



De Gruyter  
& Andeweg

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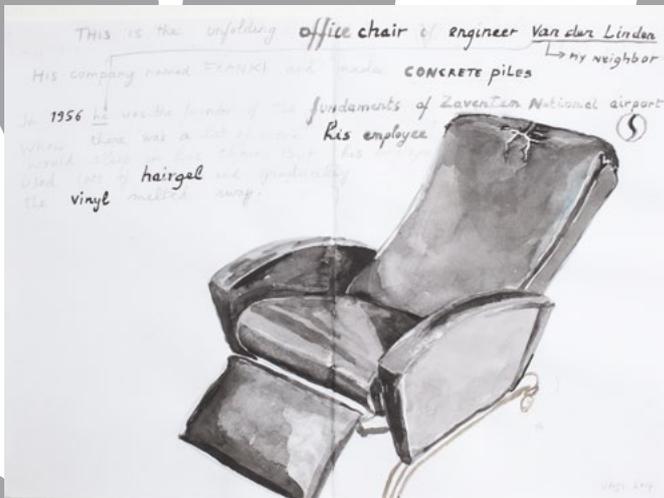


# De Gruyter & Andeweg

## Metaphysical intermediaries

Juliaan Andeweg collects morning dew in a towel to recharge the paintings in his studio. In a similar vein, Voebe de Gruyter has a distinct perspective on the rainwater that trickles down our windows. These drops store reflections of reality — fragmented images that through condensation or catchment ultimately end up in our drinking water. In both cases, the processes release forces and images that lie beyond the artists' sphere of influence.

Stroom Den Haag's programme and library inform and strengthen each other in a unique way. The ideas and sources of inspiration that underlie the artists' practices and the exhibition themes elaborated in Stroom's presentations and projects form a steadily-expanding 'web' of relationships, which are embodied in Stroom's library collection. This library in turn forms a starting point for new ideas and provides the background for Stroom Den Haag's programme.



**Voebe de Gruyter,**  
*The chair of  
engineer Van der  
Linden* (2015),  
41x30 cm, water  
colours, pencil on  
paper.

*De Gruyter & Andeweg* is the result of such an inimitable yet crystal-clear insight that came to our Librarian Arnold Mosselman — the realisation that there is a subtle rhyme between the two artists presenting new and existing works in this exhibition. They are Voebe de Gruyter — an artist whom Stroom has worked with before — and Juliaan Andeweg — a younger colleague who drew our attention with work that initially appears quite different.

Both De Gruyter and Andeweg were born in The Hague. But they have a number of less obvious things in common that have a far greater impact: aspects that lie in the essence beyond matter itself, in the intangible realm.

You could say that the two artists have an expanded sensibility; that they follow a holistic approach. You could call them fantasists — dreamers even. A sceptic could say that Voebe de Gruyter and Juliaan Andeweg are not engaging with reality. But what is reality actually? Is it strictly limited to what can be perceived through our senses and understood through reasoning?

What we do know for sure is that De Gruyter & Andeweg have an eye for the immaterial qualities of materiality and objects. And that they venture into 'alternate spheres', to share the unparalleled richness of a different — often unverifiable — reality with us.



## What doesn't dissolve sinks to the bottom

### Voebe de Gruyter & Juliaan Andeweg

*This spring Stroom Den Haag has a surprise for us in store: a joint exhibition by Voebe de Gruyter (1960) and Juliaan Andeweg (1986). Yasmijn Jarram talked with the two artists about what they have in common.*

by Yasmijn Jarram

**Juliaan Andeweg,**  
*Boreas* (2016),  
Installation *Rijks-*  
*academieOPEN*,  
Amsterdam.  
Photo: Gert Jan  
van Rooij

Juliaan Andeweg and Voebe de Gruyter: hardly the most evident of combinations. The two artists don't just represent different generations; at first glance, their bodies of work don't have that much in common either. Andeweg makes roughly-hewn, seemingly formalist paintings, objects and installations, in which he doesn't shy away from a grand gesture. In contrast, De Gruyter's diverse work appears airy and conceptual, with little emphasis on material aspects. Still, this didn't stop Stroom from confronting the two artists with each other, working from the suspicion that they actually share a distinctly metaphysical view of the world around them. They are both interested in the hidden, mystical domain that lies hidden

behind the material surface. In the run-up to the exhibition, more and more cross-connections between their work came to light. While the original plan outlined two concurrent solo exhibitions, it ultimately developed into a joint presentation.

