



# International cultural policy | 2021 2024 >



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Project Hello Asia by Company New Heroes in collaboration with BeST NL. Photo: Lucas De Man.

## Introduction

Responsibility for the Netherlands' international cultural policy is jointly shared by the Minister of Foreign Affairs (BZ), the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (BHOS) and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science (OCW).

The joint approach by three ministers has clear added value, as it combines multiple perspectives and policy agendas.<sup>1</sup> We therefore continue to work together – taking the coalition agreement as our point of departure – each from our respective angles and with our own policy agendas: 'Principles Underpinning Cultural Policy in the 2021-2024 Period'<sup>2</sup> (OCW), 'Culture in an Open Society'<sup>3</sup> (OCW), 'Investing in Global Prospects'<sup>4</sup> (BHOS) and the Integrated International Security Strategy<sup>5</sup> (BZ).

In this letter, we present our international cultural policy for 2021-2024. The policy builds on international agreements that the Netherlands has made on cultural standards, values and cooperation, in the European Union as well as UNESCO. In drawing up the new framework, we have made use of the recommendations of the Council for Culture on the cultural system as from 2021, the review of international cultural policy drawn up by the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB),<sup>6</sup> and experience with the current policy framework. We have also held talks with actors at home and abroad, including in the Dutch cultural sector and at the missions.

- <sup>1</sup> Council for Culture, *Cultuur dichtbij, dicht bij cultuur*, advisory report on cultural policy 2021-2024, p. 98; Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) 2016, *Cultuur als kans* (Culture as Opportunity), a review of international cultural policy 2009-2014, p. 14.
- <sup>2</sup> Letter to the House of Representatives from the Minister of Education, Culture and Science on the principles underpinning cultural policy in the 2021-2024 period, 11 June 2019, Parliamentary Papers 32 820 no. 290.
- <sup>3</sup> *Cultuur in een open samenleving*, 12 March 2018, Parliamentary Papers 32 820 no. 221.
- <sup>4</sup> *Investing in Global Prospects*, 18 May 2018, Parliamentary Papers 34 952 no. 1.
- <sup>5</sup> *Integrated International Security Strategy 2018-2022*, 19 March 2018, Parliamentary Papers 33 694 no. 12.
- <sup>6</sup> IOB 2019, *Diversiteit en Samenhang* (Diversity and Cohesion), policy review of Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget article 4.

## Policy under development

In recent decades, international cultural policy has contributed to the internationalisation of Dutch culture. It has proved its worth as a pillar of the Kingdom's diplomacy, and it functions as a unifying link between political, economic and social topics in cultural and foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> We want to keep our international cultural policy up to date, and the review and report mentioned above provide useful building blocks for this. Both conclude that policy benefits from a clear vision, focus and allocation of roles. So we attach importance to effective direction, coordination and multi-year strategic commitments.

In the coming years we will continue to promote the internationalisation of the cultural scene and the strengthening of bilateral ties with other countries. We will take account of topical developments in the field, and link culture to foreign policy priorities.<sup>8</sup> In doing so, we will seek to be flexible, so that we can respond appropriately to change. We will also aim for close cooperation between cultural bodies and implementing partners, regional and local authorities, the mission network, and counterparts in other countries.



<sup>7</sup> IOB 2019 and 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Like the policy document *The Netherlands and China: A New Balance and the letter on Russia* (yet to be published).

*Dutch Pavilion WORK, BODY, LEISURE at the 16th Venice International Architecture Biennale, FREESPACE. Photo: Daria Scagliola*

# The value of culture and bilateral cooperation

Culture and the arts<sup>9</sup> enrich individuals and bind society together. Culture shows who we are, where we come from and what we stand for.<sup>10</sup> Cultural partnerships and exchanges with foreign countries provide inspiration, increase our store of knowledge and give access to high-quality culture and arts. Internationalisation can also promote the development of talent, and exhibitions, performances and translations can help Dutch artists and art institutions reach a wider audience.

< Culture is ‘soft power’.<sup>11</sup> Through culture, a country strengthens its ability to make friends and wield influence.<sup>12</sup> In a world of increasing international contacts and conflicts, culture can contribute to positive images of the Netherlands and foster debate.

