

Jeroen Nelemans

(The Netherlands)

"I am interested in the construct of an image, specifically how the digital image can be manipulated to contemporary notions of sight and seeing.

With the increasing appearance of the visual language of digital technology and the Internet, I started using imagery that I collected from the Internet. The idea that the image has already had an existence in many different forms or materiality intrigues me. The lifespan of an image; painted on a canvas, shot on photo negatives, turned by the digital world of zeros and ones and then by me made into a physical objects that creates a new dialogue that blends the virtual and physical.

This discourse is very much evident in the light box series: *The More I see the Less I Grasp*. This series challenges the relationship between traditional documentation and contemporary notions of representation. To create these layered images, I photographed each lightboxes' innards, and using green-screen technology during post-production, I inserted photographs of nature scenes. Finally, the commingled image of the lightboxes' inner bulbs and the sunny forest are presented on the light box, illuminated from within. In this presentation, Nelemans reveals that a picturesque image, so often taken for granted as 'natural,' cannot be separated from the mechanism of its creation.

From the *Postcard* series are images of tulip fields were taken from Dutch Postcards and Calendars. These bird eye perspectives of color fields became even more abstracted when the actual backlit film is wrapped around the fluorescent light bulb. Early mapmakers frequently used imagery from early works without giving credit to the original cartographers. *Eindhoven* is made from multiple screenshots using Google Earth of road markers in the city of Eindhoven. Much like the *More I see the Less I Grasp* series, these new images of Eindhoven



Six Feet Above.

cannot be separated from the mechanism of its creation, as the map becomes a negative space of the plexiglas, which is removed with a laser cutter, allowing the LED light to be revealed.

Straight lines were crucial for Mondrian's ideal of harmony and order, which he achieved by reducing the image to vertical and horizontal lines and the use of primary colors. I decided to simplify Mondrian's

ideal even more by only using a tool that is designed to create the straight line. Over time 4/5 days each laser levels loose its brightness and eventually disappears. When the batteries die, they will be replaced with new batteries.

This performative element of the piece is being repeated over the time of the exhibition, and therefore creating a new and continuous dialogue to Mondrian's ideal of harmony and order. Light and space have been two essential qualities that Vermeer illustrated within his paintings. Nelemans uses digital collaging to challenge these qualities by

removing the image from its original context. The new spatial forms are replaced with images of light installations that were taken from museums that control and light these Dutch 17th Century paintings. Today we know more about Vermeer's paintings because of scientific investigations rather than contextualize the actual image. Nelemans takes advantage of the medium and let the light source come from the back of the image, creating a more investigatory look.

Since most images, in my art practice, are being introduced via computer or television screens. I like to continue this discourse and to see some of my work backlit as well. Using light in a direct way is also my interpretation of the Dutch light, which has been an obsession throughout history for most Dutch artists.

Jeroen Nelemans (1974) was born in the Netherlands and currently resides in Chicago. His recent shows include The Mission Gallery in Chicago, the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia, the DelaCruz Collection Contemporary Space in Miami, the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia, the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art in Greece and the Urban Institute for Contemporary Arts in Grand Rapids.

His works have also been screened at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Miami, the Banff Center in Canada, the Werkleitz Centre for Media Art, Halle, Germany, Magmart International VideoArt Festival, Napoli and the Kortfilm festival in Copenhagen.

Nelemans collaborated with Anne Wilson in a video titled: Walking the Warp, which was part of a group show at the Whitworth Art Gallery in Manchester, the Knoxville Art Museum and the Contemporary Art Museum in Houston and the Triennale Design Museum in Milan.

Nelemans received a Full Merit Scholarship from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and finished his MFA in 2007. He was a resident at the Jentel residency, Vermont Studio Center and at the Santa Fe Art Institute.

an interview with

Jeroen Nelemans

We would like to start with our usual ice-breaker question: what in your opinion defines a work of Art?

Art is artificial; therefore it has to be man-made. A sunset is not art, unless an artist claims and presents the sunset as an artwork. Art is the product of a conscious intention.

You have a formal artistic training in painting; moreover, in 2007 you received MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. How much in your opinion training influences art? We were wondering if in your opinion a certain kind of training could even stifle one's creativity...

