



Short Notice

The ‘Absolute Colour Music’ of Jan van Deene: Inventing Abstraction in Paris 1911-13

• LUDO VAN HALEM •

Some time in the late autumn of 1913, Willem Steenhoff (1863-1932), the deputy head of the Rijksmuseum’s paintings department and a progressive art critic, must have gone to the new building that housed De Onafhankelijken (The Independents) to see the Second International Jury-Free Exhibition, staged by this recently formed artists’ society.¹ After the exhibition ended, the weekly magazine *De Amsterdammer* carried his less than enthusiastic review, although he did find a group of paintings hanging in the large room by the entrance striking, ‘mostly large canvases, which, although by different painters, seem to have come from one workshop. They just give the impression of fantasies of soap bubbles before they have reached their absolute spherical shape, after they leave the bowl of the pipe’. However he was really not taken with them, because ‘there is no richness of ornamentation to praise, but the painterly content is certainly poorer’.² More than a hundred years later the Rijksmuseum took one of those ‘soap bubble paintings’ – the 1913 *Peinture VII* by Jan van Deene (1886-1977, fig. 1) – into the collection as an example of early abstract painting.³

Van Deene had submitted eight paintings for the exhibition, which hung together with works by Jacob Bendien (1890-1933), Arnold Davids

< Fig. 1
JAN VAN DEENE,
Peinture VII, 1913.
Oil on canvas,
39.5 x 32.5 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. SK-A-5065.
Purchased with
the support of the
Knecht-Drenth
Fonds/Rijksmuseum
Fonds. © heirs of
Jan van Deene

(1887-1942), Chris Hassoldt (1877-1956), John Rädecker (1885-1956) and Anni Rädecker-de Roos (1890-1974) in the large entrance hall: more than twenty-five altogether. Whereas other paintings in the exhibition had conventional titles that referred to the genre or the subject, the ones by Van Deene and others were listed in the catalogue as *Peinture* and *Schilderij* – ‘painting’ in French and Dutch – respectively (figs. 2-4).⁴ To emphasize that they were not referring to visible reality in their work, they called it ‘Absolute Art’, comparable to absolute music, which, unlike programmatic music, does not refer to a non-musical reality.⁵

The artists who exhibited together were friends, and before the exhibition had lived and worked in Paris for varying periods of time between 1911 and 1913.⁶ In that turbulent, artistic melting pot they developed a common, non-representational style of painting with interlocking, rounded areas of colour that were sharply separated from one another, sometimes by raised edges of paint. Together, those paintings must have formed an overwhelming tableau of swirling and eddying shapes and colours, from small to several metres in size. Unfortunately we know of no photographs from that exhibition, but more than sixty years later Van Deene still remembered pretty well what it looked like: ‘Anyone coming into the



Fig. 2

JAN VAN DEENE,
Peinture VIII, 1912.
Oil on panel,
42 x 31 cm.
JK Art Foundation.
© heirs of
Jan van Deene
Photo: Peter Cox

Fig. 3

CHRIS HASSOLDT,
Schilderij, 1913.
Material, dimensions
and whereabouts
unknown.
Photograph published
in *Memorandum
voor schilders*,

*kunstverzamelaars,
kunsthandelaars,
enz. II* (1913), no. 26
(3 December 1913).
Photo: The Hague,
RKD – Netherlands
Institute for Art
History, image no.
0001523076



large entrance hall saw Hassoldt's large canvas right in front of them [possibly fig. 3], with a painting of mine on either side and above it – together a fascinating entity. The four impressive works by Bendien dominated the side walls [among them fig. 4].⁷ A statement that Van Deene had written to clarify their meaning hung alongside the paintings (see Appendix).⁸

The paintings Van Deene and his friends exhibited had little in common with the current and even the most revolutionary modern art in the Netherlands.⁹ As the art historian Cor Blok put it, it was 'a self-contained phenomenon'.¹⁰ This Dutch isolation is in stark contrast to the dynamism of the place of their origin, for in Paris they were in the birthplace of abstraction and part of the widespread international movement that would radically change the course of twentieth-century painting.¹¹ Sixty years later, Van Deene put his recollections of that time on paper. Although somewhat distorted by time and not entirely reliable as to the details, they serve as a guide to allow us to follow his personal development at a pivotal point in Western art history, when he tried to design an 'absolute "colour" music' that 'would be understandable by those sensitive to art throughout the world, a universal supra-personal art that could be practised generally'.¹²