Economically speaking, too, culture is significant. In the Netherlands, the cultural and creative sectors do much to boost employment.<sup>13</sup> Culture is a major element of state visits and trade missions. By crossing borders, artists and art institutions are able to reach new and different audiences, as well as new markets. Making their mark abroad for the first time often helps artists’ careers take off.

In addition, international cultural policy is beneficial for the Netherlands’ image abroad. We seek to present ourselves as an open and creative country, a country that is appealing as a partner. This image is also important for other sectors – like tourism – and strengthens our international relations.

In short, government involvement in international cultural policy is necessary: not just because of the intrinsic value of culture, but also because of its international character, its role in the development of talent and its importance for the Netherlands’ image as a creative, open country.

<sup>9</sup> We define culture as the arts (including architecture, visual art, design, new media, film, literature, performing arts and crossovers between these disciplines) and heritage (such as archives, archaeology, historic collections, monuments, historic buildings and immaterial heritage).

<sup>10</sup> Coalition Agreement 2017, *Confidence in the Future*, p. 22.

<sup>11</sup> See for instance Joseph Nye 2004, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*; various publications by the [Institute for Cultural Diplomacy](#).

<sup>12</sup> Various indices and studies, including the [Good Country Index](#) by Simon Anholt and the review by the Reputation Institute, publish annual rankings of countries and their reputation scores. Culture proves to be one of the decisive factors. The Reputation Institute ranks the effect of reputation on tourism and export.

<sup>13</sup> The Netherlands is the only country in the European Union where the cultural and creative sectors account for more than 4% of employment (see: ‘[Market Analysis of the Cultural and Creative Sectors in Europe](#)’, p. 9). In 2015, culture and media contributed 3.7% of GDP to the Dutch economy, along with a 4.5% share of overall employment (in work years). These calculations do not take account of the work contributed by volunteers (*Satellietrekening Culture en Media*, July 2019). In addition, econometric analyses conclude that creative industries have a positive impact on product and process innovation in the rest of the economy, thanks to spill-over effects ([TNO, 2017](#)). Dutch creative industries’ share in the Dutch economy is about 2.3% ([Statistics Netherlands 2017](#)).



# The focus of international cultural policy

For culture makers and cultural organisations, an international orientation comes naturally, as a source of innovation and a benchmark. Culture transcends borders. The Dutch cultural sector is becoming increasingly active abroad, and engaging in more and more international partnerships.<sup>14</sup> The advent of digital media has promoted this trend. We see fostering these exchanges and pressing for the defence of a free cultural space as our responsibility.

The Netherlands distinguishes itself abroad through its innovative and unconventional approach. Cultural institutions, artists, designers and architects are internationally renowned. They have built up an outstanding reputation abroad and are a match for their foreign counterparts. Dutch design thinking, for instance, is an approach that not only attracts worldwide interest in educational programmes, but also provides scope for alternative solutions to, applications for or perspectives on social challenges such as sustainability, social inclusion, healthcare, urbanisation and demographic ageing.

The world around us is changing, not just as a result of geopolitical shifts, globalisation and digitalisation, but also because of growing demand from civil society and cultural

organisations, business, regional and local authorities, and society as a whole to be more involved in policymaking.<sup>15</sup> Cultural policy is pre-eminently suited to encouraging involvement on the part of these groups, including culture makers, influentials and young people at home and abroad. In that respect, international cultural policy and public diplomacy<sup>16</sup> can reinforce one another.

International cultural cooperation is the norm rather than the exception. The role of government is to promote it, to create the necessary conditions for it (knowledge and networks) and to issue grants. We continue to do this by providing targeted support for initiatives in the various artistic disciplines and crossovers between them. In addition, we seek to link culture and the arts closely to our various policy agendas.<sup>17</sup> We achieve this through multi-year, strategic efforts and by bringing together knowledge and expertise. International cultural policy serves a broader interest than that of the individual disciplines or of individual organisations and institutions.

Government involvement can be desirable or necessary to bring about cultural partnerships, particularly in the case of countries where government plays a central role in cultural policy and cultural life.