“There are these interesting coincidences that present themselves every time round,” says Andeweg. “Each time we meet something new pops up.” Take the mythical god Hermes, whom the artists have adopted as a central figure in the exhibition. Hermes is the protector of thieves, travellers and junctions. “He has a very changeable character. He is the swiftest of the twelve gods of the Greek pantheon,” explains Andeweg. “Hermes had a quick sword and a quick tongue — just like his Germanic counterpart Odin, who spoke in rhyme. His speed is emphasised in every hymn devoted to him. Even before he was a day old, he had stolen Apollo’s cattle.” After meeting a few times, the artists discovered that De Gruyter had actually written a thesis about Hermes for her final project at the Rietveld Academie. A thesis that she furthermore wrote in Andeweg’s year of birth.

For her graduation project, De Gruyter made a closer study of the chapels in the Flemish countryside of her youth. She became fascinated by the history of the old crossroads on which these chapels stood. In Roman times, statues of Hermes were often erected at these sites, surrounded by stones offered

by passing travellers. “The country was full of robbers back then,” she says. “If you went into the forest, you were never sure of getting out in one piece. You used your gut feeling to decide whether to go left or right.” The chapels — some of which have already disappeared again — were built later on. “It was precisely at these locations where I placed and photographed a statue of Hermes that I had made. I never exhibited those pictures because at the time, they digressed too much from the focus of my thesis. Thirty years on, I thought it would be a nice idea to breathe new life into them for this exhibition.”

## Water

One of the points of reference in the Stroom exhibition is an interest the artists share in water as a source of knowledge. De Gruyter, for example, has made work about ‘cognisant’ water: the premise that water contains information. “All the images in water’s surroundings are reflected in its surface — are absorbed by it,” she explains. “It’s a kind of container filled with images. When you swim in it, you need to push aside all those images.” Andeweg in turn has read a great deal about ‘living water’: the idea that vibrations could leave an impression of some kind. “If you think of how crystals grow under precarious conditions, it becomes easy to form a mental image,” he says. “I believe that water is something absolute, and that it determines what it wants to be. If it is liquid or prepared to be filled with



Juliaan Andeweg,  
*Chooser of the  
Slain* (2017),  
video loop (still).

concentration, it does so of its own volition. When I started out as a painter, I used to go to the forest to collect morning dew. I used a towel that I had reserved for this purpose. I would wring the water out of the towel after getting back to my studio. I also lit a fire basket and opened all the windows to let the wind blow through the room. I wanted everything to be in the same place at the same time. I had this kind of animistic relationship with the four elements.”

Like the ancient Greeks, Andeweg assumes that the world is composed of four classical elements rather than 82 chemical elements. “You can still get your head around a number like four,” he explains. “I believe that to an extent, a civilisation can benefit from simplification.” De Gruyter disagrees: “When you simplify everything, you lose a lot in the process. We can’t make any conclusive statements about the world around us. I can’t make any conclusive statements about myself. You’ll never find out. Occasionally, you can feel it, but you can’t express it in words. Actually, every day, you should acknowledge that you don’t know the facts of the matter. This allows you to reset the counter in your own mind. Only then will these things come to you.” Like Andeweg, De Gruyter is interested in new developments in science, due to the link with art. “These scientific theories are all flights of thought. Art is important because it forces people to look in a different way. When you sensitise people to perceptual issues, they become receptive. That’s why it is so important to do things, make stuff — rather than stay passive and simply let yourself be wowed by the media.”

Andeweg confirms the importance of being receptive: “My feeling is that in general, most people agree that there are all sorts of connections. However, due to the transience and distractions of today’s world, they find it a bit scary or weird. But when push comes to shove, these things play a part in every



