

Fellows

Léon Hanssen

IFK_Gast des Direktors

Duration of fellowship

01. October 2017 bis 31. January 2018

Léon Hanssen

PROJECT TITLE

Piet Mondrian in Vienna: Searching for the Unknown Third

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

More than twelve years have passed since the last considerable exhibition of works by Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) was on display in Vienna. It was already perceivable in the course of this exhibit at the Albertina that the context of Viennese culture during the late 19th and early 20th century holds a unique promise of re-discovering Mondrian's art and artist's personality. It is an opportunity to seek out Mondrian as an unknown third, and no longer (as Thomas Wagner put it in the *FAZ*, April 26, 2005). The unknown third, a tendency towards the bizarre and even towards the ghostly, is to be understood as the third face of an aesthetic culture of modernity averting catastrophe. It becomes all the more apparent if we interpretatively place Mondrian's self-portrait from the early 20th century next to other contemporary self-portraits, say, of the Viennese composer Arnold Schönberg. With Schönberg and other Austrian artists, such as Zemlinsky and Stefan Zweig, Mondrian shares an experience of exile under the pressures of the political and military events during the 1930s, which entailed enormous hardships, but also the potential of transatlantic enrichment in a creative sense. The third aspect of this biographical and culture-historical research project concerns Mondrian's

strange life as a bachelor, which places him within a long tradition, alongside Kant and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Flaubert, Kafka and Wittgenstein. With Mondrian, there is also an ideological frame, as he assumes that maleness and femaleness will not constitute credible, vital positions in a future global culture; instead, the anthropo-technological progress of humanity will aim at a third position: a machine-like human figure that is sufficient in and of itself.

CV

As a cultural historian, Léon Hanssen holds the chair of Life Writing and Cultural Memory at the Tilburg School of Humanities (NL). His teaching and research interests include the inter-war period, (classical) modernity, game theory, retromania/-topia, hauntology, transdisciplinarity, and cultural memory. Léon Hanssen co-edited the correspondences of Johan Huizinga (in 3 volumes), and he wrote his dissertation about the great historian's critique of his times (his *Zeitkritik*): *Huizinga and the Solace of History* (1996). Subsequently, he published an award-winning biography in two volumes about the Dutch cultural historian Menno ter Braak, which has also been published in an abridged German version (*Menno ter Braak (1902–1940). Leben und Werk eines Querdenkers*). After researching and writing a monograph about the poet M. Vasalis (*M. Vasalis: A Productive Misunderstanding*), Hanssen began concentrating on a broadly conceived biography of Piet Mondrian, the first volume of which was published in 2015 (*Creating a Paradise on Earth. Piet Mondrian 1919–1933*). Léon Hanssen is also the editor of an international website that aims at presenting all writings and letters of Johan Huizinga, as well as his collected literary remains in their original language and in all available translations (forthcoming).

Publications

„Die Lust an der in Schweben gehaltenen Illusion: Johan Huizinga und Georg Lukács“, in: Adam Bžoch (Hg.), *Johan Huizinga and Central/East Europe / Johan Huizinga a stredná/stredovýchodná Európa*, (= World Literature Studies / časopis Pre Výskum Svetovej Literatúry 9 (2017) 1 April S. 41–47; „Games of Late Modernity: Discussing Huizinga's Legacy“, in: Halina Mielicka-Pawłowska (Hg.), *Contemporary Homo Ludens*, Newcastle upon Tyne 2016, S. 23–34; *De schepping van een aards paradijs: Piet Mondriaan 1919–1933*, Amsterdam 2015; *Menno ter Braak (1902–1940), Leben und Werk eines Querdenkers*. Aus dem Niederländischen von Marlene Müller-Haas, Münster, New York, München, Berlin 2011, (= Niederlande-Studien, Band 51).