

Rooms 2–4: Robert Zandvliet. The Painting is a Door

Introduction

*Robert Zandvliet (*1970) is regarded as one of the most important contemporary Dutch painters. The Museum Franz Gertsch is paying tribute to him with an extensive solo show: “The Painting is a Door” brings together important groups of works from the past 15 years in an exemplary dialogue. While the Haarlem-based artist’s pictorial inventions always proceed from concrete motifs, his dynamic style of painting transfers them to a very free, associative space. His explorations on canvas are informed by this antipodal sphere between representation and self-reflexive painterly practice, which the exhibition unfolds to the fullest extent of its multi-faceted range.*

Room 2

The exhibition begins with the group of works **“Seven Stones” (2013–14)**, which is on display outside of the Netherlands for the first time. All seven works are presented as a cohesive series, whose formal homogeneity is underscored by the strongly reduced colour palette. The focus is on stones and Robert Zandvliet approaches this motif with conceptual consistency. Through the pictorial transformation they become detached from the actual subject. Closer inspection reveals that

Zandvliet dispensed with customary paint-brushes and used only a wide roller for these works. The artist is not interested in the specific object, the stone, but rather in the essence of the stones, or as he himself puts it, “the energy field of the stones”.

In this context, the thoughts of the French sociologist and philosopher Roger Callois (1913–1978) provide an important frame of reference for Robert Zandvliet. In his consequential book “Pierres” (1966) Callois postulates that stones have remained what they always were. They are only themselves and nothing else. He writes: “Stones have been here from the beginning. As witnesses of this beginning, they mean nothing, they represent everything, they will be witnesses of the end.”

Room 3

The tour of the exhibition continues in this room, where everything is set in motion in various ways and on different levels. The selection of works from different groups highlights Robert Zandvliet’s broad range of painterly procedures and capabilities. **“Verolme Rozenburg”**, a work the artist created in **2011** as part of the series “I Owe You the Truth in Painting” (2008–2012), shows the towering hull of a ship. This is an explicit reference to a small landscape format by the

Dutch painter Dolf Henkes (1903–1989). Zandvliet rescales the scene of a ship in a harbour and translates Henke’s image into his own pictorial language with its dynamic painting style.

The comprehensive series “Le Corps de la Couleur” (2019–2023) is an exploration of the fundamental core of individual colours. In other words, Robert Zandvliet looked for the painterly and pictorial equivalent of a given colour. The work **“Yellow” (2019)** serves as an example: Offset through horizontal segmentation, the dazzling bands of yellow are reminiscent of the rapidly passing train compositions of the Dutch railway in its characteristic shade of yellow.

Room 4

The adjoining large hall features another example from the “Le Corps de la Couleur” series: While **“Terra” (2020)** appears to depict roof tiles, their painterly treatment does not allow for any suggestions of spatiality. Everything is dominated by the colour, by reddish, earthy shades that seem to coalesce. In **“Stage of Being II” (2017)** the artist focuses on the human figure. Barely visible as a silhouette at the centre of the landscape format, it seems to vanish into the image space. For the viewer, the figure functions as a link between the different spheres. It lets us dive into an

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image space which Zandvliet essentially conceives as a “stage of being”.

At the back of the hall, the presentation reaches its conclusion with Zandvliet’s latest group of works “Paradaidha” (2023–2025). The Old Persian word “Paradaidha” originally described a walled, irrigated garden, a place of plenty and good fortune that became the epitome of paradise. For the painter, the edges of the picture became the imaginary wall around Paradaidha. In the comprehensive publication “Monolith” Robert Zandvliet writes: “When I walk through nature, I see the infinite variety of plants: shrubs, trees, countless types of grass. Each blade of grass, each tree has its own structure, and at the same time, they all collaborate as part of a bigger organism, a bigger structure. This connection between the individual and the whole became increasingly important to me. That is why “Paradaidha” had to be about the overall structure.”

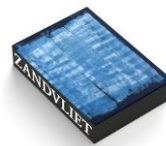
The artist’s meticulously thought-out compositions exclude elements such as horizons and serve as artistic equivalents of certain nature experiences that are dominated by light and colours. Such as the soft warmth of the light at dawn (“**Paradaidha Zora**”, 2003) or the magically atmospheric mood at moonlight (“**Paradaidha Luna**”, 2023). Standing before this monumental painting, the illusion of

perceiving a landscape gives way to the reality of painting and the factuality of the applied paint, the artist’s idiosyncratic brushstroke: To the magnificent interplay of the smallest details, a single blade of grass or a bud in the all-encompassing idea of entirety.