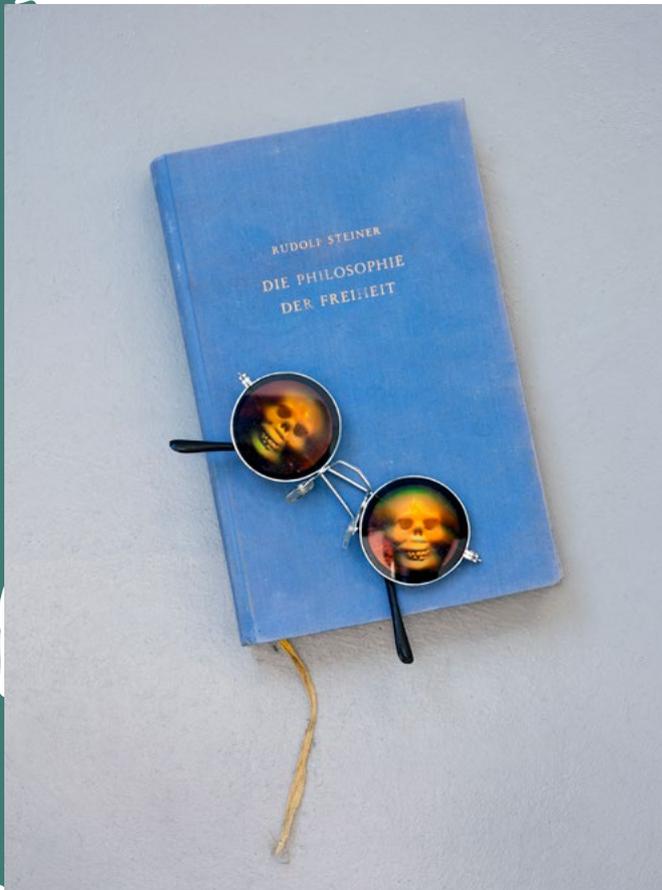
Voebe de Gruyter, *The Game of the Baldheads* (2010),  
wood, eggs, blueberries. Dimensions variable.

person's life." He compares it to processes in nature, which are so extraordinary that they would be seen as impossible if they didn't occur on a daily basis. "Maybe something similar is going on with these types of immaterial processes," he suggests. "In my experience, these are found immediately above the processes of nature. Indeed, for me personally, matter always has an immaterial form too. From a human being to a flower, from a blade of grass to a meadow." De Gruyter adds: "Speaking about those two layers, it's very important for me to sense when a work is a work for me personally. When do I get this feeling? When something comes to the fore. Something from a different time creeps in — a kind of signal that reinforces the work. It comes from outside — it emphasises the necessity of the work to manifest itself at that precise moment." Andeweg: "You really phrased that very nicely."

This feeling that everything is starting to come together is something Andeweg remembers from his final presentation during RijksakademieOPEN 2016. "Everything ran in loops," he explains. "Elliott Smith's track *Christian Brothers* running in the background, the round fire pots, the videos, the north wind forming circles. I had the feeling that I was really able to crystallise this immaterial quality — without putting a name on it." In his presentation, Andeweg distanced himself from a formalist approach. This was a conscious choice: "Actually, the

materiality of my work — or the confirmation of materiality — reflected a purely conceptual approach. People jokingly refer to my paintings as curtains or corrugated sheets. They're always looking for ways in which to interpret them in their own terms, or to demean them entirely — because they're afraid that otherwise, they won't be able to understand them. But the vertical pleats or folds in those monochrome works of mine, for example, actually represent the flight of a psychopomp, who escorts souls to the afterlife, on an empty surface. This so-called materiality is simply supported by the concept."

Towards the end of our conversation, De Gruyter shows a picture of a row of water bottles which she had arranged on the floor of an exhibition space. The work was inspired by the bottles of water set on the judges' table at the Queen Elisabeth Competition, a prestigious competition for young musicians in De Gruyter's home town of Brussels. Since the judges sit on an elevation, the sounds of the music might travel over the audience's heads from the stage to their table, nestling in the water and determining who wins the competition. At the time, the exhibition of this work was delayed due to circumstances. By sheer coincidence, its presentation ended up running at the same time as the competition itself. De Gruyter: "This meant the image presented in the exhibition could be viewed concurrently with the actual bottles. Originally, these periods didn't line up; but



due to a scheduling error, they suddenly did. To me that's a present. Maybe this is the Hermes we are seeking." Andeweg concludes: "It's like shaking a test tube. What doesn't dissolve sinks to the bottom and crystallises when you strain it. There's something in the air — something that you can capture."

Yasmijn Jarram  
is an art critic and curator

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**Juliaan Andeweg,**  
π† (2016),  
*Die Philosophie  
der Freiheit* by  
Rudolf Steiner,  
hologram glasses.



Voebe de Gruyter, *Beer Felts* (2014), table, beer felts (paper of a lecture by De Gruyter torn in pieces and chewed by art students in Brussels), text on A4.



Juliaan Andeweg, *Art Game Danny Vapid* (2016),  
exhibition at Martin van Zomeren, Amsterdam.



