroad stay in the Netherlands after their studies and set up a business as designers. The opposite also occurs. After his graduation from the Design Academy one of the stars of Dutch Design, Tord Boontje, studied for his Master degree in London, where he started a design studio with his British wife, who is also a designer. A few years ago he moved to the French countryside. The last few years several Dutch designers have moved abroad, either because they found their own country too confining, or because they formed a relationship with someone from abroad. In New York, a modest Dutch design scene has even developed. Last year Hella Jongerius exchanged Rotterdam for Berlin. The Brabant designer duo, Job Smeets and Nynke Tynagel, moved their studio Job to Antwerp some years ago.*



THE FIG LEAF WARDROBE, 2008 - DESIGNED BY TORD BOONTJE © META

# OLD MASTERS BEHIND THE URALS



COLLECTION RIJKSMUSEUM

**Since the seventeenth century, Dutch works of art have been distributed all over the world, also to Russia. Everyone knows the Rembrandts in the Hermitage, but you will also find Dutch paintings in remote places like Kazan, Smolensk, Tula, Tbilisi and Almaty.**

KOEN KLEIJN

A visit to a museum in Russia can be a real revelation. The museum of Saratov, a sleepy, down-at-heel provincial Volga town, is a sparkling, freshly renovated institute, with outstanding climate control, security and lighting, where French, Italian, Spanish, Russian and Dutch paintings are shown to their best advantage. As well as the great cultural shrines in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, there are dozens of small museums with highly diverse collections that include quite a number of Dutch and Flemish paintings. Many of these works were once privately owned, confiscated by the Bolsheviks and distributed as national art treasures throughout the entire Soviet Union. Each district got its own Frans Hals, so to speak. The academic level regarding art history was fairly high in the Soviet Union, but the country was isolated; curators had little contact with their colleagues in the rest of the world, partly because of the language barrier. This has changed, but there is still a lot we don't know about these Dutch and Flemish works of art in Russia, their quality, their provenance and their physical condition. Conversely, the Russian curators still do not have many connections outside their own countries.

#### ORIGINAL OR COPY

A few Dutch organizations are actively improving this situation. Gerdien Verschoor is responsible for the activities of Codart, an international network of curators involved with Dutch and Flemish art. She has just come back from a study trip with 30 curators to Helsinki and Saint Petersburg. Ms Verschoor: "It was a large international group of people from museums such as the Amsterdam Historisch Museum, Rijksmuseum, Louvre, Prado, and Getty. We visited a number of museums, had a look in depots, especially those of the Hermitage, of course. So much is stored there that some works will never be displayed, and will never be included in exhibitions. They were now shown to us." Verschoor is also well-informed about all the other things that can be seen outside of Moscow and Saint Petersburg. "Far beyond the Urals, there are a lot more paintings than you would imagine. The knowledge certainly exists, but the local curators cannot always see whether a Frans Francken is actually a real Frans Francken, or an 18th-century copy, and whether this Rembrandt was not actually painted by one of his pupils."

#### NEW LIFE

Peripheral to the Codart visit, three curators attended a symposium for Russian regional museums in Jasnaja Polyana, the estate of the writer Lev Tolstoj, near the city of Tula. Bernard Vermet was one of them. He works for the Stichting Cultuur Inventarisatie (Foundation for Cultural Inventory), that registers and documents Dutch and Flemish cultural heritage in countries outside Western Europe and North America. In Tula, the Dutch curators gave a workshop about digitization and registration. Vermet: "The symposium was organized in collaboration with the Dutch Cultural Heritage Foundation. They developed a programme for the

registration of museum collections, the MuseumD-System. This is a very useful programme, it is cheap, and can easily be adapted to individual wishes, also with respect to security and accessibility. This programme was distributed with the support of the Dutch government even as far as Namibia. It is ideal for art historians, but an anthropologist can work with it as well. It has now also been translated into Russian. The Russian Museums Association is promoting it among its members, and an instructor is being trained who will be able to coach these Russian museums. Eight of them were present at the first symposium, among them provincial museums from Perm, Kaluga, Kursk, Rybinsk. The museums had practised with the programme using their collections of Dutch paintings. Then, of course, they also want to show what they possess and which questions they have. That is really nice. Then we show them the site of the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (Netherlands Institute for Art History) that has indexes and databases that enable you to quickly make a comparison and also to obtain a first impression about attribution of a work. We also draw their attention to the site of Codart, which contains a lot of literature, and the names of curators they can contact." Verschoor: "The museum in Perm turned out to have two largely unknown paintings by Jacob Jordaens. That was quite a discovery. The paintings had already been in circulation outside the museum on occasion, but by presenting them to this group of international curators, they are given a new lease of life."