<sup>14</sup> Database DutchCulture: Number of Dutch cultural activities abroad: 12,977 (2014), 14,926 (2016), 15,181 (2018).

<sup>15</sup> See for instance various publications by the [Clingendael Institute](#).

<sup>16</sup> IOB 2016, 'Policy Review: Public Diplomacy'.

<sup>17</sup> See letters to parliament referred to above, under Introduction.

# Principles

In view of the importance of international cooperation, we will continue to focus on combining the strengths of our cultural and diplomatic networks.

In sum, the following principles apply to our international cultural policy in 2021-2024:

- The quality of the Dutch cultural sector benefits from international partnerships and exchanges, which contributes to our prosperity and wellbeing.
- In bilateral relations with other countries, culture strengthens the Netherlands' image and provides opportunities to promote mutual understanding and trust – even in countries with which the Netherlands has a complex relationship. Moreover, cultural diplomacy has great value for foreign policy.
- International cooperation on cultural heritage contributes to solutions to social issues in the Netherlands and abroad, and ties in with the government's aim of increasing knowledge about our shared history, values and freedoms.
- We continue to uphold the principle of subsidiarity. At the same time, we recognise that the European cultural agenda is highly beneficial to the Dutch cultural sector and partnerships with other countries.



Patricia Kaersenhout, "De Ziel van Zout", one of the works of "Dutch Trail" at Manifesta 12 in Palermo, Italy.

- The right to cultural expression, as an element of freedom of opinion, is a principle that deserves to be internationally recognised and defended.
- We use the power of culture – especially the creative industries – in our efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably in focus regions for development cooperation.
- We opt for a comprehensive, strategic approach with room for flexibility and tailor-made solutions.
- We set store by constructive partnerships and a clear division of roles among the various implementing parties, based on their expertise.

These principles are formulated below in three main aims.

### Aims of international cultural policy

We are adopting the following three aims and desired results for international cultural policy in the 2021-2024 period:

- 1 *The Dutch cultural sector will occupy a strong position abroad through visibility, exchanges and long-term partnerships. This will:*
  - result in inspiration, increased knowledge, enrichment, a wider audience and market expansion;
  - enhance the economic value of Dutch art and culture.

- 2 *Dutch cultural expression will be used to support bilateral relationships with other countries. This will:*

- strengthen the Netherlands' position and reputation abroad;
- foster dialogue about standards and values;
- promote partnerships;
- contribute to exchanges and dialogue, even with countries with which the Netherlands may have a complex relationship.

- 3 *We will harness the power of the cultural sector and creative industries in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly in connection with the BHOS agenda in focus regions. This will:*

- enable the cultural and creative sectors to contribute to achieving the SDGs through international partnerships;
- offer opportunities for the excellence of the Dutch creative sector to contribute abroad to finding solutions to challenges currently faced by society;
- strengthen the Netherlands' image as an innovative, creative and inclusive country, in line with the new NL Branding.



# Priorities

## Europe

European countries are our main trading partners<sup>18</sup> and allies, with which we have a great deal in common. Accordingly, the Netherlands has a considerable interest in maintaining good relations with them. Culture makers find it relatively easy to access the European market, thanks to its geographical proximity, good infrastructure, shared standards and values, and interest in Dutch cultural products. An international cultural policy that supports and strengthens this access yields high dividends.

European trends like increasing migration problems and Brexit call for a foreign policy that focuses more strongly on Europe. Dutch international cultural policy can contribute to this, so in 2021-2024 we will strengthen our cultural policy in European countries by raising current budgets and expanding the list of European countries designated as important to the Netherlands.

We note moreover that Dutch cities and regions are increasingly active internationally, mainly within Europe and in border regions. To support them, we are investing in providing information on EU instruments that can facilitate this, and in

opportunities for international partnerships. We also seek to increase knowledge sharing on best practices in international partnerships in the region.

## European Union

Taking our lead from the principle of subsidiarity, we set store by a European cultural agenda that does justice to shared values like human rights, diversity, tolerance and the protection of cultural heritage; a policy that moreover promotes innovation and creativity. The Dutch cultural sector also profits from this agenda, for example through the Creative Europe programme.