'It is profoundly ugly'

Although Steenhoff was well disposed towards modern and contemporary art, his critical, reserved attitude is illustrative of the Dutch reactions to this new non-representational art, which first manifested itself so widely in the Netherlands in the autumn of 1913. In an attempt to get a grip on this phenomenon, trivial comparisons were made and the technical skills and genuine intentions of the artists were called into question in newspaper and magazine articles. The critic 'Gio' (pseudonym of Jan Kalff Jr, 1865-1944) of the *Algemeen*



Fig. 4
JACOB BENDIEN,
Compositie
[Schilderij], c. 1912.
Oil on canvas,
345 x 150 cm.
The Hague,
Kunstmuseum,
inv. no. 0334685.

Handelsblad, for example, wondered whether he was being taken for a fool. He took the 'panels' by 'Bendien from Berlin, Davids, Van Deene and Hassoldt from Paris ... for mosaics, sometimes – by chance? – not unpleasant in colour. Unless they are jokes...' ¹³ The critic Nathan Wolf (1872-1942) also questioned their good intentions in the cultural weekly magazine *De Kunst* and thought that the artists 'seem to start from the idea: the crazier you act, the more you're talked about. And so this club came up with a new idea: we make large designs for children's puzzle boxes and exhibit them as paintings... Now they hang there on the wall, those puzzle box designs'. ¹⁴ In *De Telegraaf* the conservative critic and professor at the Rijksakademie, Carel Dake (1857-1918), described the paintings as 'colossal canvases, painted with colourful tears' which put his aesthetic sensibility severely to the test. Because 'one day's stay in a room decorated with these artworks would turn a gentle sheep into a raging lion. It is profoundly ugly'. ¹⁵

Two magazines took the trouble to print Van Deene's statement in its entirety, but they did not hesitate to question the artistic value of this new form of painting. In the popular illustrated magazine *Het Leven*, 'A.T.' asked himself 'what that must mean – not a living soul can make sense of it. And no wonder, as it is nothing, it represents nothing, the painters who make those things, and claim that this is now the "absolute art", say so themselves'. ¹⁶ The writer and journalist Frits Lapidoth (1861-1932), who worked for *De Nieuwe Courant*, also concluded that he did not understand 'a single thing' about the work or the statement and reproached them for their 'vanity and gross over-estimation of themselves'. ¹⁷

'Start All Over Again'

The exhibition and the cool reception in the press was the end of an adven-

ture that had begun for Van Deene in 1911. He trained at the Rijksnormaalschool voor Teekenonderwijzers, the drawing teachers' school established in the Rijksmuseum, and at the national academy, the Rijksakademie. He had then tried to set himself up as an independent painter in Amsterdam. Becoming acquainted with such things as the Hoogendijk Collection in the Rijksmuseum, which contained a lot of works by Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), and exhibitions by the *Moderne Kunstkring* and the *St Luke painters'* society 'reinforced in me the desire to get to know modern French art better', he wrote. With a little money from his father and from his childhood friend Chris Hassoldt, he went to Paris in the autumn of 1911. ¹⁸

It was there that he immediately sought out the painter and critic Conrad Kickert (1882-1965), co-founder of the *Moderne Kunstkring*, who on his *jours* acquainted him with artists such as Otto (1884-1957) and Adya (1876-1959) van Rees-Dutilh, the Gallicised Dutch painter Jean (Jan) Verhoeven (1870-1941) and the German painter Otto Freundlich (1878-1943) 'who was not friendly, a large, plump figure ... he later became known for works similar to those I made myself'. ¹⁹ Kickert referred him to the Cézanne collector Auguste Pellerin (1853-1929) and to the prominent art dealers who represented the avant-garde, such as the Bernheim family, Paul Durand-Ruel (1831-1922), Ambroise Vollard (1866-1939), Clovis Sagot (1854-1913), Wilhelm Uhde (1874-1947) and Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler (1884-1979). Repeated visits to museums such as the *Musée du Louvre*, *Musée du Luxembourg*, *Musée de Cluny* and *Musée Guimet* were also considered a self-evident part of the course. Through this immersion in Classical, old, non-Western and contemporary art, Van Deene came to realize 'that everything I'd been taught before had become worthless for me, that all

my study time at the Normaalschool and the Akademie were lost years – that I had to start all over again'.²⁰