#### MOSCOW STEALS GOYA

Russia is a very fruitful area of research, Vermet says: "Poor English is still the most important factor that prevents them from having contact with the outside world and access to information and networks. But organizing these smaller museums is also important for the museums themselves, in order to have a stronger position vis-a-vis the large institutes in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. These dominate the country, and the rest is of minor importance. For instance, the state museum of Nizhny-Novgorod had a beautiful Goya. When it had to be returned after a period of loan, Moscow decided that it looked better there. Nizhny could do nothing. This has been the general practice for many years." What, in the end, is the benefit? "To outsiders this might not seem very important at all," Vermet says. "Who, apart from the art historians, would be interested in the fact that a painting by Jan Vonck can be found in the museum of Tula? But the overriding factor is that these people will be involved in the larger community of scholars and art historians, world wide. This is highly necessary after 60 years of isolation." ◀

RKD: [www.website.rkd.nl](http://www.website.rkd.nl)  
CODART: [www.codart.nl](http://www.codart.nl)  
Stichting Cultuur Inventarisatie: [www.culturalinventory.nl](http://www.culturalinventory.nl)  
Cultural Heritage Foundation: [www.culturalheritage.cc](http://www.culturalheritage.cc)  
Instituut Collectie Nederland: [www.icn.nl](http://www.icn.nl)

# TOLERANCE, RATHER THAN HOSPITALITY

**“There is no culture of hospitality in The Netherlands, you’re left to do your own thing”, says Yolande Harris, a British artist who came as an artist-in-residence to the Netherlands seven years ago, and stayed. What is the meaning of such a statement to the artists-in-residence programme?**

DANIELLE VAN ZUIJLEN

Apparently, a culture that in essence is not regarded as hospitable is still capable of producing a phenomenon called artist-in-residence, which provides the constant flow of foreign artists with the opportunity to develop their work in peace and quiet. The concept of residency is also an import product that adapts itself to the way in which the art scene in a country is organized. In America, for instance, you will find privately funded residency institutes that have been there for decades, and in Germany there are castles where artists are received as kings.

In the Netherlands, the number of artists-in-residence has increased dramatically over the past ten years, and they are found in all shapes and sizes. The organisations are mostly found in visual arts, but the possibilities for literary authors have also increased. Residencies are set up in accordance with the organisation’s objectives. In most cases the places are unique, with characteristics linked to the place itself, and to the history of the organisation.

## ARTIST INITIATIVES

Originally, Dutch residency programmes were mostly artist initiatives. Some of them developed into substantial institutes. More and more, residencies are used to involve artists in urban development projects like, for instance, Jeanne van Heeswijk’s Blauwe Huis (The Blue House) at IJburg, a new residential area located on an artificial island near Amsterdam. Residencies can be informal or institutionalised. Some of them focus on production, like the Netherlands Institute for Media art in Amsterdam, on one specific medium, like the European Ceramic Workcentre in Den Bosch, or on

providing studios to international colleagues, like Rotterdam Artists in Residence – a platform connecting five artist initiatives. Residencies are often found in large cities, but sometimes also in former monasteries or in factories in remote towns and villages. For instance, the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture, known in the Netherlands as Fonds BKVB, has recently founded a residency in Den Helder – in the north of North-Holland. The fact that a foundation initiates a residency as part of its policy, is new, and illustrates the extent to which the programme has become institutionalised.

## CONNECTION WITH THE LOCAL ART SCENE

The way in which guests and users of residencies experience Dutch hospitality, does not just depend on facilities or the level of fees, although these are certainly very important. Foreign artists come here not only to create work or to show it, they also want to make contact with the Dutch art scene. In this respect, the people who are responsible for the programme, and who take care of hospitality on the work floor, are of vital importance, especially regarding the link between guests and the local art scene. The feeling of being welcome depends critically on the personal reception and the amount of energy the organisers have for their guests, in order to support them in a way that is worthwhile. A constant flow of energy is not always a matter of course, because receiving guests is a 24-hour matter, as is the case in commercial hospitality. Because of this, initiatives sometimes just cease to exist, or, when the organisation is strong enough, are handed over to another organiser with new energy,

which happened in the case of Hotel Maria-kapel in Hoorn. Therefore, access to current information is of great importance to artists who want to find a high-quality studio that really suits them.

## SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND CONTEXT

For this purpose, Trans Artists was set up more than a decade ago. This is an organisation that tries to maintain an overview of the always changing programme. Trans Artists does not restrict itself to locations in the Netherlands, but maps out the field worldwide. This information finds its way to artists who work cross-border, via the internet, but also via workshops, expert meetings and individual advice. They are the main target group. In order to increase opportunities for artists, Trans Artists promotes professionalisation of the programme by organising meetings that focus on sharing knowledge and experiences among the various residencies. Partly because of the fact that ‘knowledge and information are made available in a generous way’, the Netherlands has a strong artist-in-residence programme. What matters to the organisers of a good residency is: sharing knowledge, sharing context, providing access to everything that is available. The Netherlands, with its wide possibilities, appears to be more hospitable than you would expect on the basis of our culture, in which tolerance is considered to be more important than hospitality. ◀

*Danielle van Zuijlen is an artist and a curator.*

[www.transartists.nl](http://www.transartists.nl)  
[www.blauwehuis.org/blauwehuisvz/](http://www.blauwehuis.org/blauwehuisvz/)  
[www.nimk.nl](http://www.nimk.nl)  
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[www.rair.nl](http://www.rair.nl)  
[www.hotelmariakapel.nl](http://www.hotelmariakapel.nl)



HET BLAUWE HUIS (AMSTERDAM, 2005-2009), JEANNE VAN HEESWIJK, PUMP UP THE BLUE, BERVE PARAPON, IJburg, AMSTERDAM 2007. PHOTO: RAMON MOSTERD

# FREE TO MOVE, LEFT TO DO YOUR OWN THING

**Yolande Harris (GB, 1975) is an artist and composer. She has been living and working in The Netherlands since she became a researcher at the Jan Van Eyck Academy in Maastricht in 2003.**

DANIELLE VAN ZUIJLEN

“An amazing place. You have a place to work, a stipend, you’re with an international group of people and advisors”. In 2007 she moved from Maastricht to Amsterdam, where she was artist in residence with different organizations dealing with new media, for example the Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst. Small, independent organisations, which, together with Mediamatic and Waag Society, form a special working environment. A discourse where high-level research into the new media is encouraged, explains Yolande. This special climate attracts international artists and keeps them in the Netherlands. This discourse enabled Yolande to develop her work at a professional level, without having to take commercial objectives into account.

Yolande works with sound and images and experiments with the latest technology in order to enrich our experience of space by means of sound. She created the Satellite Sounder, which translates satellite signals into squeaking, scratching sounds. When you watch the YouTube clip, you can see exactly what she means to achieve. People wearing head phones

are walking across a bridge, looking around in wonder, making minimal movements forward and backward, while the gadget sounds out the environment. Through their movement, space creates music that completely absorbs them. “My move to Amsterdam was the point where I committed myself more to The Netherlands”. A basic stipend of the Netherlands Foundation for Visual Arts, Design and Architecture enabled her to continue with the development of her work. For Yolande, the attraction of Amsterdam is also in “the huge number of international people passing through”. But “it risks falling apart”: she remarks, that there have been fewer opportunities and that payments have been lower this last year, because some organisations had their subsidies cut. In the meantime, she herself would be termed as a ‘long term resident’. “It’s hard to stop being a foreigner, to get beyond a certain level”. She feels that her knowledge of the Dutch language is insufficient to talk about her work. But she does fill out her tax return form herself – in Dutch. Dealing with bureaucracy is one of the challenges. In spite of her success -

she presented projects that were developed in the Netherlands in, among other places, Barcelona, Los Angeles, Florida, New York and Frankfurt, and in 2008 started a practice-based PhD in composition at the Orpheus Institute in Ghent/Leiden University - the question ‘how can I make it sustainable’ is a realistic one. In order to remain in The Netherlands, she would really like to teach; however, vacancies for positions of this kind are seldom made public. Long-term opportunities are even rarer. “Culturally, there is not a great tradition of hospitality in the Netherlands. You’re free to move, but also left to do your own thing”. She sometimes experiences a certain lack of roots. With her Satellite Sounder, Harris stimulates new, more intuitive relationships with the location in which the user finds himself. Perhaps it offers a remedy for the lack of roots that characterises many internationally operating artists. ◀

