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DUTCH DIARY

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While the full impact of the governmental budget cuts are yet to be felt, Holland remains a thriving and lively scene.

While the ban on selling marijuana to tourists in Amsterdam does not go into effect until 2013, nothing seems out of the ordinary in the city, although drastic funding cuts in the arts have clearly spooked and affected artists and arts organizations.



Bertien van Manen, *Pjotr and his family, Apanas, Siberia, 1993* from "Let's Sit Down Before We Go," Foam Fotografiemuseum, COPYRIGHT BERTIEN VAN MANEN

Many cultural institutions are scheduled to have their government funding taken away by next year, perhaps the most prominent being the Rijksakademie, which will now focus chiefly on their well-known residency program and collaborate with fellow artists' studio foundation De Ateliers, which faces the same cuts. Individual grants to artists are also scheduled for a severe cut, although one artist I spoke to thinks this will help the quality of work produced.

Despite the grim news, spirits were high for the grand opening of De Appel's new space on May 24, located not far from Centraal Station at Prins Hendrikkade 142. The beaming (and expecting) director Ann Demeester graciously chatted about De Appel's newly renovated and expanded home at Moes bar and restaurant in the basement of the building, which led to a patio area positively swarming with revelers hoisting drinks and smokes late into the evening, until nearby neighbors lodged a noise complaint. Topsy Turvy, curated by Demeester, included work by an eclectic range of artists, including Ugo Rondinone, V for Vendetta's David Lloyd, James Ensor, Markus Selg, and Alberto de Michele.

Amsterdam's photography museum, Foam, had two exhibitions on view that were radically different, conceptually and formally. The New York Times Magazine Photographs, co-curated by the magazine's

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photo editor Kathy Ryan and Lesley A. Martin of Aperture Books, culled images from the past thirty years of the magazine. With a wide range of work from fashion to documentary to fine art photography, some outstanding work was on view by Jack Pierson, Roger Ballen, Ryan McGinley, and Inez van Lamsweerde, et al. On the ground floor was Dutch-born Bertien van Manen's *Let's Sit Down Before We Go*, in which she documents intimate meetings with people she encountered in her travels through Russia, Moldavia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Tatarstan, and Georgia between 1991 and 2009.



Ugo Rondinone, *If There Were Anywhere but Desert. Sunday, 2000* from "Topsy Turvy" at De Appel. PHOTO BY CHRIS BORS

Utrecht, the fourth largest city of the Netherlands, is a scant 25 minutes from Amsterdam and well worth a day trip. At Het Utrechts Archief, philosopher and art critic Boris Groys was giving a lecture about the end of history, or more specifically, the show he curated at Basis voor Actuele Kunst (BAK), *After History: Alexandre Kojève as a Photographer*. Situated on two floors, it proposed that the philosopher Kojève was really an artist in disguise and that his visual archiving through his

own photographs and purchased postcards of places he had visited went hand-in-hand with his writing, thus making them ripe for further contemplation. Groys also included some nude photos of women from the magazine *Die Neue Zeit* that Kojève collected, adding a little spice to the reverential installation downstairs. After a stellar meal at De Rechtbank restaurant, just a stone's throw from BAK, it was time for some beauty sleep.

Having greatly admired Dutch artist Folkert de Jong's work since the first time I saw it in Miami, where Javier Peres presented his installation *The Shooting at... Watou; 1st of July 2006*, as part of Art Basel Miami Beach in 2006 and subsequent exhibitions at James Cohan Gallery in New York, I relished the chance to visit his studio outside of Amsterdam in the village of Krommenie. De Jong was hard at work designing costumes and props with his wife, artist Delphine Courtillot, for the Wooster Group's adaptation of *Troilus and Cressida* by William Shakespeare in collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Performances took place August 3 through 18 at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon, UK and August 24 through September 8 at Riverside Studios in London. De Jong also collaborated with Courtillot for designer Walter van Beirendonck's fall-winter collection based on the theme of secret societies.

Back in Amsterdam proper, Galerie Gabriel Rolt hosted a reception for London-based artist Shezad Dawood, whose second exhibition with the gallery is titled *Cosmic Beach*. A series of attractive acrylic-on-vintage textile paintings were on view, as well as two wall-mounted neon works with an extraterrestrial quality, bringing to mind the theory of ancient astronauts. Rounding out the trip was another



Artist Folkert de Jong in his studio. PHOTO BY CHRIS BORS

opening, this time an all-nighter at Smart Project Space, a large venue located off the beaten path in a former morgue for I'm Losing More than I'll Ever Have (The Practice of Everyday Life), whose numerous multi-media works, most notably by Christian Marclay and Werner Herzog, stood out. In similar fashion to the merger of the Rijksakademie with De Ateliers, Smart will be merging with the Netherlands Media Art Institute, which had their funding halted by the Ministry of Culture, and will be renamed New Art Space Amsterdam as of January 2013. While the full impact of the governmental budget cuts is yet to be felt, Holland still remains a thriving and lively scene, and with the long-awaited reopening of the Stedelijk Museum on September 23, one can envision a silver lining in these cloudy times.

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