



K O N I N K L I J K E N E D E R L A N D S E
A K A D E M I E V A N W E T E N S C H A P P E N

The Dr. A.H. Heineken Prize for Art, awarded to Peter Struycken.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Peter Struycken is one of the few contemporary Dutch artists whose work is widely known among his fellow countrymen. Any Dutchman knows, for example, his portrait of Queen Beatrix, composed from tiny dots, because it has adorned Dutch postage stamps for more than thirty years.

The long list of his famous works includes 'Blue Waves' in the pavement under a Rhine bridge in Arnhem; computer-controlled lighting in the arcade at the Dutch Architecture Institute in Rotterdam; and the colourful geometric shapes in Tilburg's Concert Hall, to name just a few.

These examples illustrate how for almost fifty years Peter Struycken has been creating colours and shapes in very systematic ways. Very often, his work has been related to science, research, and analysis. For this reason alone it would have been highly appropriate for him to receive a Heineken Prize.

Indeed, wavelengths, patterns and numbers play major roles in his work. But seeing Peter Struycken as some sort of researcher, as someone who is engaged purely in cerebral work, would be a grave mistake.

Struycken fits into an art tradition that spans many centuries; the tradition of Leonardo da Vinci, who also made name for himself as innovative researcher and experimenter; of Albrecht Dürer, who travelled to Italy to study linear perspective at the University of Bologna; and of Jan van Scorel and Maarten van Heemskerck, who went to Rome to brush up on their knowledge of classical antiquity.

Within this tradition, science is a means but art is the end. Peter Struycken does not need to earn a degree, he makes art – art that gives viewers new experiences of space, form and colour; seductive, beautiful art, in which the computer has become a key tool.

I think back to that ten-meter screen at the Groninger Museum, which Peter Struycken used to take along visitors on a journey through a dynamic, three-dimensional colour space that was inspired by the music of Scriabin.

No one noticed the systematic thinking that had gone into making the trip possible. On the contrary: travellers underwent a captivating, mystical experience of the kind that only the finest artworks can bring about.

So ladies and gentlemen, the jury did not award an investigator but a great artist.

Please join me in a round of applause for Peter Struycken, winner of the Heineken Prize for Art 2012.