

A Tribute to M.C. Escher in the Crop Fields of Fryslân

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Abstract

In 2018 Leeuwarden, Fryslân was the Cultural Capital of Europe. One of the projects was in honour of M.C. Escher, who was born in Leeuwarden. Seven Dutch artists designed and made eight large scaled land art works, each on a crop field, which were best to be seen from a higher position. This paper presents an overview of the eight pieces of art.

Pilot Project

Henk Rusman is an artist who has been living and working for more than 38 years in Het Bildt, a region in the northern part of Fryslân, a province of the Netherlands. He was always aware of the changing of the seasons. Every summer he considered the waving of the crop as an invitation: “Come and do something with us!”



Figure 1: Impossible cube as a pilot project.

When Leeuwarden, Fryslân was chosen as the Cultural Capital of Europe this project was not part of the bid book. In spite of that Rusman took his chance and proposed the crop field project as a tribute to M.C. Escher. In 2017 he realized a pilot project: M.C. Escher’s impossible cube (see Figure 1). This project gave him some experience how to get such a job done. Wooden planks were used to flatten the crop. The pilot project was a success and was followed up.

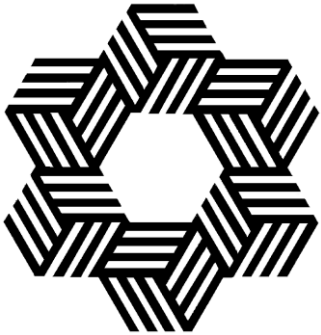


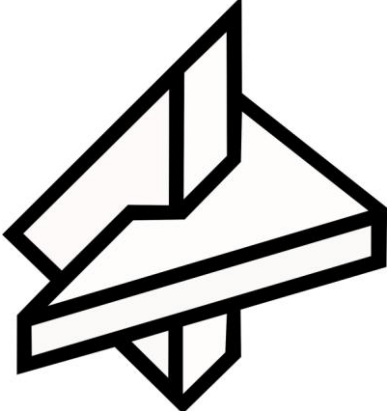



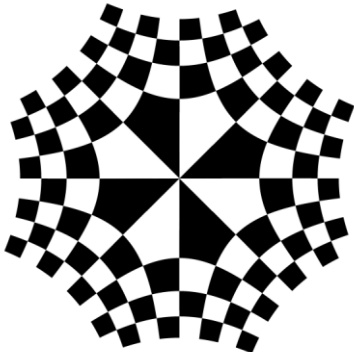
Eight Pieces of Land Art in the Crop Fields

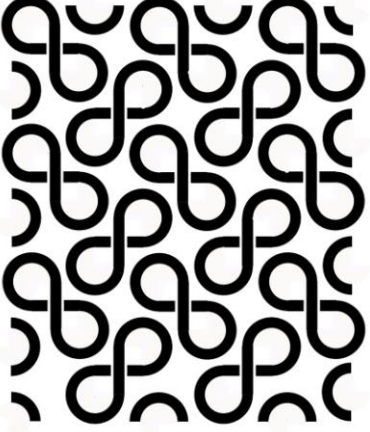


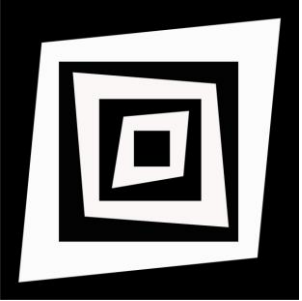
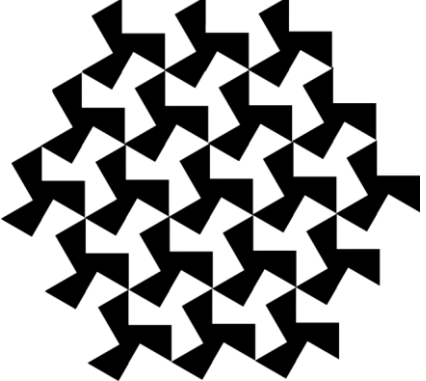