[www.yolandeharris.net](http://www.yolandeharris.net)  
<http://sunrunsun.nimk.nl>  
[www.scorescapes.net](http://www.scorescapes.net)

## “THE HUGE NUMBER OF INTERNATIONAL PEOPLE PASSING THROUGH”



YOLANDE HARRIS, SUN RUN SUN'S SATELLITE SOUNDERS, (AT SCHIRG KUNSTHALLE FRANKFURT 2009)

### FACTS & FIGURES

Trans Artists shares reliable knowledge on facts, use and value of artist-in-residence opportunities. The Trans Artists website offers a vast database of more than 800 residential art centres, listed by discipline and country. Furthermore, the website contains all relevant knowledge concerning artist-in-residence programmes: experiences, deadlines, application procedures, funding, networks, research, etc. Trans Artists also actively promotes the use of residency opportunities, for instance by its expert meetings and workshop programmes in The Netherlands, Europe and beyond.

[www.transartists.org](http://www.transartists.org)

### PLATFORM AIR NL

This platform operates as a pool for the international residential studios run by artists' initiatives in The Netherlands and Flanders. In the Low Countries, there are some 50 guest studios at artist-run initiatives. These fulfil the function that artist-in-residence programs offer elsewhere in the world. The guest studios are structured in a different way and they have their own specific profiles alongside the big, international residencies like the Jan van Eyck Academy, the Rijksakademie, The Ateliers and the European Ceramics Workcentre. Trans Artists coordinates the Platform AIR NL and takes an active stance in promoting the visibility of the Dutch international guest studios and supporting the collaboration among them.

The AIR-Platform website provides up-to-date knowledge about all the guest studios, their projects and international exchanges.

Most guest studios are situated in the cities of Amsterdam (15), Rotterdam (9), and Eindhoven (4). Most of them are multidisciplinary, some offer outstanding facilities for specific disciplines, such as the Free Glass centre in Zaandam, or the graphic workplace and bronze foundry of Beeldenstorm in Eindhoven. In the rural areas, artists run exciting residences focusing, for instance, on landscape (the Peer Group's Portable Artist In Residence: P.A.I.R. in Allardsoog in the Province of Drenthe) or on collaborative artistic projects (Hotel Maria-kapel in the old town of Hoorn, to the north of Amsterdam).

# ADIOS MERWEDEPLEIN!

“ALL GENOCIDES  
HAS THERE MIDDLEMEN”



MERWEDEPLEIN, AMSTERDAM IN THE THIRTIES. PHOTO: VAN AGT MAAL

**Ah yes, exile is an empire made up of several kingdoms. On the one hand, you enter the kingdom of the pain of having been uprooted, of sickness for your homeland, of abandonment, solitude and oblivion; on the other hand, you enter the kingdom of re-emergence, of hospitality and the friendship of those who welcome you onto their piece of land, who accompany you for your own strength and help you to gather together the pieces of yourself that vagrancy has scattered painfully along the way, who help to reconstitute you!**

Amsterdam Vluchtstad (City of Refuge) opened its gates widely to receive me as I approached my half-century. A writer in residence! Putting down on the pages of exercise books my 25 years of wandering around outside of my own country. Merwedeplein! Anne Frank would look out from a picture frame at the entrance to the living room, a look of sparkling mischief and vivacity. She inspired insolence, rebelliousness, breathed the sweetness and whisper of a possible Utopia: write, keep writing, and write forever, even when the fire is burning all around! She was magnificent, simply super-human, for having opened the window on Nazi barbarism, while her teenage feet dangled over the funeral pyre, with words charged with implacable truth: life is sacred and whoever takes the life of another is destroying the world. No one has been able to extinguish the hope that is present in her adolescent look, mischievous and yet already so mature.

