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## **Wessel Huisman/Master of Fine Arts/Photography**

**WESSEL HUISMAN** (Breda/NL, 1954) is an international established artist from The Netherlands. In 1981 he graduated with honour from the Radboud University Nijmegen – department of Economic and Social History. In 1984 he finished his study at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design Arnhem/NL with excellent results. Later that year he became managing director of the same Academy(ArtEZ); a position he hold until 2006. Since then he has devoted himself fulltime to his artistic career.

### **Tradition and craftsmanship**

Wessel Huisman is famous for the light and clarity in his paintings. His way of working is part of a rich Dutch tradition. Painters like Rembrandt, Johannes Vermeer(both 17<sup>th</sup> century), Vincent van Gogh(19<sup>th</sup> century) are other exponents of this typical Dutch fascination for light and space. Like his ancestors Wessel Huisman combines a unique style with a great personally developed craftsmanship.

### **International recognition**

Apart from countless exhibitions in the Netherlands since 1990, Wessel Huisman is also very successful in Europe and other parts of the world. In Italy he is represented by Linea Spazio Arte Contemporanea, based in Florence. From 2007 onwards his star is also rising in Asia - with shows in among others Japan, Zuid-Korea, Vietnam, China - and in America. More often he combines these presentations with lectures and masterclasses at universities and in museums, like in 2008 in Saigon- en Hanoi/Vietnam, in 2012 en 2013 in Shanghai/China. In Shanghai he is represented by Moyi Art Gallery and in Hong Kong by Asia Contemporary Art Fair.

### **Prices and nominations**

Already for many years Wessel Huisman belongs to the elite of the Dutch artists. In 2012 and 2013 he got into the finals for Best Artist of the Year. In 2004 he received the Victoria Price of the city of Doetinchem for his masterplan for art in public space. In 2014 he won the 'Premio Telethon' for his series for the 'Small Wonders' exhibition in the Linea Gallery, Florence.

The participation in Biennales (Florence/Italy) and fairs, e.g. the Shanghai Art Fair for several years, gave him very important international feedback on his achievements. Winning the Lorenze Il Magnifico price of the city of Florence, granted by an international jury of art historians and museum directors in 2011, 2013 and 2015 were important landmarks in his international career.

### **Important Business Clients/Collectors**

A lot of his paintings is collected by private persons all over the world. Among them are relatives of the Royal Dutch family (Prince Armin zur Lippe/Detmold/Germany), businessmen like Dirk van den Broek and engineers like Jan Dalmeijer (Arcadis). Important companies are e.g. Heineken Brewery (2014), AkzoNobel (1996) and SKF Bearings (2012). The Korean office of this originally Swedish company commissioned a work for their conference hall in Busan. The general manager of the first class Jade Garden restaurants in China bought two big works for their place in the International Financial Centre/ IFC Pudong/Shanghai (2012). For the cruise ship company Holland America Line (HAL) he made a series of paintings (2010). The Joop van den Ende Holding has a collection of paintings exhibited in his theatres in The Netherlands and Germany. The Dutch General Consulate in Düsseldorf/Germany commissioned a large painting, being a present for the German prime minister (2000). In The Netherlands a lot of companies have collected his works in the past. Among them are insurances companies like NV Schade/The Hague with a collection of ten paintings, accountancy offices like KPMG/Amsterdam. The Dutch government has bought works for their ministries. Quite special is the large number of architects that favour his work. Not only in the Netherlands, but also in the US, Turkey and

Italy. Specialized as they are in dealing with all kinds space problems, they recognize the unique spatial qualities of his paintings.

## **Why painting?**

During the exams finishing his study in the academy of fine arts in Arnhem/The Netherlands, he made a collection of paintings, architectural sculptures, drawings and photographs. Also the first years working as an artist, he practised all these media. Beyond that he was very interested in architecture as well. In the beginning of the 1990's he decided to focus entirely on painting, while most photography became a means to support my artistic projects. Why painting? First of all, because since he was young he was fascinated by the world of paintings and painters. Being an artist himself he discovered the richness of its language more and more, its inspiring history and tradition. He was eager and still is very motivated to explore and enrich that language of image making every day! Studying paintings from the first examples, made some 40.000 years ago, until the works of contemporary artists became part of his researches. He is convinced that apart from having a good insight in the meaning of images and the necessity of having ideas and inspiration, a painter needs to develop his personal craftsmanship. If you want to become a highly qualified professional musician, you have to master your instrument and the grammar of your metier in a personal way. For him making paintings and developing his skills and enrich his experiences is an ongoing parallel process.

