

**Press Release - October 2004**

**NEDERLAND NIET NEDERLAND**

**Dutch art acquisitions 1980-2004**

A selection

With works by: Ben Akkerman, Erzsébet Baerveldt, Manon de Boer, Stanley Brouwn, René Daniëls, Jan Dibbets, Marlene Dumas, Jeroen Eisinga, Ger van Elk, Henri Jacobs, René Jolink, Niek Kemps, Suchan Kinoshita, Job Koelewijn, A.P. Komen, John Körmeling, Atelier Van Lieshout, Bert Loerakker, Mark Manders, Aernout Mik, Marc Mulders, Karen Murphy, Michael Raedecker, Jeroen de Rijke, Willen de Rooij, Lily van der Stokker, Elly Strik, Henk Visch, Marijke van Warmerdam, Lawrence Weiner en Erik Wesselo.

Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, 14 November 2004 – 16 May 2005

NEDERLAND NIET NEDERLAND looks back on the museum's purchasing policy for Dutch art over the past 25 years. The exhibition, curated by Christiane Berndes and Phillip van den Bossche, presents a subjective selection of purchases made by the Van Abbemuseum and pulls together several new narrative threads. In the first instance, an overview of this kind presupposes a definition of this part of the collection and a look at earlier decisions taken. For instance, who and what is in the museum collection and in which context can the various purchases be placed? How do you then make a choice from 25 years of acquiring Dutch art? How does a museum reinterpret and renew its own history through its collection exhibitions?

For NEDERLAND NIET NEDERLAND individual artists and art works were chosen. The approaches of the artists represented are broad and diverse, both in terms of choice of material and content. Along with paintings and drawings, this part of the collection comprises photographs, sculptures, installations and videoworks. In recent years the Van Abbemuseum has linked its purchasing policy to its exhibition agenda. From 1992 to the present day, the museum has organised major solo exhibitions as well as smaller displays, including work by Niek Kemps, Mark Manders, Marijke van Warmerdam, René Daniëls, Ger van Elk as well as De Rijke & De Rooij. The personal engagement and choice of an artist is always made more lasting by purchasing one or more works, or maintaining a dialogue with the relevant artist when putting together a representative body of his or her works. Several such purchases were made following an exhibition and have rarely, if ever, been shown. They now form part of the current exhibition and are displayed in rooms in combination with works by various contemporaries or artists from the same area, like René Daniëls and Henk Visch.

The exhibition's title is a play on the words 'EINDHOVEN NIET

EINDHOVEN' which appears in the 1987 painting 'zig-zag Zigzag' by René Daniëls. NEDERLAND NIET NEDERLAND does not refer to the often maintained negation of a Dutch identity, but sets the door open for a type of 'active relativism' – a productive form of 'self-assured doubt'.\* What role does the area or city where an artist lives and works play? Or how does the notion of 'community' work in relation to nationality, or the passport as a legal document? The exhibition focuses on Dutch purchases and serves as a basis for a series of critical questions and future scenarios. Collecting implies making choices and the displays and acquisitions of Dutch art cannot be separated from international exhibition policy. As well as a selection from the purchasing policy of the last twenty-five years, works by Manon de Boer and Lily van der Stokker, for instance, introduce the first artists of a possible new acquisitions policy. In addition, throughout the museum a number of so-called 'sundries' have been introduced, including work from the collection, a recent addition by Atelier Van Lieshout and 'Fragmentarium' by Job Koelewijn. In the auditorium are screenings of films and videos by Manon de Boer, Jeroen Eisinga, Erik Wesselo and Komen & Murphy.

The responses to the many questions arising from this part of the collection are not easily translated into a standard exhibition model. Thus NEDERLAND NIET NEDERLAND is more than a display in a number of museum rooms. Over the next six months the Van Abbemuseum will organise a series of events and projects around and alongside the exhibition, including a video programme of the artists' community in Brussels, where a great many Dutch artists have established themselves in recent years, and a symposium on the collection policies of Dutch museums concerning Dutch art. Recently there has been on-going debate in various media on Dutch culture and art policy. With NEDERLAND NIET NEDERLAND and its attendant events over the next few months, we hope as a museum to contribute fresh angles and recent historical insights to this discussion.

\*the term was coined by Jacques de Kadt and along with 'self-assured doubt' was quoted by Dick Pels in his Dutch essay "Do I like the Netherlands Enough" (Vrij Nederland, no. 38, 18 September, 2004).

\*\* Or as Martin Walser in his novel 'Ein springender Brunnen' wrote in 1998: "The past is in the present in such a way that it cannot be extracted like you can retrieve a substance from another substance using a clever technique so that you then have the substance as such. The past as such does not exist. It exists only as part of what is in the present."

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