

DUTCH SUMMERThe summer is on a Saturday this year¹

06.07 – 31.08.2024

Antonio Fernández Alvira
Domas van Wijk
Linhuei Chen
Sarah & Charles
Bernat Daviu
Maurice Meewisse
Momu & No Es

"The weather in June can still be a little uncertain, but you shouldn't think about that. What you should do is think about the way you want your summer to be."²

This summer, circumstances have bound me to stay in the Netherlands, depriving me of a proper sunny vacation. This has prompted a unique blend of longing and imagination. In my mind, I began to construct an ideal summer—one where work and pleasure intertwine seamlessly. This fantasy gave birth to the exhibition "Dutch Summer | The summer is on a Saturday this year." Through metaphorical and conceptual interpretations, this exhibition hints at the fleeting, unpredictable, and often ironic nature of the Dutch summer.

The 'package' of summer is a social construct, often seen as a well-deserved reward after months of hard work. It represents an opportunity for rest, rejuvenation, and reward, a time when people feel entitled to leisure and enjoyment because they have earned it. The works of Domas van Wijk, Linhuei Chen, Sarah & Charles, Bernat Daviu, Maurice Meewisse, Momu & No Es, and Antonio Fernández Alvira come together to create a narrative that mirrors the anticipation, humor, frustration, and fleeting joy associated with our summers. The varied textures, colors, and moods of the artworks play with the idea of alternating weather conditions, from stormy clouds to rare sunlit days.

The interplay of different media and the placement of contrasting pieces evoke the contrast between expectation and reality, much like the Dutch summer itself. This exhibition invites viewers to reflect on their own perceptions of summer, not just as a season, but as a symbolic reward for their efforts and perseverance throughout the year. It questions the notion of 'deserved leisure' and how societal expectations shape our understanding and anticipation of this cherished time.

¹ Translation, original Dutch saying: De zomer valt dit jaar op een zaterdag

² p. 12, Tove Jansson, The Summer Book, Translated by Thomas Teal, Published by New York Review Books Classics, 2008 (originally published in 1972), ISBN: 978-1590172681

An Art Science Salad is a whimsical title for a profound artwork that invites exploration at the intersection of art and science. **Domas Van Wijk's** piece unfolds before our eyes with two ammonite fossils enclosed within flashy 3D-printed frameworks, functioning as gears that push each other round and round. The mesmerizing kinetic movement it creates makes us think of compilation videos on YouTube serving some kind of weird satisfaction and meant for relaxation or meditation purposes.

The fossilized gears' graceful interaction showcases the aesthetic kinetic quality typical of Van Wijk's artworks. The nautilus shape, not novel within art history, represents the Fibonacci sequence and the closely related golden ratio, embodying a connection between natural beauty and mathematical order.

The ironic title suggests a touch of humour and invites an equally playful interpretation. The incorporation of mechanical principles, such as the nautilus gear, alongside natural elements, highlights a juxtaposition central to Van Wijk's oeuvre: the dualistic interplay and blurry line between nature and human technology.

The blend of natural and mechanical elements of this particular 'Art Science Salad' reminds me of the unpredictability of the Dutch summer. The juxtaposition of ammonite fossils and mechanical parts points to the fleeting nature of good weather, where nature and human expectations often clash, much like the sudden shifts from sunny to rainy days.

Linhuei Chen's lineage traces back to a family of seafarers from an islet in Taiwan, where the ocean, boats, and the valour of seamen were ingrained in her upbringing. The experiences of migration that shaped her family's narrative now fuel her exploration into how these journeys impact transcultural identities, particularly in reshaping ideas of home and cultural hybridity. Drawing from memories and current interactions in new cultural landscapes, she explores these themes through her artistic practice.

Her artworks often incorporate diverse optical viewers, serving as metaphors for her transcultural experiences bridging the East and West. These viewers symbolize the lenses through which she interprets and portrays the intricate layers of her cultural journey, capturing its depth and diversity.