We note that the European Union increasingly gives a role to the arts, heritage and the creative industries in other instruments and programmes, for example in the field of development cooperation. The EU and UNESCO also have international partnerships geared to promoting mobility and participation on the part of young people. We too regard these themes as important.

<sup>18</sup> [Statistics Netherlands 2018.](#)

## Heritage

Interest in cultural heritage is increasing both at home and abroad. The protection of heritage is closely linked to debates on changes in our human environment (such as urbanisation), as well as sustainability and identity.<sup>19</sup> The Netherlands works with other countries in the European Union and UNESCO to protect cultural heritage in regions in crisis. We also work at international level for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Heritage contributes to mutual understanding, especially where there is a shared history. Partnerships with other countries, especially those with which the Netherlands shares a past, colonial or otherwise, will therefore continue to be important for our cultural policy in 2021-2024. A link with topical themes and priorities in the target countries is desirable in order to work together on the basis of dialogue. We are focusing on sustainable preservation, heritage conservation and accessibility of heritage sites and archives, with scope for different perspectives.<sup>20</sup> We are continuing coordinated efforts by the Cultural Heritage Agency, the National Archives and the missions, while at the same time making project grant funds available to carry out the plans of the umbrella organisation for international cultural policy under the basic national infrastructure (BIS) for 2021-2024.<sup>21</sup> Project grants are also available for organisations seeking to share expertise in the field of promoting protection and knowledge of intangible cultural heritage.<sup>22</sup>



<sup>19</sup> See also the letter to parliament *Erfgoed Telt* (Heritage Counts), which focuses on three main themes of heritage policy: preserving our cultural heritage, the human environment and the power of heritage to unite.

<sup>20</sup> Partly in line with the recommendations of the Council for Culture: *Cultuur dichtbij, dicht bij cultuur*, p. 108.

<sup>21</sup> See the 'Countries' section for an overview.

<sup>22</sup> Besides the above-mentioned implementation partners, advice or assistance is requested – where possible and useful – from other heritage organisations, multilateral and otherwise, including the Cultural Participation Fund, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and UNESCO.

Saving documentary heritage at the San Augustin Monastery in Quito, Ecuador. Photo: courtesy Prince Claus Fund.

Cultural heritage can also play an important role in other ways, and can foster the broader ambitions of international cultural policy. These include, notably, capacity development and knowledge exchange in cases involving adaptive reuse, digitalisation or the management of collections, colonial and otherwise.

One of the goals mentioned in the coalition agreement is increasing Dutch people's knowledge of their shared history. The programme to promote historic and democratic awareness gives substance to the pursuit of this aim.<sup>23</sup> Knowledge and insights gained through international heritage partnerships are valuable for this programme.



Celebration anniversary "Laboratoire NÉerlandais" in the Atelier NÉerlandais.

## Cultural cooperation and the SDGs

Like the EU and UNESCO, we believe that the cultural and creative sectors provide opportunities to make an innovative contribution to raising awareness of the SDGs and fostering their achievement.<sup>24</sup> Design contributes to economic growth and adds a meaningful dimension to efforts to tackle global challenges, such as sustainability, climate change and the quality of the human environment. Artists and designers provide new ways of thinking and innovative solutions.

SDG 11 (safe and sustainable cities, and protection of world heritage) and SDG 16 (just, peaceful and inclusive societies) provide notable opportunities to build on the experience of the Creative Industries Fund NL in this area<sup>25</sup> and involve creative

industries, in collaboration with local partners. The knowledge and networks that have been built up enable the Netherlands to make a worthwhile contribution to this agenda.

With respect to efforts to achieve the SDGs, we also see a role for the Prince Claus Fund in providing scope for different, innovative perspectives precisely in those areas and with respect to those themes where cultural expression is under pressure. Freedom of expression is a fundamental right in the Netherlands, and one we uphold when working with other countries. The Prince Claus Fund's programme will continue to pay special attention to young people, as well as to preserving endangered cultural heritage in regions in crisis.

<sup>23</sup> Letter to parliament on the programme to promote historic and democratic awareness.