Through a chance meeting in the Louvre with the painter Dirk Filarski (1885-1964) and John Rådecker, whom he did not know but recognized from Amsterdam, Van Deene became acquainted with their traveling companion, Jacob Bendien. They became friends and Van Deene introduced Bendien to his circle of acquaintances – the Parisian Hollanders. They visited the art galleries and museums that by then Van Deene knew well, and the three museums housed in the Palais du Trocadéro. It was there that they saw 'curious products by the Incas and other American peoples' and 'Oriental sculpture ... from ... Indo-China'. Above all they felt themselves drawn towards the latter 'by the mysterious-

ness that emanated from it'.²¹ In the spring of 1912 Van Deene and Bendien found studios in Montparnasse within walking distance of one another and from then on 'the artistic collaboration developed between Bendien and me'. They began to paint character heads of known and unknown people who caught their eye, whose features they made abstract with flat colour shapes (fig. 5).²² The forms and the lines used to render eyes, mouths and hair reflect their familiarity with the ancient Khmer statues in the Palais du Trocadéro (fig. 6).

'The Last Step'

That spring saw the Salon des Indépendants, where Van Deene, and no doubt Bendien too, first encountered the (almost) non-representational paintings by Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944). The exhibition featured *Improvisations 24*

Fig. 5

JACOB BENDIEN,
Peinture 1, 1912.
Oil on canvas,
65 x 50 cm.
Utrecht, Centraal
Museum, inv. no.
19672.
Photo: Centraal
Museum, Utrecht

Fig. 6

Head of Shiva,
Cambodia, late
ninth-early tenth
century. Sandstone,
46 cm (with pedestal).
Paris, Musée Guimet
– musée national
des Arts asiatiques,
inv. no. MG 18101.
© RMN-Grand Palais
(MNAAG, Paris) /
Thierry Ollivier





Fig. 7
 WASSILY KANDINKSY,
Improvisation 26
(En ramant), 1912.
 Oil on canvas,
 97 x 107,5 cm.
 Munich, Städtische
 Galerie im
 Lenbachhaus und
 Kunstbau, Gabriele
 Münter Stiftung 1957,
 inv. no. GMS 66.

(*Troika II*), 25 (*Jardin de l'amour*) and 26 (*En ramant*, fig. 7) from 1912.²³ 'But I couldn't get on with the wild lines and paint smears from which it was put together, although not without a feeling for harmony. I missed the order in it, the balance, the quiet strength that characterizes a beautiful artwork,' Van Deene recalled his reaction at that time.²⁴

Van Deene and Bendien were on a different track, one that was being followed by several artists in Paris. On the one hand it was based on Cubism's fragmented rendering of space and volume, and on the other on Fauvism's autonomy of colour. Otto Freundlich, for example, who Van Deene knew from Kickert's circle and whose work he saw at Sagot's,²⁵ had already taken a step towards an abstract composition with countless coordinated bands of colour in 1911 (fig. 8).²⁶ Although a group of figures had been the starting point, nothing more was to be seen of

it and at the very most the vague suggestion of a perspective space remained. However, any suggestion of perspective had completely disappeared in the large abstract painting that the Paris-based Czech artist František Kupka (1871-1957) exhibited at the Salon d'Automne in October 1912: a composition of intersecting segments of circles in red, blue, black and white (fig. 9).

Van Deene mentions this Salon, which he found disappointing, but makes no reference to Kupka's *Amorpha, Fugue in Two Colours*. This is remarkable because the painting attracted considerable attention and even featured in the European and American newsreels screened by the Gaumont Film Company.²⁷ But it is also interesting because the description he used for his own and for Bendien's paintings applies to this painting: 'areas of colour contained in curved lines' and 'sharply defined, flat

colours'.²⁸ 'Finally, in the late autumn of 1912,' says Van Deene, 'I took the last step. ... The creation of the first, so-called "non-representational" painting,' which, unfortunately, he does not identify.²⁹