Linhuei Chen's *Vision Text: Dutch Summer* belongs to her *Metaphoric Optical Viewers* series. The artwork features a leather cut-out of a person undergoing a vision test alongside a painting that depicts vision test images. Chen humorously incorporates the Dutch landscape and the farmhouse as vision test symbols to express the typical cultural landscape people experience in the Netherlands.

In the context of the exhibition the work can be seen as a representation of the elusive nature of a perfect summer day in the Netherlands. The optical viewers and the play on perception point to how people perceive and remember summer – often idealized, but in reality, fleeting and sporadic.

Sarah & Charles have been exploring the intersection of reality and fiction, drawing inspiration from the world of entertainment and its unseen structures. They create immersive installations where the viewer becomes both object and subject. By focusing on the creation of fictionalized realities, such as props, sets, and narrative

frameworks, their work navigates the space between illusion and confusion, analyzing storytelling mechanisms and revealing the backstage processes.

The Heads depict two avatars of the artists, both without eyes or mouths. Unable to speak, they emit only unintelligible groaning. These avatars symbolize vanity and elusiveness, contrasting with the grand tradition of the artist's portrait as a means of introspecting individual mastery, which remains unattainable.

The faceless avatars inhabit the ironic twist on the typical summer experience, where expectations of warmth and sunshine are often met with unpredictability and disappointment. This interplay between expectation and reality complements the exhibition's exploration of the delicate balance between work and pleasure, offering a playful yet profound commentary on the complexities of human connection and the transient beauty of summer.

Bernat Daviu is an artist who considers himself a painter first and foremost. A painter aware that the death of painting has long been anticipated but has not yet arrived. As such, he expands it and allows it to mutate into objects, costume design, dance, performance, video, music, and art installations. He activates painting, sets it in motion, and turns it into a mirror of our surroundings. Daviu is interested in the borderlands between art and non-art. He is interested in pushing the boundaries of the spaces of art and their codes of behaviour and reception. His work uses humour and the absurd as strategies for subversion and to connect with reality, as part of a collaborative practice in which choreographers, dancers, filmmakers, writers, and different kinds of artists give rise to polyphonic pieces and spaces of encounter.

Bernat Daviu's Splash Diptych, can be seen as a reflection of the whimsical and often frustrating nature of Dutch summers. The playful and dynamic nature of his paintings evoke the brief bursts of activity and enjoyment when the weather is favourable, and the absurdity of preparing for summer activities that are often cut short by... rain.

Maurice Meewisse's Celestial Machines was originally conceived as a site-specific project that inhabited nine window exhibition spaces at his Rotterdam studio complex (Foundation B.a.d, Rotterdam 2023). Originally conceived as a site-specific project within this unique environment, the artwork underwent a transformation for its presentation in different contexts. Meewisse reinvented the project to align with the specificities within a room, crafting a new iteration that embodies the essence of site-specificity while embracing the distinct context of the exhibition.

Meewisse draws from Federico Campagna's ideas as seen in *Technic and Magic*. Campagna connects the themes of technology, magic, and spirituality with the planetary system by drawing parallels between ancient beliefs, modern technological systems, and our understanding of cosmic forces. By doing so, he invites viewers to reconsider their place in the universe, their relationship with technology, and the potential sacredness of the natural world, including the planetary system. Likewise, Meewisse offers a critique of modernity while proposing a reclamation of magical thinking as a way to enrich our lives and reconnect with the mysteries of existence.

In the context of the 'Dutch Summer' exhibition, Meewisse's Celestial Machines aligns with the theme of unpredictability and the intersection of expectation and reality. Just as the Dutch summer often defies expectations with its fleeting moments of sunshine amidst unpredictable weather, Meewisse's work challenges the viewer to reconsider their understanding of the world around them. His use of site-specificity and transformation mirrors the exhibition's exploration of the delicate balance between work and pleasure, and the contrast between idealized summer experiences and their often less predictable reality. Through this lens, Meewisse's piece becomes a metaphor for the anticipation and transient joys of summer, inviting viewers to embrace a more profound connection with the natural world and the cyclical nature of the seasons.