I graduated from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in the Fibers and Material study program. At that time I was exploring and manipulating materials and creating large-scale installation work. I think it is healthy for an artist



the More I see the Less I Grasp. 2012 25" x 25"



Jeroen Nelemans

to be in different environments and use these new surroundings to nourish new work. Whether it is academia, an artist residency or a changing your studio, an artist needs a community.

You are a multidisciplinary artist: how do you choose a particular media for your works?

My previous work informs the new work.

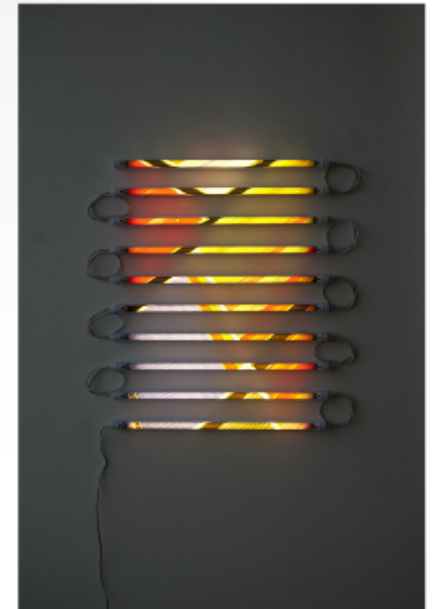
My installation work is always designed and intended to be experienced by the individual, perhaps a moment to be experienced by the individual, perhaps a moment to contemplate their relationship to the work. The sun and the water became part of my art practice, allowing

natural cycles to occur in these unusual settings, like grass growing inside of AstroTurf in Six Feet Above. These natural processes were not, however, brought back into the gallery space. Here the natural cycle stopped and decay continues to change the artwork.

In Six Feet Above, a 12 by 24 feet piece of AstroTurf is suspended six feet above the ground that bisects the gallery space. Traveling underneath, a vast network of roots weaves in and out from under this plane. Once above and within this floating carpet, the viewer realizes that the AstroTurf is a new host for live grass. Video became a new media to explore as the element of time helped to

make these large-scale installation even more powerful.

Now I work more with landscape imagery that I collect from the Internet. The idea that the image already has had an existence in many different forms or materiality intrigues me. The lifespan of images; painted on a canvas, shot on photo negatives, turned into the digital world of zeros and ones and then by me made into a physical object. We live in a visual culture that seems to be like a variation of Platonism as though we were returning to the cave.



Untitled (from the Postcard series) 2012 25" x 50"
light fixtures, back lit film

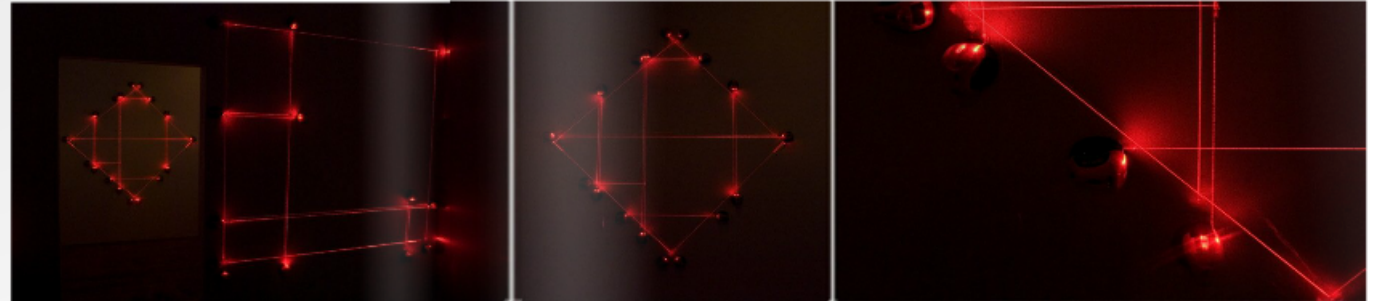
Now we would like to focus on your artworks that that our readers can admire in these pages: let's start with *From the Postcard*. Can you tell us about your process and set up for making this series?

The Postcard series is an extension of the More I see the Less I Grasp series. I was working with light boxes and wanted to continue to explore the possibilities with light fixtures. With the More I see the Less I Grasp series I was very interested in the framework of the light box. The new image became a new window of display.