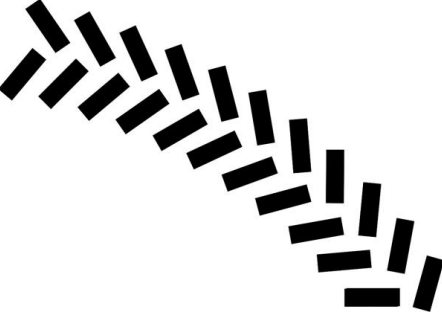
In 2018 eight fields became available, six along the Oudebildtdijk, a 12 km long dike with high vantage points on the fields, and two fields in the polder, which had to be viewed from a Ferris wheel. Rusman invited artists to make a proposal for an art work as a tribute to M.C. Escher. The selected creations are shown in Table 1. The biggest creation just fits in a 142 m diameter circle.



Figure 2: Overview along the dike, 8 pieces of art (red spots) and a Ferris wheel (blue spot).

Table 1: All pieces of art as designed and executed, ordered from west to east.

	<p>Henk Rusman</p> <p>Regular division of the plane, symmetry system P3.</p>	
	<p>Marco Goldenbeld</p> <p>Two intersecting triangular shaped objects in a parallel projection. Seen from different points of view the horizontal and vertical directions change.</p>	
	<p>Rinus Roelofs</p> <p>Flat projection of a 3D structure with several layers.</p>	
	<p>Hans Kuiper</p> <p>Conformal Chessboards. Two chessboards are deformed and fused together. The edges of the fields have a hyperbolic shape.</p>	

	<p>Roland de Jong Orlando</p> <p>The pattern is composed of lemniscates, the symbol of infinity, symmetry system PG (design) and P4 (as executed).</p>	
	<p>Ria Groenhof</p> <p>Rotated squares and rhombi, getting smaller and smaller. The smallest square suggests an entrance to the earth.</p>	
	<p>Henk Rusman</p> <p>Symmetrical division of the plane, symmetry system P3.</p>	
	<p>Bowe Roodbergen</p> <p>Track of a gigantic wheel.</p>	

Changing Views: Light and Dark, High and Low

The view on the crop fields is always changing. During the day the light over the fields changes hour by hour. During the season the colour of the crops changes day by day. These two effects create a continuous variation in the visual impression. At first the lower parts are lighter than the higher parts, later in the season it is the opposite. When the sun is very low something amazing happens: the relief can appear to reverse so that the upper and lower layers swap over.

Construction and Removal

A professional land surveyor put in place the most important wooden markers in each field, using a GPS-tool. The artists themselves had to complete the supplementary markers and the execution of their design. Flattening the crop with wooden planks was not always a good practice. The young and green crop tended to rise up again. In some cases mowing was a better method. Unfortunately this land art is temporary. Harvesters put an end to all projects. See Figure 3.



Figure 3: Harvesters 'deleting' Land Art.

Impact of the Project

The project received a lot of attention. There were several facilities for the visitors. Figure 4 shows an impression. There was a daily bus connection from the M.C. Escher exhibition in Leeuwarden to Het Bildt, including a visit to the Ferris wheel. At one spot on the dike a temporary stand was built by the artists. Also TV [1,2,3] and newspapers [4] covered the project.



Figure 4: Some facilities for visitors.

Mienskip

“Mienskip” was the theme of Leeuwarden Fryslân Cultural Capital 2018. Mienskip means cooperation in the Frisian language. And in this project Mienskip was everywhere. There was a close cooperation between artists, farmers and helpful citizens. They all embraced the artworks as theirs.

References

- [1] Omrop Fryslân. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DLDRFB1pw5A>.
- [2] Sense of Place. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TL6z01muu4g>.
- [3] Bildts Filmhuus. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cAfCxSosRpM&list=PLcbwhUYCJYZB00QFwKMh4lhUL7YCIM0LB>.
- [4] Volkskrant, Video. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=he8YW6MreGM>.