By then Van Deene's fellow student Arnold Davids had arrived in Paris and Chris Hassoldt and his wife Charlotte and John and Anni Rådecker-de Roos came too. This meant that the group of friends were able to closely follow Van Deene's and Bendien's development. In late September or early October they moved to Montmartre and then one by one they returned to Amsterdam, Van Deene just before Christmas 1912 and Davids as the last

in March 1913.³⁰ 'When I came from Paris, we all buckled down to hard work in Holland, when I made almost all of those paintings ... And Bendien made really large paintings, yes, even larger than this one [fig. 4], much, much larger. So these have all been in that exhibition of the *Onafhankelijken* then,' said Van Deene in 1973 in an interview for the television programme *Signalement*.³¹ Paris, though, is still identified on the paintings and in the catalogue as the place of origin of their joint painting style (except in Bendien's case since he had left for Berlin in early 1913) which in any case gave an 'international' cachet to the *De Onafhankelijken* exhibition.³²

Fig. 8

OTTO FREUNDLICH,
Composition, 1911.
Oil on canvas,
200 x 200 cm.
Musée d'art moderne
de Paris, inv. no.
AMVP 4259.
Photo: Eric Emo/
Parisienne de
Photographie



Fig. 9

FRANTIŠEK KUPKA,
*Amorpha, Fugue in
 Two Colours*, 1912.
 Oil on canvas,
 211 x 220 cm.
 Prague, National
 Gallery, inv. no.
 o 5942.
 © National Gallery
 Prague 2023



The fuss made by the press about the new abstract art was good for the visitor figures of the 1913 exhibition of De Onafhankelijken – which had been established in May 1912 along the lines of the de Salon des Indépendants – but it turned out differently for the artists themselves. It was both the first and the last manifestation of ‘Absolute Art’ by Van Deene, Bendien, Davids, Hassoldt, Rådecker and De Roos. There was no authoritative critic who defended their work, nor was there an art dealer who saw any financial gain in it. For the artists themselves, it did not seem to be the starting point of new artistic possibilities. Their careers and artistic identities would develop in completely different ways, from Davids’s eventual relegation to obscurity to Rådecker’s fame as the sculptor of the National Monument in Dam Square in Amsterdam. Van Deene even decided to ‘say farewell

to painting’ and did not pick up his brushes again until 1925.³³

The 1913 exhibition was anything but the ideal platform to present such a radical form of painting. The absence of a jury, prompted by the desire to be independent of the ballot committees other artists’ societies used, gave it the stigma of dilettantism. Steenhoff thought that it was no more than a ‘spectacle of all that artistic zeal of so many people who mistakenly think themselves artists.’³⁴ This reflected on Van Deene and his friends and, with the exception of Bendien, their abstract pioneering work was neglected for decades. The re-evaluation of ‘Absolute Art’ only began sixty years later with the travelling exhibition *Het Nieuwe Wereldbeeld: Het begin van de abstracte kunst in Nederland, 1910-1925*, since when the few paintings that have survived have gradually entered museum collections over the years.³⁵

APPENDIX

As a 'statement by the management of this exhibition' quoted text by Jan van Deene, in Frits Lapidoth, 'Kunstkroniek: De Onafhankelijken, tweede Internationale jury-vrije tentoonstelling, Amsterdam', *De Nieuwe Courant*, 30 November 1913 (see notes 4 and 8).

Om deze schilderstukken te kunnen genieten, moet de beschouwer zich aan twee dingen gewennen:

