

press release  
may 2015

dutch pavilion  
56th international art exhibition  
la biennale di venezia

**M**  
mondriaan  
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Partecipazioni Nazionali



from the laguna of venice — a journal, 2014 (details)

## herman de vries to be all ways to be

curators: colin huizing and cees de boer  
commissioner: mondriaan fund  
9 may-22 november 2015  
opening dutch pavilion: 6 may 14:00 hrs

herman de vries (b. 1931) is representing the netherlands at the biennale arte 2015. under the title *to be all ways to be* the dutch pavilion exhibits new sculptures, objects, works on paper and photography by de vries. educated as a horticulturist and natural scientist, de vries gathers, orders, isolates and displays objects from nature, directing our attention to both the unity and the diversity of the world around us. in his preparatory travels to venice, de vries collected many objects from the laguna, the giardini and the city, resulting in multiple works both in the dutch pavilion and on the deserted island of lazaretto vecchio in the southern laguna. the exhibition is curated by colin huizing and cees de boer.

herman de vries has been working for more than sixty years on an uncommonly versatile oeuvre in which art, science and philosophy are juxtaposed with the reality of the world. initially involved in the international zero movement, he has since then focused on natural processes and phenomena and presents these as the primary, physical reality of human existence. the strength and richness of de vries' oeuvre stems from the biotope developed in his hometown of eschenau (germany) and during his travels, including venice.

the dutch pavilion in the giardini in venice built by rietveld in 1954 with its open, transparent and spatially poetic character, symbolizes the rational and optimistically progressive thinking that prevailed during the first half of the twentieth century. the organic and natural materials in the work of herman de vries, counter this notion and attest to the idea that natural processes and phenomena are too complex to explain rationally.

the title of the exhibition *to be all ways to be*, expresses the idea that the experience of and reflection on human existence takes many divergent paths, none of which is superior or inferior to the other. experienced through the eye, ear, body and nose, the works within the pavilion, the giardini and at different locations within the venetian lagoon, will question existing definitions and positions with regard to nature and culture.

as part of the exhibition herman de vries has explored the surroundings of the city of venice, the giardini and the laguna. one of de vries's pivotal works: *from the laguna of venice — a journal*, introduces this habitat into the dutch pavilion. people are encouraged to engage with this habitat: a special boat will ferry them to de vries's sanctuary: *natura mater* at the lazzaretto vecchio, several times a week. tickets for these trips are available at the dutch pavilion.

works by herman de vries are included in museum collections worldwide. in 2014 and 2015 de vries is participating in the retrospective zero exhibitions in the guggenheim museum new york, martin gropius bau berlin and stedelijk museum amsterdam.

colin huizing (b. 1965) is chief curator at the stedelijk museum schiedam. he curates exhibitions on artists and significant developments in the visual arts since 1960 until today. in 2011 he organized in close cooperation with the zero foundation (düsseldorf) the exhibition *nul = 0, dutch avant-garde in an international context, 1961–1966*. in 2014 he curated the exhibition *herman de vries — all* in the stedelijk museum schiedam.

cees de boer (b. 1955) studied general literature and philosophy and was awarded a ph.d. for his research on the collage novels of max ernst. currently he works as a freelance curator, art critic and art advisor. he published books on sjoerd buisman and norman dillworth; in 2000 he curated *ulay: performing light* at de appel arts centre, amsterdam together with the artist. september 2014 appeared his study of philosophical aspects of the work of herman de vries: *overal stroomt mijn oog*.

#### publication

the valiz/mondriaan fund publication *herman de vries — to be all ways to be* offers a parallel world to the exhibition, illuminating all the works on view and highlighting herman de vries in dialogue with jean-hubert martin (*magiciens de la terre*, centre georges pompidou / grande halle parc de la vilette, 1989; *affinités insolites*, grand palais paris, april 2016). martin confronts de vries with key concepts such as synesthesia, mimesis, craftsmanship, sound and music, smell, nature and ecology, and interweaves the works and thoughts of de vries, with images and other sources throughout his text. this publication opens up historical, art historical and philosophical contexts and perspectives.

for the exhibition and the publication designer remco van bladel has transformed the *futura* typeface by paul renner into a specially customized version, called *natura*. herman de vries has been using the *futura* typeface for more than four decades throughout his work. the *natura*, which consists only of lower case letters, contains some of the glyphs renner originally designed in 1925, which were slightly more geometrical than the final *futura*. van bladel set a system of variables to define the shape of each of these original glyphs through chance operations, thus making the individual letters of the *natura* both identical yet slightly different as well, in that way constituting a parallel to de vries' concept that nature presents individual entities only.

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#### mondriaan fund

the mondriaan fund, a publicly financed foundation for visual arts and cultural heritage, is responsible for the dutch entry to the venice biennale. for the 56th edition the mondriaan fund (again) issued an open call to curators, who were asked to produce a plan together with one or more artists in keeping with a state event. a specially appointed jury selected the de vries and huizing/de boer plan from 56 proposals.

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