As for me, in the dusk of my exile, fumbling over a fictional trilogy in which it became essential to push my multiple destinies into a crossroads: Chad, “the

shit country I love”, but which refuses to become my Utopia, the booming of the war cannons promising nothing super-human; Guatemala, where I discovered the lives of Maya refugees in the Yucatan, a brotherhood of resilience in exile; and finally a Darfur of refugees, this frozen time in which European armies, in all earnestness, raced in after the janjawid to counter the threat from China. Fine, multiple plots in a trilogy where the heroes are the victims of monstrous human greed and the ‘god’ Petrol. All genocides have their middlemen, a sad group of ‘collaborators’ that allow veritable murderers to play Pontius Pilate!

Amsterdam! A thousand friendships unfurled along the happy canals, a thousand songs whistled and hummed on my bicycle. Frequent stops at the innumerable museums, the opera houses, the theatres and the cinemas, humble collaborations with Power of Culture, Radio Nederland and the Holland Festival; interviews given and even being the subject of a film – The missing book – by a young Dutch director for the festivities of May 4 and 5; everything so as not to

provoke tedium in this crossroads city, rich in abounding culture. I also experienced all the four seasons in the Netherlands, even the one, already forgotten, of skating on the ice of the canals, ponds and lakes. Terrific! This frosty white winter was just for me.

A good harvest of words for books, a restless trilogy that will one day see the light of day. I am proud of it and happy about it! Today, I say a sad farewell to my neighbour Leo. I continue my snail trail towards other kitchen gardens, this time with a heavy heart. And I thought I was a real vagabond! But I have Tiziano, Els, Marijke, Charlotte, Edgar, Hélène, Jos, Ginger, Adriaan, Antoine and hundreds of friends at my side... ◀

Koulsy Lamko, September 21, 2009

*Koulsy Lamko (1959) is a Chadian-born author, poet and playwright*

# NOT LISTED, NEVERTHELESS ACKNOWLEDGED

**How is quality assessed in the international art world? Of course, artists whose work is sold well receive a lot of attention, but this is hardly a criterion for quality. It means that speculators think they can earn a lot of money with your work. In November 2009 this was apparent again when international art critics put the paintings of Damien Hirst aside and said they were second-rate.**

ALEX DE VRIES

There are numerous lists and because of the popularity of the canon, new top tens, top hundreds and top thousands are being made continuously. A good example is The Times Top 200 Artists of the 20th Century to Now. In the Netherlands we have the annual 'Elsevier Top-100 Dutch Artists'. The credibility of these lists greatly depends on arbitrary criteria. It is tempting to consider money as the deciding factor, because 'figures don't lie'. The international position of visual artists is determined by many different factors, and price is only one of them. Other criteria are the artist's level of education, the reputation of the institutes where his work is shown, awards, participation in prestigious exhibitions, publications and working periods in 'residencies'. A Dutch artist with a low ranking on the international price lists could, however, actually count on important appreciation in the art field. Dutch artists are certainly able to build an excellent reputation abroad on their own terms, without that necessarily leading to great fame and increase of prices. Moreover, the Netherlands, small as it is, has quite a good international reputation.

## CONTEMPORARY IN A TRADITION

An example of a Dutch designer with an international practice is Mirjam Kuitenbrouwer (Nijmegen, 1967). She was educated at the Hogeschool voor de Kunsten in Arnhem in 3D Design. After that she attended the post academic Jan van Eyck Academy in Maastricht for two years, not a teaching establishment, but an institute where professional visual artists perform specific research into the arts, in order to broaden the content of their work.

The research of Kuitenbrouwer was related to the way in which we can direct spatial observation in art and reality and how we experience this. She creates different types of work in all kinds of media, in which photography plays an important role. Typical for her is the way she connects extreme tradition to modern technologies and always stays in charge. She became very successful some 10 years ago with her small wooden panels, on which she combined different photographs of interiors and connected the extremes by means of techniques used in the art of painting. A solo exhibition in the Arnhem Museum for Modern Art and an independent publication 'Het verblijf: Mirjam Kuitenbrouwer's vertrek' gave a fascinating view of the first eight years of her practice. The way she gives insight into how her work comes into being is clear and certainly catches people's imagination abroad.