## **Space/Depth/Movement**

All his paintings are about light, clarity, brightness. At the same time all his works are about creating a sense of space of depth. In fact on the two dimensional surface of a painting, this is quite difficult. You can use the laws of perspective - horizon, vanishing points, etc. - to create an *illusion* of space. The illusion refers to impressions you have seen in the three dimensional reality. In the course of years Wessel Huisman noticed that there is also a more abstract way of giving the

spectator a sensation of space. In his paintings you always see lines, strokes and rectangles of paint that have nothing to do with the figurative image. They give the painting an extra order, rhythm and movement. The process of adding these extra accents evolves with the development of the figurative image. They form a kind of structure, like the construction frame of a building. The ordering of these elements is a very delicate process; in fact it is crucial for the final expression of the painting. In the end all these accents, related to the figurative elements of the image, give the painting an extra depth and movement. An sensation of space which directly forms itself in the head of the spectator. This impression has always a positive, generous, even meditative character. It is an expression of vital energy. That is what he wants to give the spectator: a direct, intense experience of liberating space! He is not a moralist; he doesn't want to convince the audience of anything. All his paintings have a certain atmosphere, like a fingerprint. That is his **unique style**, in the most direct and unpolished way. It would be a big mistake to try to conceptualize this personal aspect by some intellectual chit-chat. It is his sign of life to the world, the best he can give. That doesn't imply that he doesn't reflect on his work, and that he is not conscious of what he does. Nor that he works in an automatic mode. He is very aware of the conditions that enable him to get the best out of him in terms of dedication and concentration.

### **Importance of Light/Memory**

During the last twenty five years Wessel Huisman has realized that he has a kind of light archive in his head. Very often he recognizes light circumstances related to his own youth when he sees photographs taken under totally different circumstances. Light triggers his memory like a smell can do. In fact he has seen all the light qualities and contrasts already in real. Thus the photographs he uses activate that memory. In many of the **titles** of his paintings he mentions a date, month, year. This has nothing to do with the moment the original photograph was taken, but with the origin of the light memory. You could say that Wessel Huisman is an expert on memories as well! It is no coincidence that he studied history in university before he went to the academy. The past has always fascinated him. It

is not so much a romantic longing for the past, but rather the notion that earlier experiences form references to cope with the present day.

Every place, whether city or village, has its own atmosphere, its own expression, caused by local conditions. The light circumstances are of great influence. It is not only a basic necessity to see things, the condition of the light determines the *mood* of reality. In fact a neutral light reality doesn't exist. According to the geographic location, the season and the time of day, the light changes. Since his first exhibitions in Japan and Vietnam, he understood he needed e.g. an interesting paradox in a town like Hong Kong. The modern city scape seems to deny the unique past and local circumstances. If you wander through Central or Admiralty, it could be anywhere. But it is part of his sensibility to note the specific atmosphere on the spot.

For years he only used all kinds of grey, black and white layers to build up his paintings. Since he was interested in light and light contrasts, he skipped the outspoken colours like red or blue. Recently however he noticed he could integrate colour tones in his paintings to specify the *mood* of the light.

### **A Special Focus on Architecture**

Wessel Huisman always had a special interest in architecture. Architecture is the art of creating space in the three dimensional reality. Most architectural images have a rhythmic structure. They give him the opportunity to play with the formal forms in a way impossible in the real situation. Also this element strengthens the spatial sensation. Especially in case of modern skylines and city views, there is a sense of flying and floating, of transparency once he loosens the closed construction of a building or a street side. The painted form is not interested in the end of the façade, nor hindered by gravity. It gives an wonderful freedom to play with these solid forms, which vanish into air or seem to be built on mirror like surfaces. That's one of the reasons he works figuratively! Because you can *understand* the scene he paints, or even recognize if the street or buildings on the

painting are familiar, one feels connected to it more directly. Once he has drawn the attention on the image, it is much easier to involve the spectator in this more abstract play of movement and depth.