<sup>24</sup> The Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council of the European Union recently adopted a [Resolution on the Cultural Dimension of Sustainable Development](#), deciding to integrate culture into the EU's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. UNESCO has held a ministerial conference on 'Culture and Public Policy for Sustainable Development', and published a study of the subject with contributions by member states and international organisations.

<sup>25</sup> Information on the Inclusive Cities and Societies through Design programme can be found here: [report on internationalisation programme: design sector](#). The sector had also participated actively in the [UN Human Settlements Programme \(UN-Habitat\)](#).

## Countries

International cultural policy can be implemented worldwide. Because its budget is restricted, however, we have to make choices. So our policy focuses on countries where collective efforts yield the greatest added value. For each of these countries, detailed agreements on collaboration and implementation are drawn up between the various actors involved. We use a country-specific approach to link culture with foreign policy priorities.

< The added value of international cultural policy is greatest where our agendas overlap and joint efforts are made. Countries are selected on the basis of a combination of factors: demand from abroad, artistic and economic opportunities for the Dutch cultural sector, artistic quality, social relevance, historic ties and importance for foreign policy. This has resulted in a strategic focus on the following 23 countries:<sup>26</sup>

- **within Europe:** Belgium/Flanders, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom;
- **on Europe's borders:** Russia\*, Turkey, Egypt and Morocco;
- **outside Europe:** Australia\*, Brazil\*, China, India\*, Indonesia\*, Japan\*, South Africa\*, South Korea, Sri Lanka\*, Suriname\* and the United States\*.

In addition, the above-mentioned efforts in respect of the SDGs target the focus regions chosen by the Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, in line with government policy. If activities are carried out in specific countries, the missions are involved.

<sup>26</sup> Besides funding for the 23 countries listed, a programme budget is also available for cultural activities in support of policy priorities by the network of Dutch missions around the globe.  
\* An asterisk signifies that the country has also been designated a partner for coordinated cultural heritage cooperation.



ZandGlas - experiments natural wild sands by Atelier NL. Photo: Mike Roelofs.

# Implementing parties and instruments

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The government values smooth collaboration between the various actors, allowing scope for individual parties' roles and expertise. Both the Council for Culture and the IOB mentioned this as a concern. We seek to improve this joint work by fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, by means of a multi-year programme-based approach and close coordination.

## Central government cultural funds, support organisations and similar bodies

The Netherlands Film Fund, the Cultural Participation Fund, the Performing Arts Fund, the Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Mondriaan Fund, the Creative Industries Fund NL and the support organisations in the field of design and film that fall under the BIS 2021-2024 will continue to play a major role in our international cultural policy. They possess valuable expertise in their various disciplines, along with an international network, and can provide a tailored approach to supporting talented artists and institutions. The same applies to the implementing bodies mentioned above: the Cultural Heritage Agency, the National Archives and the Prince Claus Fund.

## Dutch missions abroad

Dutch embassies and consulates-general are our eyes and ears abroad. They also have large local networks, including cultural networks. This is important in building and maintaining relationships, identifying opportunities and matching supply and demand. Together with other implementing bodies, missions flesh out a jointly drafted multi-year cultural approach. To this end, they are given programme budgets that are in line with the ambitions and opportunities for cultural collaboration in their countries, as well as the necessary capacity for implementation.

### Umbrella organisation for international cultural policy

The umbrella organisation for international cultural policy under the BIS 2021-2024 has a key cross-sectoral supporting role to play. It has responsibility for: 1) providing information and advice to the Dutch cultural sector, cities and regions, and missions (including information about and support in the use of EU grant programmes); 2) acting as a centre of expertise and networking hub, particularly for the Dutch cultural sector; and 3) implementing specific elements of international cultural policy.

### Options for supporting implementation

We provide scope for flexibility. The above-mentioned implementing partners are themselves best placed to organise their instruments and make agreements with one another. Support can for instance take the form of funding (on an annual or multi-year basis) for projects and other cultural activities, visitors' programmes, the provision of information, advice, matchmaking, guidance and research.

### Budget margin for strategic efforts

During this policy period we will be making an annual budget available for prestigious events and celebrations (for example friendship years) that missions can request at their own initiative. We also encourage the organisation of cultural events during outgoing state visits and trade missions.



