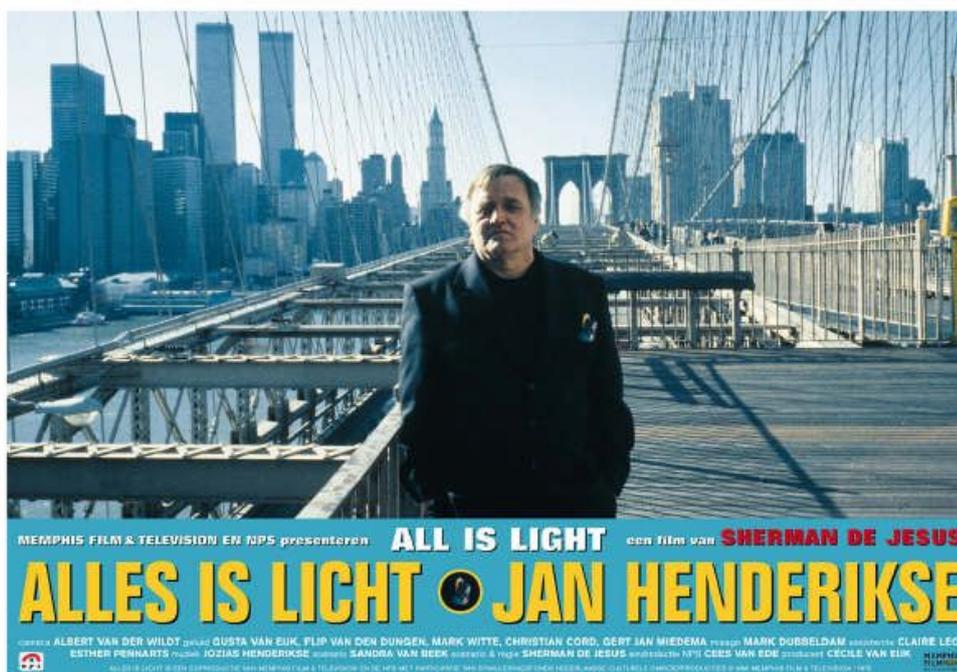


A film by Sherman De Jesus



What the worlds uses and rejects, settles itself in Jan Henderikse's art.

AWARDS : Best International Documentary at The New York International Independent Film & Video Festival 2003

International artist Jan Henderikse is an exponent of Contemporary Art, who in a sense takes the strategies of Warhol and Duchamp further and applies them in our banal little reality.

Starting with its conception in New York City the film narrates the birth of *Nite Lite*, a huge work of art by Jan Henderikse in the St. Georgen Church in the German town of Wismar. *All Is Light* in a very transparent and attractive way lays bare the artistic attitude and the way it interferes with our lives and our thinking.

His art is rooted in everyday utensils, which he spots and buys everywhere in large quantities. Jan Henderikse uses them to make gigantic installations: beer-crates, coins, used commercial supermarket posters or plastic night lights of Jesus Christ. According to him: 'Too much is not enough'. Apart from collecting things, he makes them as well. For instance he took pictures of all the corners of Broadway, the longest street in New York City, and casted a WWII shell-hole in a Berlin bridge in bronze. Art is what he regards it to be and when he has put his signature on it. A German newspaper called him '*der Grossvater des Trash*', the grandfather of trash, in connection with a large exhibition in Potsdam (Berlin). In German cities such as Kiel, Stuttgart, Cologne and Berlin, he is celebrated as a great visual artist. Museums and individuals buy quite a great deal of his work. Jan Henderikse himself hardly mentions it, if ever. Maybe because he is not really satisfied about the amount of recognition he gets. Maybe because he is just being modest. Or maybe because he rejects the idea of the artist as a super hero.

RENATE WIEHAGER ON ALL IS LIGHT:

Dr. Renate Wiehager is the director of the DaimlerChrysler AG Art Collection which includes about 700 works by international artists, among them are works by Jan Henderikse and Jan Schoonhoven (a documentary on Schoonhoven is developed by Memphis Film)

...I have watched the film more than once, by myself, with friends and other artists. And the nice result was: I was a fan of Jan Henderikse and am even more so now. And: I was a fan of modern art, and am even more so now.