(Text: Andreas Fiedler; translation: Katherine Lewald)

The art historian, independent curator, and art critic Andreas Fiedler developed the exhibition.

In addition to the exhibition, a comprehensive



book provides an extensive, multi-perspective documentation of the artist’s career, starting with his meteoric beginnings in the late 1990s. The publication “**Robert Zandvliet. Monolith**” is available at the museum shop.

The show is presented under the auspices of the ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Switzerland, Karin Mössenlechner.



Kingdom of the Netherlands

The exhibition is kindly supported by:



Parallel to the presentation at the Museum Franz Gertsch, a further exhibition on Robert Zandvliet is on show at the Kunsthalle Darmstadt (“Robert Zandvliet. Paradaidha”, 29.03.–30.08.2026).

museum
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Biography

Born 1970 in Terband (NL)
Lives and works in Haarlem (NL)

1992-94 Master's Degree at the art academy
De Ateliers, Amsterdam (NL)
1987-92 Hogeschool voor de Kunsten Constan-
tijn Huygens, Kampen (NL)

Awards

2004 Wolvecamprijns (Wolvecamp-Prize)
1998 Charlotte Köhler Prijs (Award in Literature)
1994 Prix de Rome (Painting)

Selected solo exhibitions

2026 „Robert Zandvliet. Paradaidha“, Kunsthalle
Darmstadt, Darmstadt (DE)
„Robert Zandvliet. The Painting is a Door“,
Museum Franz Gertsch, Berthoud (CH)
2024 „Pink Moon“, GRIMM, London (UK)
„Florilegium: Overview 1998-2023“, Peter
Blum Gallery, New York, NY (US)
2023 „Hint of Spring“, Galerie Onrust, Amster-
dam (NL)
2022 „Le corps de la couleur“, Galerie Bernard
Knaus, Frankfurt am Main (DE)
2021 „Anatomy of Colour“, Peter Blum Gallery,
New York, NY (US)
„Le corps de la couleur“, Galerie Onrust,
Amsterdam (NL)

2020 „Dawn To Dusk“, Dordrechts Museum,
Dordrecht (NL)
2019 „Aan 't Groothoofd“, Dordrechts Museum,
Dordrecht (NL)
„63 x 72“, Galerie Knoell, Bâle (CH)
„Dawn to Dusk“, Dordrechts Museum,
Dordrecht (NL)
2018 „Stage of Being“, Galerie Bernhard Knaus,
Frankfurt am Main (DE)
„Stage of Being“, Galerie Onrust, Amster-
dam (NL)
2017 „Trunk“, Galerie Mark Müller, Zurich (CH)
2016 „Shades“, Peter Blum Gallery, New York,
NY (US)
2015 „Une barque sur l'océan“, Galerie Jean
Brolly, Paris (FR)
„Regen in Schuine Strepen, Zandvliet \
Van Gogh“, Vincent van Gogh Huis,
Zundert (NL)
„Nocturne“, Galerie Jean Brolly, Paris (FR)
2014 „Stones & Sketches“, De Pont Museum,
Tilburg (NL)
2013 „Roadmovie“, Stedelijk Museum, Kam-
pen (NL)
„Seven Stones“, Galerie Bernhard Knaus,
Frankfurt am Main (DE)
2012 „I owe you the truth in painting“, Kunst-
museum Den Haag, Den Haag (NL)
2011 „Pier and Ocean“, Peter Blum Gallery, New
York, NY (US)
„Vorschau“, Galerie Onrust, Amster-
dam (NL)
„Robert Zandvliet. Veronica“, De Ketel-
factory, Schiedam (NL)

2008 „Inner Landscapes“, Peter Blum Gallery,
New York, NY (US)
„Rückblick – Neue Bilder“, Galerie Fried-
rich, Bâle (CH)
„Robert Zandvliet. Fries“, Museum Belvé-
dère, Heerenveen (NL)
2006 „Robert Zandvliet. In the Face“, Galerie
Onrust, Amsterdam (NL)
2005 „Robert Zandvliet – Beyond the Horizon –
Paintings 1994-2005“, Kunstmuseum,
Bonn (DE); De Pont Museum, Tilburg (NL)
„Robert Zandvliet“, Galerie Friedrich,
Bâle (CH)
2004 „Recent Paintings“, Peter Blum Gallery,
New York, NY (US)
2002 „Highways and Byways“, Galerie Onrust,
Amsterdam (NL)
„The Blind Spot“, Galerie nächst St. Ste-
phan, Vienna (AT)
2001 „Brushwood“, Stedelijk Museum, Amster-
dam (NL); Kunstmuseum, Lucerne (CH)
2000 „Peintures“, Musée d'art Moderne et Con-
temporain, Strassburg (FR)
„The Varick Series“, Peter Blum Gallery,
New York, NY (US)
1999 „Robert Zandvliet“, Galerie nächst St. Ste-
phan, Vienna (AT)
1998 „Robert Zandvliet“, Galerie Onrust, Ams-
terdam (NL)
1997 „Het Witte Doek“, De Vleeshal, Middel-
burg (NL); De Pont Museum, Tilburg (NL)
1996 „Guarda!“, Diecidue Arte, Mailand (IT)
„Robert Zandvliet“, Dordrechts Museum,
Dordrecht (NL)