1. Ontbreekt de voorstelling, d.w.z. de afbeeldingen van vormen en kleuren ontleend aan natuurvoorwerpen of aan de natuur. Deze schilderijen stellen wel wat voor, maar alleen innerlijke dingen. Zij zijn: gevoelens uitgedrukt in lijn en kleur. Zij verschillen in zooverre niet van andere schilderijen. Alleen is bij deze het door de lijn en kleur uitgedrukte gevoelsleven als het ware aangebracht, toegepast op natuurvormen, op dingen door uiterlijke aanschouwing uit de natuur bekend. Maar deze natuurdingen, dit bedenke men wel, zijn niet anders dan een voorwendsel; 'het eigenlijke', waar het bij een schilderij altijd om gaat, zit in de lijn en de kleur, in het gevoelsleven, de weelde en liefde, die door de lijn en die kleur worden uitgedrukt. Door het loslaten der natuurvormen kon dit 'eigenlijke' zuiverder, precieser worden uitgedrukt. Het gebruik der natuurvormen leidt steeds de aandacht van den schilder 'van waar 't eigenlijk om gaat' af, naar dingen die tot de mooiheid of liefde van het schilderij niets doen.
2. Betreft het tot uiting gebrachte gevoelsleven niet de stemmingen of persoonlijke gemoedsbewegingen van den maker. Er is dus geen verdriet, weemoed, vreugde of opstandigheid, liefde of haat in deze schilderijen weergegeven; zij zijn niet lyrisch. Maar weergegeven is in elk schilderij de heerlijkheid van het leven, de liefde, de mooiheid ervan. In elk schilderij heeft de schilder gemaakt het heerlijkste wat hij toen wist. Het is dus een afbeeldsel van het schoone beeld der wereld, dat hij in zich heeft, een afbeeldsel telkens van onzen lieven Heer zou men kunnen zeggen, of van de bezielde natuur *in abstracto* zonder een zich hechten aan een bijzonder voorwerp of ding van die natuur, aan een of ander bepaald detail er van, zooals wij dat in andere schilderijen gewoon zijn. En de persoonlijke aandoeningen en gemoedsgesteldheid van den maker zijn daar buiten gehouden. Hij is, aan het werk zijnde, om zoo te zeggen in een toestand van onaangedaanheid, of liever hij wordt, of is dan alleen aangedaan door de mooiheid, door de liefde van het leven. Natuurlijk is de persoonlijkheid van iederen schilder afzonderlijk in zijn schilderijen merkbaar. Maar om die persoonlijkheid is het niet te doen. De schilders van dezen groep probeeren allen precies hetzelfde weer te geven; dat de individualiteit niet geheel ontbreekt, dat elk schilderij op zichzelf beïnvloed wordt door het gemoedsleven en de levensomstandigheden van den maker, komt door menselijke gebrekkigheid.

In order to enjoy these paintings, the viewer must get used to two things:

1. There is a lack of representation, that is to say the depictions of shapes and colours borrowed from natural objects or from nature. These paintings do represent something, but only inner things. They are: feeling expressed in line and colour. To that extent, they do not differ from other paintings. Only in these that emotional life expressed by line and colour is, as it were, applied to natural shapes, to things known from nature through external observation. But these things of nature, it should be remembered, are merely a pretext; 'the real thing', what a painting is all about, is in the line and the colour, in the emotional life, the profusion and sweetness, which are expressed by the line and that colour. By omitting natural shapes this 'actuality' could be expressed more purely, more precisely. The use of natural shapes always diverts the attention of the painter 'from what it's really about', to things that do nothing to the beauty or sweetness of the painting.

2. The emotional life expressed does not reflect the moods or the personal emotions of the maker. Hence there is no sadness, melancholy, joy or rebellion, love or hate represented in these paintings; they are not lyrical. But depicted in each painting is the splendour of life, the sweetness, the beauty of it. In every painting the painter has made the most glorious thing he knew then. It is therefore a rendition of the beautiful image of the world, which it has within itself, an image each time of our dear Lord, one might say, or of animated nature *in abstracto* without being attached to a particular object or thing from that nature, to some particular detail of it, as we are accustomed to in other paintings. And the personal feelings and state of mind of the maker are excluded from it. He is, while working, so to speak, in a state of unaffectedness, or rather he becomes so, or is then only moved by the beauty, the sweetness of life. Of course, the individual personality of every painter can be seen in their paintings. But it's not about that personality. The painters in this group all try to depict exactly the same thing; that the individuality is not entirely lacking, that each painting in itself is influenced by the inner life and living conditions of the maker, comes through human imperfection.