Her literary talent contributes to the idea that Dutch art has the quality of connecting a rational, serious working method to a spiritual and light-footed poetic quality. This way Kuitenbrouwer places herself, as a contemporary artist, in a tradition which leads from Jan van Eyck, Pieter Saenredam and Vermeer to Mondriaan and contemporary artists such as J.C.J. Vanderheyden and Pieter Laurens Mol. Galleries from Austria and Germany and later from Italy and Japan were introduced to her work at exhibitions and invited her to come and give presentations. This led to participation in expositions and solo presentations at institutes such as the Kasseler Kunstverein, the Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig and the Secession in Vienna, the Kunsthalle Nürnberg and Museo Michetti in Francavilla. This enabled her to enter the international collector's circuit ▶

MUSEUM DIRECTOR SJAREL EX CLOSELY EXAMINES THE SCULPTURE 'EN FILIGRANE' BY HARMEN BRETHOUWER (IN THE BACKGROUND), A PIECE OF WORK FROM 2005, HEIGHT 72 CM, CREATED FOR WORKSHOP ANTÓNIO NARTINS CASTRO IN GONDOMAR, PORTUGAL. COLLECTION MUSEUM BOJMANS VAN BEUNINGEN.

# NOT LISTED, NEVERTHELESS ACKNOWLEDGED



MIRJAM KUITENBROUWER, KOPSTATION, 2008, OBJECTIVES, SILICONE AND ENAMEL ON ACRYLIC, 70 X 110 X 83 CM, COLLECTION MUSEUM HET VALKHOF, NIJMEGEN  
RIGHT PAGE: MIRJAM KUITENBROUWER, FLITSERHUIS II, 70.5 X 54 X 25 CM, COURTESY GALERIE FERDINAND VAN DIETEN D'EENDT, AMSTERDAM

by purchases made by private collectors as well as museums, company collections and so on.

## FAME

Positive reviews about her work in Kunstforum, 'Art in America' and 'Frame' confirm the quality of her work at art theoretical level. In the meantime her work has evolved into installations and sculptures. Since 1998 Kuitenbrouwer has been represented by Galerie Wohnmaschine in Berlin and occupies a special place within the international visual arts world, which has, however, nothing to do with the list obsession that the popular media consider to be the deciding factor for fame. Kuitenbrouwer is not famous and the prices for her work are not extravagant, nevertheless, her position in the world of visual arts is remarkable. These last few years this reputation has paid off in the Netherlands as well. Apart from the Wohnmaschine, she also has a Dutch gallery, Ferdinand van Dieten d'Eendt, who is organizing a presentation of Kuitenbrouwer's work in New York soon, and museums are showing an interest in her work again. She presented her new work in the Jan Cunen Museum in Oss this year and Museum Het Valkhof in Nijmegen expanded its Kuitenbrouwer collection with a new sculpture, her archetypal work 'Kopstation'.

## AFFORDABLE MADNESS

Kuitenbrouwer is not the odd one out. Interesting is also, for instance, Dick Verdult, founder of the Instituut voor Betaalbare Waanzin (Institute for Affordable Madness), who has become very popular in South America with his folkloristic pastiches. The artist Rob Moonen built a remarkable reputation in Germany with critical political work, for which he later received appreciation in South Africa, Japan and Canada, also because of his collaboration with well-known theatre makers. His colleague, Loek Grootjans, whose work has a philosophical touch, inspired by Spinoza, Pier Paolo Pasolini and Georges Perec, with his Foundation for the benefit of the aspiration and the understanding of context, has museums throughout Europe, and even in Lima, Peru. The photographer Viviane Sassen has a special connection with Africa because she grew up there, and her photos receive international response at many different levels, from large fashion houses and fashion magazines to reputable art institutes.

Harmen Brethouwer (1960) from Aalten, has specialized in projects in which he focuses on Chinoiserie, Art Deco and Minimal Art and collaborates with craftsmen at home and abroad. According to his instructions, they make traditional or technological contributions to his work. At the beginning of 2008, an outline of his work was presented in Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam. Portuguese silver filigree, Japanese varnish, Makkum porcelain, French stingray leather, Chinese silk, Brabant clock bronze, German Fachwerk and Leerdam glass came together in an incredible oeuvre that has international fame. Brethouwer usually finances and sells his work through channels that are not common in art practice. Brethouwer is also fond of lists but he is not all that interested in his own ranking. ◀

*Alex de Vries is an independent author, advisor and curator.*





# FROM THE NETHERLANDS WITH ATTITUDE

Artists and cultural organisations from the Netherlands are active all over the world. During the first half of 2010, there will be two international events to which the Netherlands is going to make interesting cultural contributions: the World Expo in Shanghai and Ruhr.2010 European Capital of Culture. Dutch Mountains gives a preview.