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Selected group exhibitions

		2019	„Sternbild Mensch“, Betriebswerk, Heidelberg (DE) „Freedom – The Fifty Key Dutch Artworks Since 1968“, curated by Hans den Hartog Jager, Museum De Fundatie, Zwolle (NL) „Stil“, Ketelfactory, Schiedam (NL) „Pick me!“, We Like Art@DE.GROEN, Arnhem (NL) „Weer en Wind“, Singer Museum, Laren (NL) „Common Ground 2“, AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (NL) „Armando's Lievelingen“, Chabot Museum, Rotterdam (NL) „Parijs- New York- Amsterdam; moderne meesters uit de collectie Reinhold de Wilde“, Teylers Museum, Haarlem (NL)		„Welt Offen“, Pforzheim Galerie, Pforzheim (DE)
2025	„Beyond These Walls“, AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (NL)			2017	„Parallel #15 – ...and more paintings...“, Galerie Mark Müller, Zurich (CH) „Die Linie ist Gedanke – Faszination Zeichnung“, Galerie Stihl Waiblingen, Waiblingen (DE) „Weer zien“, De Pont Museum, Tilburg (NL) „Mentales Gelb. Sonnenhöchststand“, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn (DE)
2024	„My World“, curated by Hans den Hartog Jager, Singer Laren, Laren (NL) „Verborgen achter Muren“, Museum Krona, Uden (NL) „True Colors“, AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Den Haag (NL)			2016	„Full moon“, Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (NL) „Hemels Rembrandt“, Museum Het Rembrandthuis, Amsterdam (NL) „Langmatt, Licht, Libellen“, Museum Langmatt, Baden (CH) „Yes Yes Yes“, Galerie Onrust, Amsterdam (NL) „De Lyriek van het Landschap“, Kasteel het Nijenhuis, Heino (NL) „De prairial à messidor“, Galerie Jean Brolly, Paris (FR)
2023	„EARTH“, AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (NL)			2015	„Ein Gipfeltreffen der Druckgrafik“, John Schmid Galerie, Basel (CH) „Goed gekozen: van 1900 tot nu – Collectie Van Toledo“, Museum Belvédère, Heerenveen (NL) „Stein aus Licht. Kristallvisionen in der Kunst“, Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern (CH)
2022	„Mondrian Moves“, Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Den Haag (NL) „Vanwege Vincent“, Stedelijk Museum, Breda (NL)	2018	„Common Ground“, AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (NL) „Stage of Being“, Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (NL) „FRYSK 100 jaar schilderkunst in Friesland“, Museum Belvédère, Heerenveen (NL) „De Meest Eigentijdse Schilderijen Tentoonstelling“, Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht (NL) „Out of Office; Kunstschatten uit bedrijven“, Singer Museum, Laren (NL)		
2021	„Reflections beyond the Surface“, AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (NL) „Tweede Biënnale Kunst in de Heilige Driehoek“, Kunsts in de Heilige Driehoek, Oosterhout (NL) „Schenking John en Esther Halvemaan“, De Pont Museum, Tilburg (NL) „2nd Biënnale Kunst in de Heilige Driehoek“, Kunsts in de Heilige Driehoek, Oosterhout (NL) „Black Light. Notions of the Sublime in contemporary art“, Kunstmuseum Solothurn, Solothurn (CH)	2017	„Sparkling like the surface of the ocean“, Garage, Rotterdam (NL) „Joy in Repetition“, Galerie Onrust, Amsterdam (NL) „The Meantime“, Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (NL)		
2020	„Diepgeworteld, bomen in de Nederlandse schilderkunst“, Dordrechts Museum, Dordrecht (NL) „Momentum“, Museum Voorlinden, Wassenaar (NL)				