Leaving Surfaces is **Domas Van Wijk's** second body of work in the exhibition. Van Wijk harvested pieces of graffiti from public places where water damage had made the many layers of paint come loose from the brick walls, polishing them to bring out an abstract surface of colours.

Similar to how his earlier installations question Van Wijk's position as the 'genius' artist/creator, *Leaving Surfaces* explores the notion of author- and ownership even further. The notion of authorship and belonging are rendered ambivalently by Van Wijk's use of the harvested graffiti: Although their surfaces are smoothed out by the polishing, the back side of the pieces remain raw, the way they were when they left their original location. The many layers of paint echo the many street artists spraying over again and again. Like in Van Wijk's kinetic installations, the artist is both there and not there.

This work reflects the themes of the Dutch Summer exhibition by highlighting the contrast between expectation and reality. Just as the Dutch summer can be seen as a polished ideal of sunny vacations and leisure, the reality often remains raw and unpredictable, marked by sudden changes in weather. The polished front of the graffiti pieces represents the idealized vision of summer, while the raw backs symbolize the often less glamorous reality. This interplay of polished and raw surfaces mirrors the fleeting, unpredictable nature of the Dutch summer, where moments of perfection are often short-lived and interspersed with periods of disappointment.

Leaving Surfaces also touches on the idea of collective experience and societal constructs. The layers of paint from various street artists reflect a communal effort, much like how summer is collectively anticipated and experienced. By incorporating these layers, Van Wijk's work becomes a metaphor for the shared yet varied experiences of summer, emphasizing that while the ideal may be universal, the reality is often personal and unique.

Momu & No Es' projects are populated with objects and visual and musical references from contemporary popular imagery, from Internet culture and from the mundane, the trivial. The artists' concern is with elements they recontextualize and reassign meaning to, turning them into protagonists of amusingly unconventional stories that move in the charged zone between the familiar and the absurd, and which generate alien landscapes in terms of mood.

They are interested in the idols of contemporaneity, in deconstructing the strategies of production of desire based on promises of success and fun but producing frustration and depression. In this way, the artists confront us with the shattered fragments of contemporary life. The bizarre, the extraordinary, the images of the hyper-realistic, the virtual, the mythical, the cosmic: everything is reality and takes on significance in this absurd and loud remix that reflects our globalised, hyper-excited and voracious consumerist present.

Momu & No Es' work in this exhibition Everyone is starting a new exciting stage of life except you comically reflects the contemporary frustration and irony in the context of summer expectations. The work symbolizes the societal pressure to enjoy summer and the feelings of disappointment when the weather doesn't cooperate, mirroring the experience of waiting for a perfect summer day that never arrives.