Voebe de Gruyter, *The water of the jury of the Queen Elisabeth competition* (2015), colour pencil, pencil, water colours on paper, drawing, spa bottles. Photo: F-WERK

## Voebe de Gruyter & Juliaan Andeweg

In 2015, Stroom presented the solo exhibition *A Burning Bag as a Smoke-Grey Lotus* by the Canadian artist Gareth Moore. Moore drew inspiration for this project from the book *Living Water: Viktor Schauberg and the Secrets of Natural Energy* by Olof Alexandersson (1973). Viktor Schauberg (1885-1958) was an Austrian naturalist and pioneer who promoted a new understanding of the potential of energy from nature. He developed systems that would allow air and water to power machines. For Stroom's Librarian Arnold Mosselman, this interesting book called to mind the work of Voebe de Gruyter, who had made a number of works about 'cognisant water'. Further associations led him to consider a combination of her work with that of Juliaan Andeweg, who was already included on Stroom's list of future exhibitors. Stroom has observed a 'subtle rhyme' between De Gruyter's semi-scientific approach and Andeweg's embrace of the metaphysical properties of matter. Both artists are interested in the process through which immaterial qualities and circumstances nestle in physical objects.



"Two weeks after my aunt died, I got my grandmother's carpet back out of the cupboard. When I unrolled it I saw it was moth-eaten. The moths flew out. I realised I had to rescue this because it was all that was left of that branch of the family. Now the last source dried up. I went to buy special shampoo for the carpet and began to wash and rinse it over the bath. The colour that came out was

dark brown – at least one hundred years drained away – and slowly the colour became lighter, until it remained the same, a kind of café latte colour. After five minutes of rinsing the colour still kept coming and I was overwhelmed by a joyful feeling because this was the exact average of colour of the universe. During the rinsing a strong smell was released, probably the smell of time."

Voebe de Gruyter, *Grandmother's Carpet* (2012), colour pencil, pencil, watercolour on paper, 104 x 102 cm.

Transport of images via your forefinger

When you point at an image, it will be drawn into your finger.

The closer you come to an image, the more clear the image will become within your finger.

When there is a lot of time in an image, meaning when an artist has spent a lot of time painting the image, the image will be more completely absorbed and remain within your finger.

That is why guards in a museum are very afraid that people who approach a painting and point to it will take the painting away; that is why they always want you to keep a distance. Curators absorb many images while pointing at them. But they don't know it. The more they organize and arrange, the more rigid and unclear the show becomes.

Voebe de Gruyter,  
*Transport of  
Images via Your  
Forefinger* (2005),  
text on drawing  
paper, 62 x 47 cm.

The exhibition offers an intuitive exploration of various connections. De Gruyter has grasped the exhibition as an opportunity to both present older works and show previously-unrealised ideas in a new context. Some of the works are actually shown for the first time ever. In addition to the Hermes project, De Gruyter's works on show include a broken and doorless refrigerator that the artist once came across in Lithuania. The Flemish curator Herman Labro, who over the course of many years secretly introduced a string of fictional artists, will also be making an appearance in the exhibition. Andeweg will be partially expanding on his final presentation at the Rijksakademie, building a dark, underworld-like environment in the basement of Stroom, with a supporting role for Sprite bottles filled with codeine. He has included a slowed-down version of the track *Christian Brothers*, which also featured in his Rijksakademie show. This is a reference to the use of cough syrup as a recreational drug in US hiphop culture, who also represent the sedative effects of codeine in their music. In addition, Andeweg has made a new installation that consists of different cocktail glasses, filled with sorts of liquids that he has concocted himself.

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▲ Adolf Hirémy-Hirschi, *The souls of Acheron* (1898), choice Juliaan Andeweg.

► Juliaan Andeweg, *Boreas* (2016), Installation Rijksacademie-OPEN, Amsterdam. Photo: Gert Jan van Rooij





**Voebe de Gruyter,**  
*Secret Export of Stories* (2009),  
video (still).

## Biographies

### **Voebe de Gruyter**

Voebe de Gruyter (The Hague, 1960) graduated from Amsterdam's Gerrit Rietveld Academie in 1986. She has worked as a resident artist at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam, ISP in New York and Cité des Arts in Paris. De Gruyter's work is best understood as propositions relating to unsuspected laws and patterns. The artist takes an evocative concept expressed through a text or image to create what could be described as a balance of forces that activate and heighten the viewer's thought processes. In her work *Een ei leggen in de nek van een vreemde* ('Laying an Egg in a Stranger's Neck', 2000), for example, she uses a number of sketches to describe how through sheer concentration, one might be able to place a(n) (egg-shaped) ball of condensed attention in someone's collar.

