

The Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Art 2004

The work of Daan van Golden presented by Professor Henk van Os, Chair of the Jury of the Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Art

Prize citation: 'for his versatile output as an artist and his ability to place art in a new context, time and again'

Your Royal Highness,
Your Excellencies,
Members of the Board of the Heineken Fondsen Foundation,
in particular its Chair, Ms De Carvalho,
Distinguished laureates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Daan van Golden, it is with great pleasure that the jury has selected you to receive the 2004 Dr A.H. Heineken Prize for Art.

Daan van Golden has been working as an artist for over forty years, a period of major change in the world of modern art. His response to that change has been both exciting and complex. It is not only the jury, but also younger generations of artists who value the extraordinary way in which he presents his paintings, photographs and other works in installations and publications, which then become works of art in themselves.

It is the opinion of the jury that Daan van Golden should receive the Dr A.H. Heineken Prize "for his versatile output as an artist and his ability to place art in a new context, time and again".

Daan van Golden's work asks us to think about what art actually is. Although virtually every one of his works takes art as its subject, he is not provocative or polemical. His work raises the question in such a delicate and unobtrusive manner that you only become aware of it in passing.

The most impressive work that I have ever seen by Daan van Golden was an installation that he created in 1987 in the Hortus Botanicus at Amsterdam University. If you want to learn the names of plants, a botanical garden is the place to go. When I was a boy, my parents frequently took me along to the botanical garden at our local university. They were interested in herbs and wanted to teach their children how to identify digitalis and belladonna. But Daan van Golden wanted to lift you to a higher plane of consciousness. He led you up the steps of a former laboratory and had you look down at all the plants below. You suddenly saw that they had all been arranged in curved beds. The paths were covered with azure blue gravel, so that the plant beds looked as if they were floating in a lake. Daan van Golden had divested the botanical garden of its educational function. There was no longer any need to talk about plants. He had admitted us into a new world of stillness and poetry in the Hortus.

Close

Daan van Golden does not create art out of thin air. He shows you how to see what is already there. Everything is imbued with meaning. As one of the jury members, Carel Blotkamp, wrote about his work: "Beauty is not purely a matter of creation; it comes to the artist from all the regions of the visible world and along all possible routes, even the camera lens." Daan van Golden's photographs, frequently taken during his travels, contain many autobiographical references, for example the series documenting his daughter Diana's life from infant to adult. His work removes the distinction between art and life. His paintings, his photographs, his paths covered with blue stones, all force you to think about what art is, and about art and life. Objects and events suddenly take on a whole new meaning, previously overlooked. It takes an artist to make them meaningful – an artist like Daan van Golden.