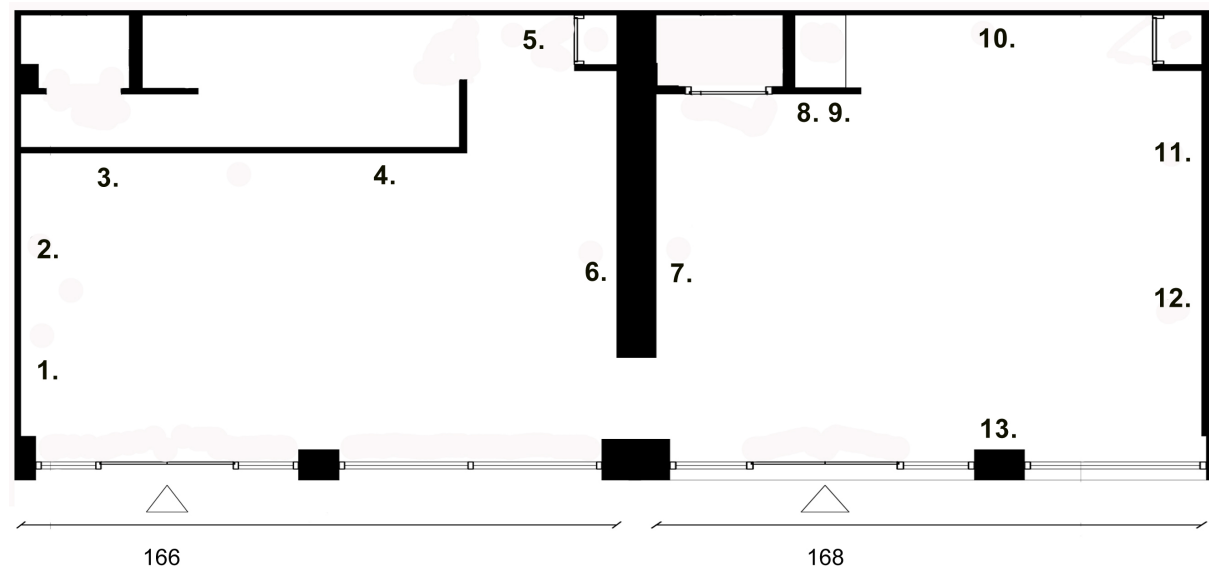
The work of **Antonio Fernández Alvira** revolves around the construction processes and the meaning of the images that make up our environment. He analyzes and explores concepts such as representation and visual fraud, the fragility and ephemeral nature of our environment, or the creation of symbols, exploring in turn the mechanisms that allow all of this to be legitimized in the collective imagination. To do this, he takes architecture and its component elements as generators of a physical corpus, which together with experimentation with materials, serve to shape, through a processual and formal exploration, his sculptural and installation works. Throughout his various projects, he has explored the binomial image and meaning, making use of tools such as fake and museum displays, also analyzing the weight of the academic in the configuration of our environment. The material and formal exploration, together with the fragmentation, the archaeological and the ruin, make up a common thread within his work. In his latest works the procedural and the purification of lines take centre stage, making the architecture organic, configuring and modulating the spaces where it cohabits through coloured walls and metal structures.

Alvira's engagement with themes of fragility and transience, bring me back to think of the irony and humour found in the anticipation of a perfect summer that often doesn't materialize. El fluir en lo fijado (The flow in what is fixed) belongs to this line of work that emphasizes procedural and purified lines, create organic architecture that modulates spaces through colour and structure, much like how fleeting summer days transform the landscape of the Netherlands.

By incorporating all these different works within the idea of the "Dutch Summer", the exhibition invites viewers to contemplate the constructed nature of their expectations and the reality of their experiences, echoing the delicate balance between work and pleasure that inspired the exhibition itself.

Notes on a Dutch Summer
Kiki Petratou

LIST OF WORKS



1. **DOMAS VAN WIJK**
An Art Science Salad, 2023-2024
Mixed media: ammonite fossil, PLA plastic, Epoxy clay, and various mechanical and electronic parts
2. **LINHUEI CHEN**
Vision Text: Dutch Summer, 2024
Oil on Linen, Leather
3. **SARAH & CHARLES**
The Heads III, (Diptych), 2019, Pigment print on paper, framed in custom painted frame
4. **BERNAT DAVIU**
Splash diptych, 2010, Acrylic on canvas
5. **MAURICE MEEWISSE**
Box 4 & 5, Elm (Planted in 1870 at the Coolsingel in Rotterdam, survived the war, cut down in 2011 because of Elm disease), 2023, waxed
6. / 7. **MAURICE MEEWISSE**
Celestial Machines, 2024, wood, rope
- 8./ 9. / 13. **DOMAS VAN WIJK**
Leaving Surfaces, 2023
Layers of spray-paint
10. **MOMU & NO ES**
Everyone is starting a new exciting stage of life except you, 2018
Print on Plexiglas
11. / 12. **ANTONIO FERNANDEZ ALVIRA**
El fluir en lo fijado, 2023
Metal structure, Alfamolde plaster, pigments and polishes