NOTES

- 1 The 'Tweede Internationale Jury-Vrije Tentoonstelling' ran from 15 November to 15 December 1913 in the 'gebouw Willaertstraat' at 165, Amstelveenseweg in Amsterdam. See A.H. Huussen Jr, *De Vereniging van Beeldende Kunstenaars 'De Onafhankelijken' 1912-1917*, Haren 2006 (*Cahiers uit het Noorden*, vol. 9). For Willem Steenhoff as an art critic, see Jan de Vries and Marijke de Groot (eds.), *Van sintels vuurwerk maken: Kunstkritiek en moderne kunst 1905-1925*, Rotterdam 2015 (*Kunstkritiek in Nederland 1885-2015*, vol. 5), *passim*.
- 2 'meerendeels omvangrijke doeken, die, hoewel van verschillende schilders, uit één werkplaats afkomstig schijnen. Ze geven even den indruk van fantasieën op zeepebellen vóór deze hun absoluten bolvorm, na het loslaten van den pijpewind, hebben bereikt' ... 'rijkdom van ornamentiek valt er niet aan te roemen, maar armer toch zeker is er het schilderkunstig gehalte aan'. Willem Steenhoff, 'Tentoonstelling van de Onafhankelijken', *De Amsterdammer: Weekblad voor Nederland*, 21 December 1913, p. 6.
- 3 See Alied Ottevanger, 'Symbolism and Early Abstract Art from the Gerard van Wezel Collection', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 67 (2019), no. 3, pp. 234-46.
- 4 *Catalogus voor de Tweede Internationale Jury-Vrije Tentoonstelling*, exh. cat. Amsterdam (Vereniging van Beeldende Kunstenaars 'De Onafhankelijken') 1913, cat. nos. 79-86 (J. van Deene), 9-12 (J. Bendien), 74-78 (A. Davids), 184-88 (C. Hassoldt), 351 (A. Rädecker-De Roos), 352-54 (J. Rädecker). As an exception Rädecker used conventional titles (*Portret I* and *II* and *Stilleven* [Portrait I and II and Still Life]), but these nonetheless seem to have been non-representational paintings, given Steenhoff's comment that he showed 'more nervous tension in his painting' (in zijn schilderwerk meer zenuwspanning) in this group, see Steenhoff 1913 (note 2), and Frits Lapidoth's description of the works belonging to the group as 'paintings that depict nothing at all' (schilderijen, die niemendal voorstellen), see 'Kunstkroniek: De Onafhankelijken, tweede Internationale jury-vrije tentoonstelling, Amsterdam', *De Nieuwe Courant*, 30 November 1913. In his monograph, however, Ype Koopmans doubts whether Rädecker had submitted his abstract paintings, see *John Rädecker: De droom van het levende beeld*, Zwolle 2006, p. 63. These are only known from a few photographs, see p. 60, figs. 48-50.
- 5 Jan F. van Deene, 'Rechtvaardiging', *Centraal Museum Utrecht Mededelingen*, number 16-17, March 1977, pp. 1-83, esp. p. 62.
- 6 See Matsya Hoogendoorn, 'Nederlanders in Parijs', *Museumjournaal* 17 (1972), no. 6, pp. 247-53 (special number *Het Nieuwe Wereldbeeld: Het begin van de abstracte kunst in Nederland, 1910-1925*); Geurt Imanse et al., *Van Gogh tot Cobra: Nederlandse schilderkunst 1880-1950*, exh. cat. Utrecht (Centraal Museum) 1981, p. 120 ff., and pp. 264-65, 268; Adriaan Venema, *Nederlandse schilders in Parijs 1900-1940*, Baarn 1980, pp. 66-71; Jan de Vries (ed.), *Nederland 1913: Een reconstructie van het culturele leven*, exh. cat. Haarlem (Frans Hals Museum) 1988, pp. 225-27; Koopmans 2006 (note 4), pp. 31-71. For Van Deene see Claar Brand, *'De heldentijd van de schilderkunst': Jan van Deene, zijn vrienden en werk in de periode 1904-1928*, Amsterdam (unpublished thesis Amsterdam Free University) 2007; for Jacob Bendien see Paul Citroen (ed.), *Jacob Bendien 1890-1933: Een herinneringsboek*, Rotterdam 1940, and *Jacob Bendien 1890-1933*, exh. cat. Leeuwarden (Fries Museum)/Utrecht (Centraal Museum) 1985. I know of no publications about Chris Hassoldt and Arnold Davids.
- 7 'Wie de ruime voorzaal betradt [sic], zag recht voor zich het grote doek van Hassoldt, met ter weerszijden er van en er boven telkens een schilderij van mij, samen een boeiend geheel. De vier imposante stukken door Bendien beheersten de zijwanden.' Van Deene 1977 (note 5), p. 74. Van Deene's recollection is at odds with the catalogue, which lists eight of his paintings and five each by Hassoldt and Davids, see note 4. Van Deene also mentions the presence of paintings by Kasper Niehaus (1889-1974) but it is doubtful whether his two portraits and a townscape had been given a place in that room, see exh. cat. Amsterdam 1913 (note 4), cat. nos. 326-28. Van Deene failed to mention that Rädecker's wife Anni de Roos submitted a 'painting' in embroidery that was made in the same style, see note 4. For De Roos, see Ype Koopmans, 'De harde kop van Anni de Roos', *Jong Holland* 16 (2000), no. 4, pp. 39-45.
- 8 Van Deene 1977 (note 5) mentions on p. 74 that he was the author of this statement. Koopmans 2006 (note 4), p. 61 and note 149, believes that these are quotes from an unpublished manuscript written by