Getting close to art and artists, following the ways and thoughts of art, not so much with a purpose of being didactic or exhaustive and tedious, but just by watching, without seeing endings and coming up with forced judgements...This is where the digressive intellectual art prose, as published in books, catalogues and printed media fails and where you have succeeded in your film. A film with a light touch, a fine sense of humor and undertones and a love for the subject matter.

In this film, Henderikse is an exponent of contemporary art, who in a sense takes the strategies of Warhol and Duchamp further and applies them in our banal little reality.

And this process becomes tangible in your film. In doing so you do not explain the art or the individual work of art - but the artistic attitude and how it interferes with our lives and thinking is laid bare, becoming transparent and attractive, and that is even better...

NOTE BY THE DIRECTOR SHERMAN DE JESUS

BBC News:

New research shows that the brains of artists work differently than other people's brains.

When I first met Jan Henderikse in Curacao, I was 14 or 15. He was already famous back in the Netherlands as a 'Nul' and 'Pop' artist, or 'Realist'. Little did I know what this meant, but I liked what he made: Art created out of waste. I saw his huge collection of trash he had picked up from the beach, nicknamed 'Plastic Baai', such as plastic or rubber dolls, plastic bottles, beer caps, corks, which he applied in big boxes. This work was appealing to me and a good start to get interested in art.

As a Caribbean boy, I did not regard European art as 'my' art, my culture. I realised that art and culture could influence a whole population, that art was the power, but that it was *their* art. Something new had to come our way. So when meeting Jan Henderikse, I was very surprised that art could also be made out of junk and trash from the ocean and that from 'our' trash

something new would be created, something that would purify. At the same time I regarded this art a funny matter. Then Henderikse with his wife Idi left the island to start a new life in New York and the following years when I left for Holland, I made a stop in New York to see them.



It was many years later, that I met Henderikse again at the opening of a sales exhibition in art gallery Brehm in Cologne. At the exhibition, all kinds of 'ready *mades*' were seen, such as an installation of Christmas lights, T-shirts with the image of the murdered Mexican pop singer Selena, as well as art with a religious message: A series of night lights, plastic images of Jesus, a mosque miniature out of plastic. And a tap with fake water stream and weekly advertising posters from a supermarket in Brooklyn in bright colors.

Jan Henderikse was walking around with a huge smile and explained about these works he had collected and put his signature on. He was serious and funny at the same time. I was very amused and thought he was a genius. For a moment, I thought: 'I can do this too'. But he does. He is driven. For 40 years, he works like this. He is getting older, is now 62. Nevertheless, he's always busy with something new. I thought it was sublime, but was it art?

Since the contact with Jan, I started to get more interested in his work. The idea for a film soon was born. Why did I hold on to the memory of our first encounter in Curacao, for all those years? What kind of life did he lead? What was his drive to get on a very crowded airplane at JFK and travel all the way to a cold studio in Berlin to make controversial art? Why take this foolish adventure into the unknown?

I was drawn to the apparent simplicity of his existence and the fact that he made the world his playground. When I visited him in New York in his apartment, it hit me, that he is torn apart by his relationship of love and hate with Europe and the U.S. He is often angry about the way we take the *American way of life* in Europe without

ABOUT SCREENWRITER SANDRA VAN BEEK

As a film journalist, visiting her sister in New York, Sandra van Beek met Jan Henderikse in 1978. After showing her his very short films, such as 'Homage to Mondriaan' and 'Water', he guided her during a long walk through Chinatown and Little Italy, showing her Americana. Their friendship started, but it was not until 1995 the idea for a film was born.

As a (film) journalist for Dutch newspapers and magazines, she started working with several film directors as a production assistant, researcher, writer and extra. She cooperated on several documentaries with director Kees Hin, a.o. 'De Salon van het Verdriet' (1978), showing three Russian women of three generations in Holland; Berlijn-Amsterdam 1920-1940, telling stories of Berlin refugees in Holland (1981), 'Een Wolk van Groen' introducing several readers of Weekly De Groene Amsterdammer (1990) and video installation 'Theresienstadt: Film of Waarheid' in which viewers comment on images out of a propaganda film (1995).