THEATRE PRODUCTION TUSSEN FROM BOUWKJE SCHWEIGMAN, PHOTO: BEN VAN DUIN



ZOLLVEREIN ESSEN, PHOTO: MANNFRED VOLLMER

## CU AT DCC

In addition to 'Happy Street', the Dutch pavilion by architect John Körmeling on the World Expo site, the Dutch Culture Centre will open on March 6, 2010 in the Jing' An district, downtown Shanghai.

The Dutch Culture Centre is a unique cultural programme, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on the occasion of the World Expo. Intendant Martijn Sanders put together a diverse programme of exhibitions, performances and master classes in close collaboration with leading Dutch institutes and their Chinese counterparts. For six months, the Dutch Culture Centre will be the hot spot for Dutch - Chinese cultural exchange.

The Dutch Culture Centre, with its 1100 m<sup>2</sup>, will be housed in the recently renovated factory complex '800show', which was originally built in the 1940s. It is located next to the metro stop with a direct connection to the expo grounds.

## WHAT'S ON IN THE DCC?

Seven major exhibitions, including:

5-27 MARCH - 8 POSITIONS

On 4 Dutch influential designers - Rem Koolhaas, Irma Boom, Viktor & Rolf and Hella Jongerius - and their 4 Chinese counterparts. In collaboration with the Dutch DFA and Netherlands Architecture Institute/ NAI.

1-28 MAY - LINEAR FRIENDS, LINEAR CITY

About John Körmeling and his Chinese sources of inspiration. In collaboration with the Van Abbe Museum Eindhoven and Bizz Art Shanghai

16 JULY - 8 AUGUST - TO CONSUME

The Dutch paradox (projects in photography and media-related arts) and the Three Shadows Photography Art Centre in Beijing will organise an exhibition together about present-day consumerism.

[www.paradox.nl](http://www.paradox.nl)

And 26 weekends, including performances of: Het Nederlands Dans Theatre II (dance), Bouwkje Schweigman (theatre), Edith Kaldor (theatre), the Nederlandse Blazers Ensemble (music), Kytelman (hip hop) and prize-winning harpist Lavinia Meijer.

See [www.2010dcc.com](http://www.2010dcc.com) and [www.artsfoundation.nl](http://www.artsfoundation.nl) for the most up-to-date programme.

## GUEST IN THE RUHR AREA

In 2010, the German city Essen and the surrounding Ruhr Area will be the Cultural Capital of Europe. As next-door neighbour, The Netherlands will show even more what it has to offer, culturally speaking. Normally, there are more than 350 Dutch cultural presentations in the German state of Noord-Rijn Westfalen every year; in 2010 there will be even more.

The Netherlands is guest in the Ruhr Area but will also be host within the framework of the project GastGastgeber. Dutch artists, designers and architects will design special, temporary accommodations in several locations which will function as places to sleep and starting points for a special discovery trip through the Ruhr Area. At the same time they will display design, music, theatre and visual arts from the Netherlands.

GastGastgeber is part of the official RUHR.2010 programme and is one of the many collaboration projects with German partners. What else can we look forward to? The diversity is great: Dutch (music) theatre projects in Bochum and Essen, plenty of Dutch music (classical, contemporary, jazz) and creative industry projects and architectural projects in Dortmund, visual (scenery) art alongside the motorway in Bochum, Duisburg or in museums in Essen.

[www.essen-fuer-das-ruhrgebiet.ruhr2010.de](http://www.essen-fuer-das-ruhrgebiet.ruhr2010.de)  
[www.nl-ruhr.de](http://www.nl-ruhr.de)

For more art and culture from the Netherlands elsewhere in the world  
[www.sica.nl/buitengaats](http://www.sica.nl/buitengaats)

# ABOUT SICA



SICA - Dutch Centre for International Cultural Activities is the centre for international policy on culture. It promotes the international activities and ambitions of the Dutch cultural sector and is a platform for discussion with regard to the international policy on culture. Besides this, SICA gives information and advice to all disciplines within the world of art, about financing, networking, regions and practical matters. SICA acts as an organizing party for the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the EU Cultural programme. For Dutch ambassadors and cultural organizations abroad, SICA is the portal to the cultural sector in the Netherlands.

[www.sica.nl](http://www.sica.nl)