*Dada Masilo performs "Love Duet" from "Giselle" at the 2018 Prince Claus Awards ceremony.  
Photo: Frank van Beek. Courtesy Prince Claus Fund.*

# Knowledge and information

Proper knowledge and information management is important for international cultural policy. Considerable attention is devoted to this, in line with recommendations from the IOB and the Council for Culture, both with regard to the development of policy – through consultation with the sector, the missions and other stakeholders – and implementation. The latter takes shape through the exchange of knowledge between networks (concerning specific themes of cultural policy, like heritage, as well as more generally) and through targeted information for stakeholders about country programmes, annual and multi-year schemes, training programmes and staff exchanges.

The results of international cultural policy were made more visible in the previous policy period thanks to the improved databases of DutchCulture and of the cultural funds and organisations that receive international cultural policy funding.<sup>27</sup> We will continue our efforts in this regard and report back on progress and results. An external evaluation of our international cultural policy will take place after the 2021-2024 period, in which results will be looked at in terms of quantity and quality and lessons learned can be used in developing new policy.

In the interests of more results-based management and more efficient monitoring in proportion to the funds invested, a more tailored approach will be applied to each country. This will entail working together with the implementing bodies concerned to formulate and implement a limited number of key indicators.

<sup>27</sup> Progress reports on international cultural policy for [2017](#) and [2018](#).

## In conclusion

Cultural collaboration strengthens our ties with other countries and boosts our image. Dutch artists and cultural organisations reach new, different audiences across borders, access a wider market, and gain inspiration from foreign counterparts. We value this exchange and inspiration and seek to continue to support it, as a shared responsibility, in the 2021-2024 period. In doing so we are opting for a targeted, strategic approach in 23 countries: in Europe, on Europe's borders and beyond.



Dutch representation at the World Music Expo (WOMEX) 2017, Poland. WOMEX is the leading international networking platform for the world music industry. Photo: Eric van Nieuwland.



	(amounts in €)			
Financial framework for international cultural policy 2021-2024	OCW	BZ	BHOS	TOTAL
<b>Rijkscultuurfondsen</b>				
Performing Arts Fund	1,468,250	245,161		1,713,411
Mondriaan Fund	1,078,250	61,291		1,139,541
Cultural Participation Fund	175,000	25,000		200,000
Dutch Foundation for Literature	614,000	30,645		644,645
Netherlands Film Fund	860,250			860,250
Creative Industries Fund NL	1,396,250		1,000,000	2,396,250
<b>Central government organisations</b>				
Cultural Heritage Agency	500,000			500,000
National Archives	500,000			500,000
<b>Publicly funded institutions and cultural organisations</b>				
Umbrella organisation for international cultural policy (BIS 2021-2024) <sup>1</sup>	360,000	900,000		1,260,000
Organisation to support design (BIS 2021-2024)	263,500	107,258		370,758
Organisation to support film (BIS 2021-2024)	238,500	30,645		269,145
Flemish-Dutch cultural institution deBuren <sup>2</sup>	521,000	525,000		1,046,000
Prince Claus Fund			3,000,000	3,000,000
Foundation to promote the protection and knowledge of immaterial heritage	80,000			80,000
<b>Dutch missions abroad</b>		6,275,000	600,000	6,875,000
<b>Foreign visitors' programmes</b>			100,000	100,000
<b>Events and support budget</b>		315,000	700,000	1,515,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,370,000</b>	<b>8,900,000</b>	<b>5,200,000</b>	<b>22,470,000</b>

Amounts per year (2018 wage and price levels)

<sup>1</sup> This includes the contribution for the Creative Europe Desk from the 'International Policy' budget article (Article 8, Education, Culture and Science budget). Funding is also available via BIS 2021-2024.

<sup>2</sup> The Dutch contribution is funded from the 'International Policy' budget article (Article 8, Education, Culture and Science budget).

<sup>3</sup> This amounts to €500,000 a year from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs budget, for programmes implemented by the Netherlands Film Fund, the Cultural Participation Fund, the Performing Arts Fund, the Dutch Foundation for Literature, the Mondriaan Fund, the Creative Industries Fund NL and support organisations.



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