- Jacob Bendien entitled 'Abstracte Kunst'. The statement is reprinted in Hoogendoorn 1972 (note 6), pp. 252-53, and in Brand 2007 (note 6), pp. 114-15 who copied it from a handwritten document by Van Deene.
- 9 See A.B. Loosjes-Terpstra, *Moderne kunst in Nederland 1900-1914*, Utrecht 1987 (photographic reprint of 1959 original with new introduction); Jan van Adrichem, *De ontvangst van de moderne kunst in Nederland 1910-2000: Picasso als pars pro toto*, Amsterdam 2001.
 - 10 Cor Blok, '1916', in Cor Blok (ed.), *Nederlandse kunst vanaf 1900*, Utrecht 1994, p. 46.
 - 11 For a recent overview of early abstract painting, see Leah Dickerman (ed.), *Inventing Abstraction 1910-1925: How a Radical Idea Changed Modern Art*, London 2012.
 - 12 'absolute "kleuren"-muziek ... voor de voor kunst gevoeligen over de gehele wereld verstaanbaar zou zijn, een universele bovenpersoonlijke kunst die algemeen beoefend zou kunnen worden'. Van Deene 1977 (note 5), p. 62.
 - 13 'paneelen' by 'de heeren Bendien uit Berlijn, Davids, Van Deene en Hassoldt uit Parijs ... voor mozaïeken, soms – toevallig? – niet onaangenaam van kleur. Tenzij dit grapjes zijn...' Gio [Jan Kalff Jr], 'Kunst. De Onafhankelijken', *Algemeen Handelsblad*, 26 November 1913 (evening edition). With thanks to Peter de Ruiter.
 - 14 'van het denkbeeld [schijnen] uit te gaan: hoe gekker je doet, hoe méér er over je wordt gesproken. En dus heeft deze club een nieuw ideetje uitgedacht: we maken ontwerpen voor kinderlegdozen in het groot en stellen die ten toon als schilderingen... Nu hangen ze daar aan de wand, die legdoos-ontwerpen'. Nathan H. Wolf, 'De Onafhankelijken. Tweede Tentoonstelling, Amsterdam,' *De Kunst: Een Algemeen Geïllustreerd en Artistiek Weekblad*, 6 december 1913, p. 150.
 - 15 'kolossale doeken, beschilderd met kleurige tranen' ... 'verblijf gedurende één dag in een zaal, versierd met deze kunstwerken, zou van een zachtmoedig schaaap een razenden leeuw maken. Het is innig lelijk'. Anonymous [C.L. Dake], 'Aantekeningen over beeldende kunst. De Onafhankelijken. I.', *De Telegraaf*, 18 November 1913 (evening edition).
 - 16 'Wat dat moet beteekenen – geen sterfeling die daaruit wijs kan worden. En geen wonder, want het is ook niets, het stelt niets voor, de schilders die deze dingen maken, en beweren dat dat nu de "absolute schilder-kunst" is, zeggen het zelf.' A.T., 'De tweede jury-vrije tentoonstelling van "De Onafhankelijken"', *Het Leven Geïllustreerd* 8 (1913), no. 48, pp. 1491-94.
 - 17 'ijdelheid en schromelijke zelf-overschatting'. Lapidoth 1913 (note 4).
 - 18 'versterkten in mij het verlangen de moderne Franse kunst beter te leren kennen', Van Deene 1977 (note 5), pp. 4-20, quote on p. 17.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 22. 'die niet vriendelijk was, een grote, plompe figuur ... hij is nadien bekend geworden door werken, verwant aan die ik zelf maakte'.
 - 20 *Ibid.*, p. 28. 'dat al wat mij voordien geleerd was, waardeloos voor mij was geworden, dat geheel mijn studietijd op de Normalschool en de Akademie verloren jaren waren, dat ik helemaal opnieuw moest beginnen'.
 - 21 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40. 'merkwaardige voortbrengselen van de Inca's en andere Amerikaanse volkeren' en 'Oosterse beeldhouwkunst ... uit ... Indo-China' ... 'door het mysterieuze dat er van uitging'. The Palais du Trocadéro housed the Musée des monuments français, het Musée ethnographiques des missions scientifiques (forerunner of the Musée de l'homme) and the Musée indochinois du Trocadéro. The latter was home to the Khmer art collection which had been put together by Louis Delaporte (now in the Musée national des arts asiatiques-Guimet).
 - 22 *Ibid.*, p. 51. Van Deene mentions that Bendien painted forty or so of those heads, two of which were rescued by Van Deene, when Bendien was no longer interested in them (see fig. 5 in this publication, and *Peinture 11* (inv. no. 19673) in the Centraal Museum). We know of two heads by Van Deene, reproduced in Hoogendoorn 1972 (note 6), p. 251 and in Brand 2007 (note 6), fig. 38.
 - 23 Dickerman 2012 (note 11), p. 35 note 16.
 - 24 'Maar ik kon geen vrede hebben met de wilde lijnen en verfvegen waaruit het, overigens niet zonder gevoel voor harmonie, was samengesteld. Ik miste er in de ordening, het evenwicht, de rustige kracht die het schone kunstwerk kenmerken.' Van Deene 1977 (note 5), p. 52.
 - 25 Van Deene 1977 (note 5), p. 81
 - 26 Fabrice Hergott, 'Composition (1911) et "le miracle de l'art" / and "the miracle of art"', in *Otto Freundlich 1879-1943: La révélation de l'abstraction | The Revelation of Abstraction*, exh. cat. Paris (Musée de