She also worked as a screenwriter of a.o. the feature 'Van Goghs Ear' (1991)

In 2000, she published 'De Grote Illusie', a biography sketch on film critic couple Ellen and Gerry Waller. She worked as researcher and production assistant on the U.S. documentary 'Prisoner of Paradise' (2001-02) and is developing with Memphis Film & TV two documentaries: on Dutch artist Jan Schoonhoven and on Salsa music (2002).

THE COMPANY

In 1992 with producer Cécile A.M. van Eijk Memphis Film & Television and Ocean Film Productions was founded, in order to develop and produce feature films, documentaries, television programs, corporate videos and educational films, for theatrical and television release and world-wide distribution.

Sherman De Jesus and Cécile van Eijk have accumulated a considerable amount of screen time directing and producing feature films, documentaries, television programs, and corporate videos. Among others much acclaimed films like *The Indian Bore A Negro*, *Long Live The Brown Monster*, *Odyssee D'amour*, *Let The Music Dance*, *Prisoner of Java* and *The Stage Is A Village*. They produced the international festival hit and award winning short *Daddy's Little Girl* ('99) and silent short *Joy Meal* ('02) by director Mathijs Geijskes.

Memphis Film is developing a series of documentaries, on Dutch artist Jan Schoonhoven, to be directed by De Jesus and Salsa music, to be directed by Esther Prade. Among their feature films in development are *Weekend Pilgrimage*, an adaptation of the novel by the Caribbean novelist and poet Tip Marugg, *Sugarcane Rosy* written by Ger Beukenkamp and Winsome Pinnock, *Delana*, written by Arthur Japin, director Jindra Markus. In production is the Telefilm: World War II drama *Boy Ecury*, written by Arthur Japin, (co-production with VARA television).

PROFILE JAN HENDERIKSE

It all started in the late 50s, after he trained at the Free Art Academy in The Hague. Henderikse says in retrospect: He is the founder of the Informal group! He brought Die Monochromen art catalogue back from Germany with him and organised the first exhibition in a gallery in Delft. In this way, Henderikse provided the practical necessities for developing a programme for him and four artist-friends. The Dutch Informal group included, alongside the youngest, Henk Peeters, Jan Schoonhoven, Armando and Kees van Bohemen.

Henderikse lived in Cologne and Dusseldorf for three years since 1959. In Cologne, he worked as an unskilled labourer, after doing all sorts of odd jobs illegally at first. After that, he joined the Ford factory. He met Zero artist Gunther Uecker, who advised him to move to Dusseldorf. Gunther Uecker had been a Zero group member since 1958. Heinz Mack and Otto Piene founded the group in the previous year. They were united by a desire for art that was politically and socially autonomous. They created kinetic objects and images in which the phenomenon of light was addressed with futuristic enthusiasm. They fundamentally agreed that depicting, and interpreting or psychogramatic art were to be rejected. French Yves Klein and Italian Lucio Fontana were important influences at this time.

The five Dutchmen followed suit in 1960 and used the same name in their own language: nul. Then Henk Peeters organised a nul exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam in 1962. In concrete situations, the artistic closeness of the artists involved gave way to a strong sense of competition.

When he heard that the German Zero artists intended to change the way a 'Nul' exhibition in Arnhem was put together, he drove to Arnhem in his 2CV (they had a Volvo, of course). There were ninety-nine percent of the works to be seen from the three other gentlemen at the exhibition. Henderikse's installation of beer crates for example was first shown at the art galleries, but when they noticed, they tried to cover it up. The German Zero artists turned out to be real ideologues and above all, they were real Germans, unanimous, speaking with one voice. Henderikse's realistic and pop art work did not fit completely into their ideology. One can imagine angry furrows on Henderikses brow, since these aseptic appearance of the pictures and installations was more or less alien to him.

Henderikse was not interested in philosophical explanations of his work. Phrases like: 'Laughing is a waste of time' (Armando), or even statements like: 'Creativity wears fine clothes', were invented amidst shouting and yelling. This got on other peoples, and other artists, nerves now and then, but it did not bother Henderikse so much. The others were fond of writing him off as a grumbler. He took things very seriously, and issued his polemics, saying just what he thought, as mischievously as he could.

