

EXHIBITION GUIDE

Willem de Rooij

Friday 21 November 2014–Sunday 8 February 2015



ARNOLFINI

For over 50 years Arnolfini has provided an innovative cultural resource for the people of Bristol and beyond. A leading centre for the contemporary arts, Arnolfini presents an ambitious programme in the visual art, performance, music, film, and offers a wide range of engaging family events. An educational charity, Arnolfini provides a diverse and exciting interactive learning programme for all ages. Arnolfini is also home to a much-loved shop, with an exceptional range of books and gift ideas, and a Café Bar offering locally sourced and home baked food.

INTRODUCTION

The work of Dutch artist Willem de Rooij is multifaceted and incorporates film, sculpture, and installation. In many instances, his installations include the work of other artists and artefacts from historical or anthropological collections that relate to his own works, forming temporary groupings which create new layers of meaning. This contextual gesture or act of framing draws attention to the relationship between cultural identity and memory, collecting and display. In his installations, meaning is not produced by an object alone, but in the relationship between the things we see, their context and our own act of reading.

Many of de Rooij's recent works are reduced, almost abstract, and seemingly devoid of any explicit meaning or reference. In these works, which include fine weavings with delicate colour gradients, you are invited to experience immediate pleasure or fascination. In a much subtler way, his work can be interpreted as questioning, for example, the way in which colours relate to systems of meaning such as skin colour or political bodies. For his exhibition at Arnolfini, de Rooij further investigates the relationship between images and meaning through an installation that consists of two different works that explore the mechanics of representation.

GALLERY 1

Index: Riots, Protest, Mourning and Commemoration (as represented in newspapers, January 2000–July 2002), 2003, consists of 18 large panels each featuring a selection of photographs cut from newspapers. De Rooij is interested in how these images are selected for global distribution in the news media, the ways in which people are presented in protest, and how they stage themselves in front of a camera. The installation presents a large selection of global political struggles, but despite being taken in different geographical and political situations and contexts, there are similarities between the different images presented. Without the newspaper headlines and captions, the formal qualities of the photographs become apparent, inviting a closer look at representation and drawing together the subjects that the title of the work indicates: riots, protests, mourning and commemoration.

De Rooij's *Index* is reminiscent of the ground-breaking Mnemosyne Atlas by German art historian and cultural theorist Aby Warburg. For this huge project, which Warburg began in 1927 and did not complete in his lifetime, around 2000 images were grouped together on 79 wooden panels covered with black fabric. The photographs were presented without caption or contextual information, and arranged according to different themes such as 'coordinates of memory', 'Astrology and mythology' and 'vehicles of tradition'. The atlas, which Warburg described as 'a ghost story for adults', was born from a lifetime's meditation on the image. While Warburg's Atlas is based on a particular pattern of ideas, *Index* looks at the production, distribution and consumption of images to construct a new context or meaning. In the context of global political struggles, this becomes a politically charged question of who represents politics, and how.

The second work is a new interpretation of one of a series of bouquet works by the artist, which each explore different formal and/or socio-political concepts. *Bouquet V*, 2010, consists of 95 different flowers loosely arranged in a spherical shape in a cylindrical vase. Each of the flowers occurs only once in the bouquet, avoiding a hierarchy of colour, species or type, and each individual flower remains visible within the whole. The bouquet poetically symbolises a concept of diversity and the tension between the individual and the collective. Presented alongside *Index*, the bouquet can be seen as pointing towards individuality within systems of classification; it also brings to mind flowers that are brought to sites of commemoration by people in mourning, and could be thought of as a memorial in itself.