With the Postcard series I removed this framework and let the wall become part of the work, as the colored light was also cast onto the wall. The images are bird's eye perspectives of Dutch tulip fields. These color blocks became more abstracted when I placed the backlit film, where the actual image is printed, around the fluorescent light bulb.

We would like to ask you some technical questions about your recent work entitled *Eindhoven*: by the way, could you explain to our readers why you have entitled it with the name of an European city?

I am Dutch and grew up near Eindhoven. The map I created completely disregards the practical qualities, so I wanted to clarify this with the title. Early mapmakers often pilfered pre-



Mondrian series 2011 5' x 5' wall mount laser levels, batteries

viously created maps from other cartographers without giving credit to the original maker in order to add new information as cities were expanding. I continue this type of investigation in my work. Eindhoven is made from multiple screenshots using Google Earth of road markers in the city of Eindhoven.

Eindhoven is also called the "light city of the Netherlands" since Philips, a company both of my parents worked for, introduced the light bulb there in 1891. For me, it was a logical step to present my map as a light box.

You are also a video maker: in these last years we have seen that the frontier between Video Art and Cinema is growing more and

more vague. Do you think that this "frontier" will exist longer?

Most of the still imagery that I work with or alter is being introduced to me by the Internet. The same accounts for the moving image, as our experience is no longer separated between television and cinema. Further more, it has become increasingly easier to not only take video, but also editing video.

In the last 5 years I have seen a pleasant shift where established film festivals also introduce a video category and a lot of video festivals over the years have gained a great reputation. I am also in a privileged scenario where I teach video editing in a college here in Chicago and it is

great to see the creative energy when I introduce these tools to my students.

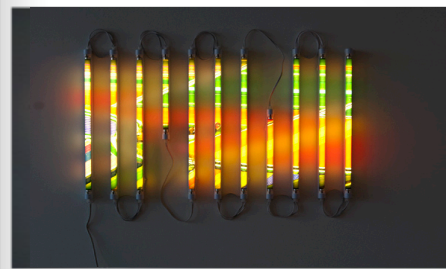
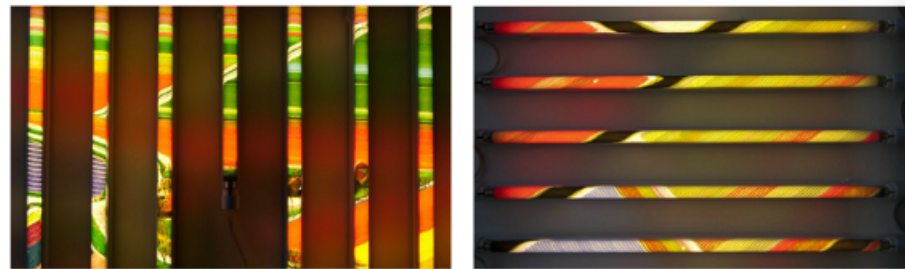
Your series *The More I see the Less I Grasp* challenge the relationship between traditional documentation and contemporary notions of representation: do you think that there's an irremediable contrast between Tradition and Contemporariness?

By the way, do you think that contemporariness it's just a matter of belonging to a "stylistic epoch"? Even though it might seem a bit paradoxical, I would state that piece of contemporary Art could even go beyond a time-based classification: what's your point about this?

Even though the word contemporary is associated with a term for a period of art, for me contemporary means of the present time. So I like to use and explore materials that are current. This discourse is very much evident in the light box series Eindhoven, which talks about cartography.

Throughout history, mapmakers, who were often artists themselves, were reliant upon technological innovations to meet the demands of new generations of mapmakers and map users. This allowed me to think of different ways to represent an image of a map that cannot be

from the Postcard series 2012 25" x 50" light fixtures, back lit film





separated from the mechanism of its creation. The actual map of Eindhoven becomes a negative space, as it is being removed with a laser cutter, allowing the LED light to be revealed.

There's a cliché question, that we often ask to the artists that we interview: what aspect

Eindhoven

2013, 16" x 32"

custom made LED Light box, lasercut plexiglass

of your work do you enjoy the most? And what gives you the biggest satisfaction?

Maintaining the newness and excitement of an idea until the work is finished!



to Leave an Incomplete Image of oneself approx 11" x 13", custom made light box, back lit film