- Montmartre) 2020, pp. 22-27. Kickert selected the painting for the exhibition of the Moderne Kunstkring that ran from 6 October to 7 November 1912 in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, *ibid.*, p. 20.
- 27 Dickerman 2012 (note 11), p. 16.
- 28 'kleurvlakken gevat in gebogen lijnen' and 'scherp begrensde vlakke kleuren', Van Deene 1977 (note 5), p. 60 respectively p. 61.
- 29 *Ibid.*, p. 61, 'Ten slotte, in het late najaar van 1912, ... zette ik de laatste stap. ... Zo ontstond het eerste, zo geheten "voorstellingloze" [sic] schilderij'.
- 30 Amsterdam City Archives, Index Cards (accession number 30238), inv. no. 174, archive record Arnold Davids. With thanks to Mara Lagerweij.
- 31 'Toen ik uit Parijs kwam, zijn we allemaal hard aan het werk gegaan in Holland, toen heb ik bijna al die schilderijen gemaakt ... En Bendien heeft hele grote schilderijen gemaakt, ja nog groter dan deze [afb. 4], veel groter nog. Die zijn dan ook allemaal op die tentoonstelling geweest, bij de Onafhankelijken toen'. Ella Snoep, interview with Jan van Deene in *Signalement: Mensen en musea*, VARA, broadcast on 28 February 1973, Netherlands Institute for Sound & Vision Collection, Hilversum (mentioned by Brand 2007 (note 6), p. 8, note 4). The interview was conducted on the occasion of the exhibition *Het Nieuwe Wereldbeeld: Het begin van de abstrakte kunst in Nederland, 1910-1925*, Utrecht (Centraal Museum), 19 January to 28 February 1973.
- 32 Exh. cat. Amsterdam 1913 (note 4).
- 33 'de schilderkunst vaarwel te zeggen'. Van Deene 1977 (note 5), p. 73.
- 34 'schouwspel van al dien zieligen kunstijver van zooveel menschen, die bij vergissing zich kunstenaar meenen'. Steenhoff 1913 (note 2).
- 35 The Centraal Museum in Utrecht acquired abstract paintings made in 1913 by Jan van Deene in 1973 (purchase, inv. no. 18132), 1995 (purchase, inv. no. 28022) and 2011 (gift, inv. no. 31600), and in 1975 two heads by Jacob Bendien dating from 1912 (purchase, inv. nos. 19672, fig. 5, and 19673). The Kunstmuseum in The Hague acquired an abstract composition by Jacob Bendien dating from around 1912 in 1975 (purchase, inv. no. 0334685, fig. 4). A 1912-13 abstract composition by Bendien in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam has been on long-term loan since 1953 (inv. no. B 2142) and a 1912 painting of two heads is a gift made in 1951 (inv. no. A 23783).