

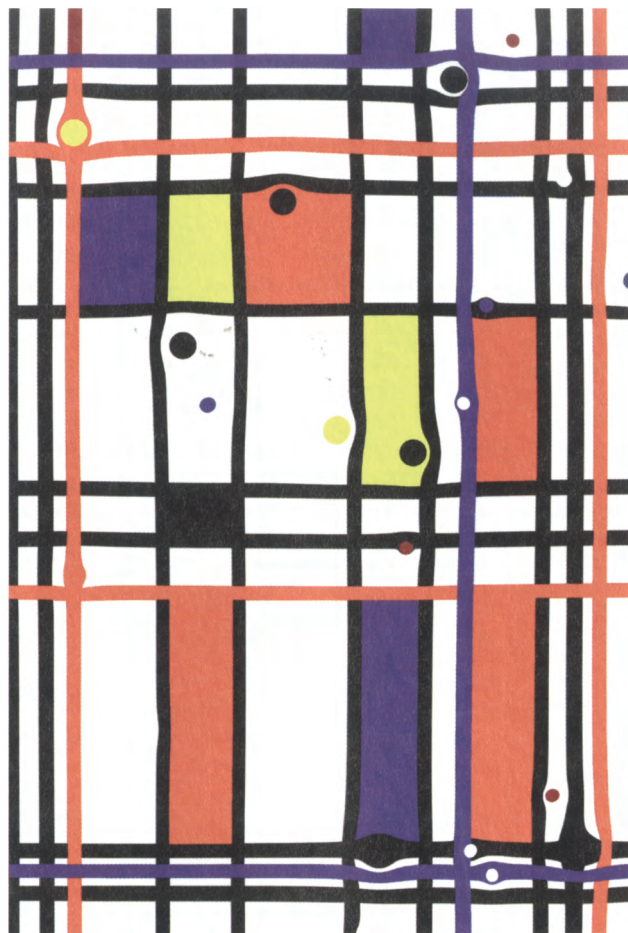
# Cultural Policy

## Forever Curious

### The Mondriaan Foundation

Is there an art-lover anywhere who has never heard of Rembrandt or Mondriaan? Probably not. Many people think of the Netherlands primarily as a land of visual artists, far more than of writers. But are today's Dutch artists also known abroad? Some people will immediately mention the photographer Rineke Dijkstra, or Marlene Dumas. But it is still difficult for painters, sculptors, photographers or designers working in the Netherlands to break through on to the international art scene. The Mondriaan Foundation, a trust for promoting the arts, wants to strengthen the position of contemporary art and design from the Netherlands. In fact, this is one of its two main aims. The other is to stimulate interest in, and demand for, contemporary art within the Netherlands itself.

The Mondriaan Foundation was established in 1994. It tries to achieve its objectives by means of a range of initiatives and supporting activities. To this end the foundation has two lofts in New York, which Dutch artists and designers can use to exhibit their work. The Mondriaan Foundation also maintains a presence in other top locations. For instance, it is responsible for the Dutch participation in the prestigious Biennale in Venice. International art fairs provide the main opportunity of arousing the interest of gallery owners, museum directors and art collectors. Therefore the Mondriaan Foundation supports stands from (Dutch) galleries at various important fairs. To name just a few where the Foundation has a presence of this kind: The Armory Show in New York, the Frieze Art Fair and Collect (both in London), the FIAC in Paris, Paris Photo and Art Cologne. Moreover, other foreign organisations that show the work of artists and designers working in the Netherlands can call on the Mondriaan Foundation for support. And of course it also supports the publication of art books, catalogues and periodicals (in other languages) featuring one or more Dutch artists. Special attention is given to design, a branch of the arts in which the Netherlands has built up a whole tradition. The Mondriaan Foundation provides financial sup-



The Australian piano teacher and composer Paul Copeland's take on Mondrian's art...with blobs.

port to individual designers who present their work at important international design fairs such as the Salone del Mobile in Milan and the Paris fashion weeks.

The Mondriaan Foundation is also extremely active within the Netherlands. Every year it supports a number of presentations, purchases, school competitions, art events and publications as well as exhi-

bitions. It organises its own symposia and debates and issues its own publications.<sup>1</sup> Two very interesting initiatives are the Art Purchase Scheme and the Prize for the Encouragement of Cultural Diversity. The Art Purchase Scheme enables less well-off people with an interest in art to purchase works of art. By means of this scheme individuals can buy works of art from some 150 galleries on credit. The Prize for the Encouragement of Cultural Diversity consists of a grant of 500,000 euros. The award is given to the museum of modern art that has come up with the best project on the theme of cultural diversity.

The Mondriaan Foundation works closely with other Dutch funds that promote Dutch art forms, in the broad sense of the term, in other countries. That is not an unnecessary luxury, for on more than one occasion the Netherlands' international cultural policy has been criticised for a lack of coherence and vision. Moreover, the context in which this policy has to operate is extremely complex. As Gitta Luiten, director of the Mondriaan Foundation, remarks in *All that Dutch*<sup>2</sup>, in the Netherlands as elsewhere globalisation has led to an intensified drive for a sense of individual identity. But for Dutch art this has meant having to deal with increasing provincialism and running the risk of losing touch with international developments in art. So the need for international reflection has seldom been so great as now. This concealed paradox gives rise to fascinating discussions. For Gitta Luiten, one of the key words is curiosity. The Netherlands must be curious about what is going on beyond its frontiers and, as it were, enter into a permanent dialogue with foreign art. This is the only way in which Dutch developments can be set in the much-needed international context.

Hans Vanacker

*Translated by Sheila M. Dale*

1. Among other things detailed yearbooks. In 2004 it published *10 years of the Mondriaan Foundation* (10 jaar Mondriaan Stichting), a jubilee publication presenting a hundred projects supported by the foundation. At that time the Mondriaan Foundation had supported no less than 5,976 projects.

2. *All that Dutch* is a collection of some thirty contributions from people with important political responsibilities in the world of Dutch culture. Each gives his or her vision on the future development of international cultural policy in the Netherlands. *All that Dutch* is a joint publication with the Foundation for International Cultural Activities, the Foundation for Amateur and Stage Arts and the Foundation for the Production and Translation of Dutch Literature and is published in an English and a Dutch version. See below for a review of this publication.

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### **'We pay too much attention to ourselves'**

#### **The Netherlands and International Cultural Policy**

*All that Dutch* is a varied collection of articles and opinions by those responsible for making and implementing international cultural policy in the Netherlands. The book does not make happy reading, because it gives the impression that complete chaos reigns. Charles Esche, director of the Van Abbe Museum in Eindhoven, neatly summarises the current crisis – because that's what it is: '*I see too much analysis and too much self-castigation in the Netherlands, which wasn't the case before. People want to map out the entire situation (this publication is an example) and then draw up a plan. We should forget about that, and say: Okay, we're in a bad way, what'll we do? And just follow our noses and concentrate on what we're doing, taking the risk that it will fail. It's only art.*'

The contemporary dogma of efficiency means that we may no longer permit ourselves any failures, even in the field of culture, but the idea of cheerfully rolling up your sleeves and using your common sense certainly has some appeal after you've wrestled your way through *All that Dutch*. Because what strikes you most is that the people responsible for supporting and propagating Dutch culture complain so much and are so completely lacking in pride in their own