### **Juliaan Andeweg**

Juliaan Andeweg (The Hague, 1986) is a graduate of the Royal Academy of Art The Hague and was a resident artist at Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam in 2015-2016. Andeweg sees the process of artistic production as a Romantic, contemporary form of alchemy. His installations, sculptures and paintings are inspired by philosophical, occult and religious interests, which inform the precise manipulation of matter and space. At the same time, the artist makes enthusiastic use of sources from pop culture and banal or vernacular imagery. These incorporate references to a timeless symbolism and the merging of urban subcultures, fleeting obsessions, media archives and an inexhaustible stream of images.





**Juliaan Andeweg**, Installation *RijksacademieOPEN*, Amsterdam (2016).  
Photo: Gert Jan van Rooij

# Colophon

**De Gruyter & Andeweg**

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## **Stroom School**

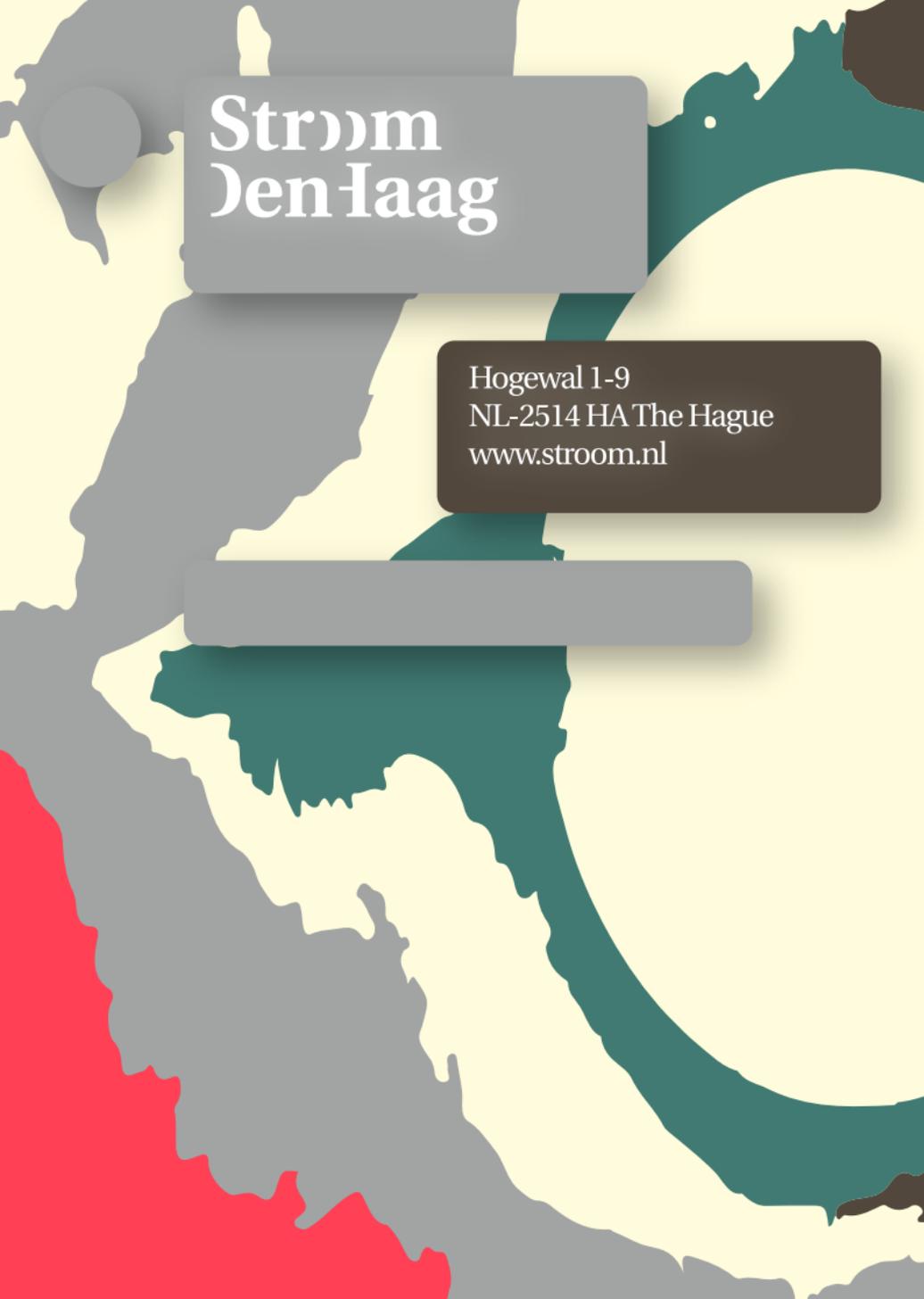
Parallel to the exhibition, a program of additional activities takes place. Please check our website, read our newsletter or follow us on social media.

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