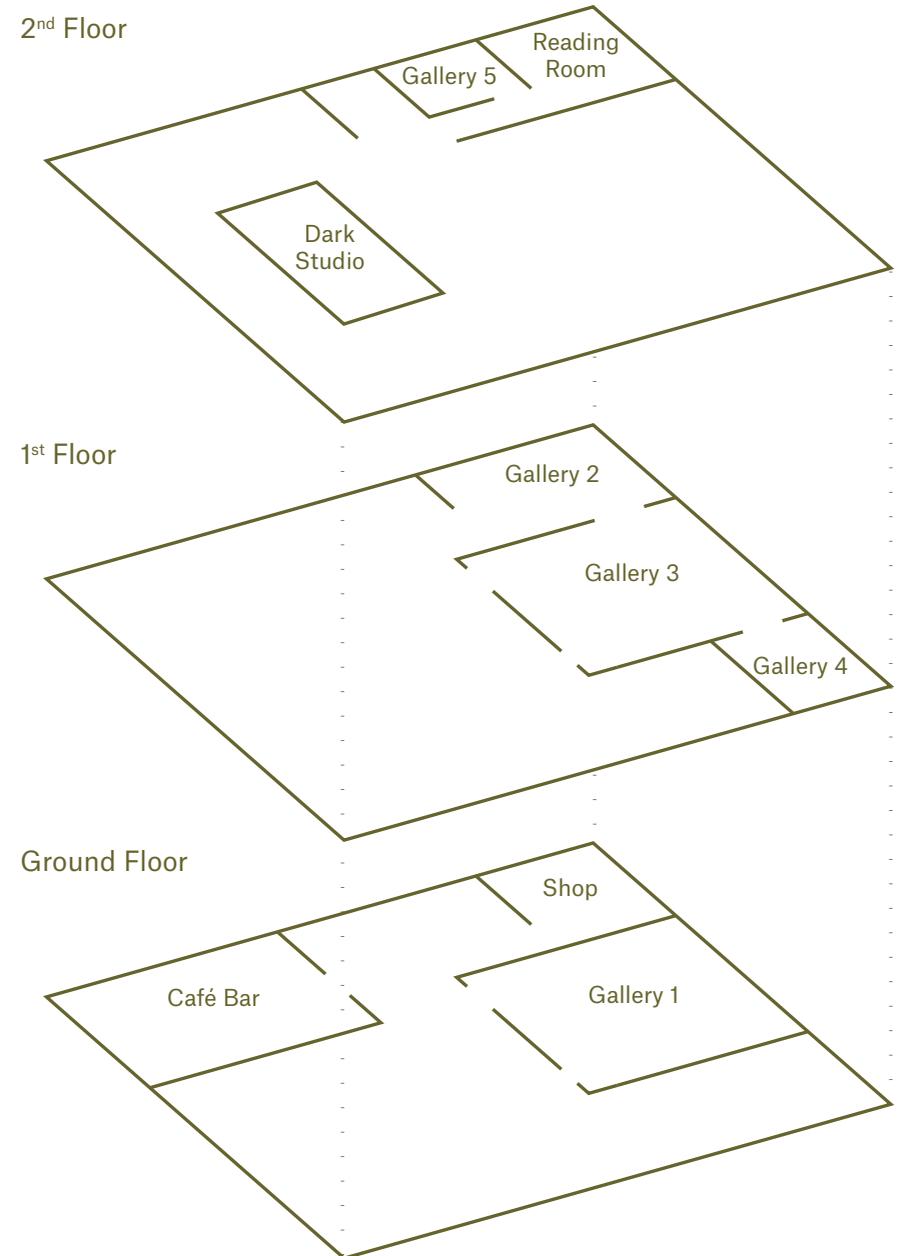
Moluccan activists at a press conference held by the Front for the Sovereignty of the Moluccas in Capelle aan den IJssel. Photo Arie Kievit / NRC Handelsblad 19-12-00

Willem de Rooij, *Index: Riots, Protest, Mourning and Commemoration (as represented in newspapers, January 2000–July 2002), 2003*. Courtesy Galerie Daniel Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin, Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, Regen Projects, Los Angeles.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Willem de Rooij (born 1969 in Beverwijk, Netherlands) is one of the most influential artists of his generation. This is his first major exhibition in a public gallery in the UK. De Rooij studied art history at the University of Amsterdam (1989–1990), and art at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (1990–95) and at the Rijksakademie (1997–1998), both in Amsterdam. He worked in collaboration with Jeroen de Rijke from 1994 to 2006, as De Rijke / De Rooij. De Rooij received the Bâloise Art Prize in 2000, a Robert Fulton-fellowship at Harvard University in 2004 and a DAAD Stipend in 2006–2007. He represented the Netherlands at the Venice Biennale in 2005 and is Professor of Fine Arts at the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main since 2006. Important solo exhibitions include The ICA, London (2002), Kunsthalle Zürich (2004), K 21, Düsseldorf (2007), Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna (2008), Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2010), Kunstverein München (2012) and The Jewish Museum, New York (2014). His works can be found in the collections of Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, MUMOK in Vienna, Hamburger Bahnhof in Berlin, Centre Pompidou in Paris, MOCA in Los Angeles and MOMA in New York.

GALLERY PLAN



Photography Policy

Please feel free to take photographs of the exhibition for your own private use.

Reproduction is not permitted. Please share your impressions of the exhibition via Facebook, Instagram or Twitter: #WillemdedeRooij @arnolfiniarts



Reading Room

If you would like to learn more about the exhibition, there are further resources and exhibition guides available in the Reading Room on the 2nd floor.

Shop

In the shop you can find a selection of publications for sale that relate to the current exhibitions.

Access

We aim to make all visitors welcome. There are parking spaces for people with disabilities outside our main entrance, access via Farr's Lane. Our galleries are wheelchair accessible.

Stay in Touch

To join our free mailing list send us an email to boxoffice@arnolfini.org.uk or visit arnolfini.org.uk. You can also follow Arnolfini on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter: @arnolfiniarts.

Portable seating and transcripts of video works are available on request

Large print versions of this guide are available at Box Office

Exhibition spaces open: Tuesday to Sunday and Bank Holidays, 11am – 6pm
Admission to exhibition spaces is free.

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arnolfini.org.uk / @arnolfiniarts

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Cover image: Grief during the funeral of Israeli army captain Gad Marsha at a military cemetery in Jerusalem. Marsha and Dutch-born sergeant-major Jonathan Vermeulen were killed on Thursday while trying to dismantle a bomb on the Israeli border with the Gaza Strip. Photo AP / NRC Handelsblad 30-12-00.

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