Henderikse remained subversive, and continued to prefer to look at the Netherlands from a distance. He lived in Curaçao from 1963 to 1967, and then from 1968 in New York, where he still is, alternating with Berlin from 1987 and Antwerpen, 1999.

EXHIBITION WASCHHAUS, GERMANY

ALLES IS LICHT - JAN HENDERIKSE - ALL IS LIGHT

When you walk around his exhibition in the Waschhaus (Germany), you are surprised first by the compelling rigour of the design. (Moreover, your surprise would be justified, as Henderikse is more likely to be known for creating a sense of claustrophobia).

There was no lack of material, as the artist, born in Delft - The Netherlands in 1937, changed his studios into stores that are now filled up. This is partly because he is a manic collector. And he is unable to part with anything that he finds and has incorporated into his constantly growing everyday collection. Therefore, he needed the sympathetic argument and space-related skills of a competent curator, which Erik Bruinenberg has turned out to be on this occasion. Wolfgang Zeigerer, gallery-owner and long-standing connoisseur of Jan Henderikses work, was impressed by the clarity of the presentation. And he knows how difficult it must have been to wrest lucidity from this artist's work, as he had worked twice in a comparable situation in Kiel. The main feature is that the works shown convey his life's work in a very refreshing way. One discovers stages of his development that seem like charming references to his leisurely travels around the world.

Nul: Beer crates take up a whole wall in Potsdam. This is a remake of the above-mentioned 1962 installation, which probably reconciled him with the past.

Heineken provided the material on this occasion as well. That must have been an easy bit of sponsoring. In the Russian Hall, you see dollar notes that have been shredded to make a lawn. On top of it sits a compressed monument in the same money waste paper. A jester's drama. Brooklyn: on the right and left of the devalued money are cheerful ranks of advertising flags from American supermarkets. They are singing in full colour the praises of fresh pork shoulder and other delicacies. However, the advertising is no longer meeting with a response. These chest freezers are replaced with neon-lit wanted ads from American daily papers. Instead of checkouts, there is an altar with a triptych. Religious knick-knacks and lavish illumination for Christmas candles batteries enter into an unduly sugary liaison. All underpinned by the unredeemed drowning on popular Christmas tunes. Touched and mocked by a long red laser finger.

It is easy to see the artistic link with American Pop Art here, though this tended to remain third rate. Henderikse is a purist in his handling of the everyday. He does not aestheticize it, like Andy Warhol or Manzoni. If he were interested in shit, it would not be his own. He is also not interested in the new design. He throws our normal looking habits out of rhythm. Changes of scale, enlargement and reduction of distance jolt our perceptions. Things that have long been overlooked because we wanted to forget there were there are put in our way. Just as they have in his way. To this extent, his will to design is essentially labyrinthine and floral. In the Waschhaus, we are introduced to the delicate line drawn by a photographic lab technician when cancelling photographs, which Henderikse took over delightedly. Next to these are showcases containing T-shirts he has made by folding banknotes. Many people will remember the predecessors of these multiples, the cork relief's.

If you go on looking, Ellen O'Shaughnessy smiles at you 36 times. Drawn to and for, as in a well-arranged stockroom, you stride up and down, leaving one room and then coming back again. Sometimes it is just details that draw you back. You become intoxicated with the abundance, plunge into the rubbish without being revolted; you are led about carefully, without being tangled up. There is a little bridge, from which you look down on an artificial landscape full of conifers and bushes. A setting that would make any model railway freak's heartbeat faster. And to

ALLES IS LICHT - JAN HENDERIKSE - ALL IS LIGHT

reassure us, Henderikse put up a banal photograph of a railway compartment window that the unknown photographer had taken from his compartment. These examples may be sufficient to convey the amusement that this exhibition can provide. I do just think it is a pity that the works did not have titles. It is an open secret that Jan Henderikse retains his sense of humour in that department as well.

CREDITS All is Light - Jan Henderikse

Idi Henderikse - van Henneigen

Mimi de Groot -Henderikse

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Jozias Henderikse

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Cécile van Eijk

MEMPHIS FILM & TELEVISION

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archives:

NAA - Galerie M Bochum Kunstvermittlung, Deutschland

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