

Daan van Golden
Agua Azul

I'm extraordinarily pleased to present this exhibition with works by Daan van Golden. (1936 - 2017)
Van Golden was an artist who has remained relatively unknown to a wider international audience, but could be considered one of the most notable and unique Dutch artists after the Second World War.

For most of his life Van Golden lived with his wife and daughter in Schiedam, a town near to Rotterdam, where he chose to live at a distance from the art world, refusing to give interviews and staying away from the competition of the market. Nevertheless, his work was shown regularly and he represented the Netherlands at the Venice Biennale in 1999.

The choice of a simple and unpretentious lifestyle is significant when thinking about his particular practice. He might be considered as kind of an outsider, though not in the sense of being uninformed or marginalised, but in terms of not quite fitting into any specific artistic discourse - locally nor internationally.

In his reduced and focussed environment van Golden worked most of his life on slowly executed paintings that demanded extreme concentration and precision. Copying and reframing existing motives, reduced to their silhouette. Early in his career he made the decision not to produce any new imagery. In this way all sorts of subjects get levelled, making no distinction between the pattern on a kitchen towel, a wallpaper or a painting by Matisse or Pollock. In his work everything is rendered in the same two dimensional way and executed with meditative precision. The result are hand painted artworks that could be mistaken for prints - stripped from subjectivity.

To Daan van Golden, life was more important than art. But perhaps more relevant, is the way he unified both, by blurring the line between personal life and work. This merging of life and art becomes very clear in his odd photographic work, which is for the most part an uncomplicated recording of his life, his family during travels and so forth. Particularly the series 'youth is an art' which is a documentation of his daughter growing up from 0 to 18 years old blurs the line. Sometimes he also appears on photos, but only as a shadow, a silhouette. All of these photographs are archived as unique works and are always titled by simply referencing the location they were taken at.

What strikes me about van Golden's project is his ambiguity in terms of art historical positioning. Meaning that comparisons with his contemporaries always seem to come short. His work touches on conceptualism (think of Jef Geys), minimalism (Agnes Martin, even though she didn't relate to the term. But the similarity is about the choice of life and secluded, meditative practice) and has similarities to European answers to Pop art (for example Konrad Lueg), but any such comparisons are never quite satisfying - his work doesn't really fit in anywhere.

There is an important aspect in his work that has to do with a kind of honesty, a lack of ambition to prove something. Daan van Golden works on his own terms and this also meant taking longer breaks from producing work. It seems like a practice that has no strong wish to relate to anything but itself or more importantly, the present moment. A wish for the work to be about 'nothing' but that in itself is taken very serious and becomes a profound characteristic - It doesn't try to tell you anything in specific.

It might be somewhat of a romantic wish, but I find that Van Golden's work shares a quality with Dutch painting going back to Vermeer and van Ruysdael. This particular quality of northern painting deals with close observation of the direct world that surrounds us, represented with extreme clarity.

You could say that Van Golden's work carries on a legacy that starts at the introduction of everyday subject matters (genre painting) which was a consequence of the autonomisation of painting following the Protestant Reformation in the Netherlands and the ban of imagery in churches. The dramatic narratives of Catholic painting made place for simplicity and sobriety, and shifted the focus from Christian iconography to more abstract matters such as light and time.

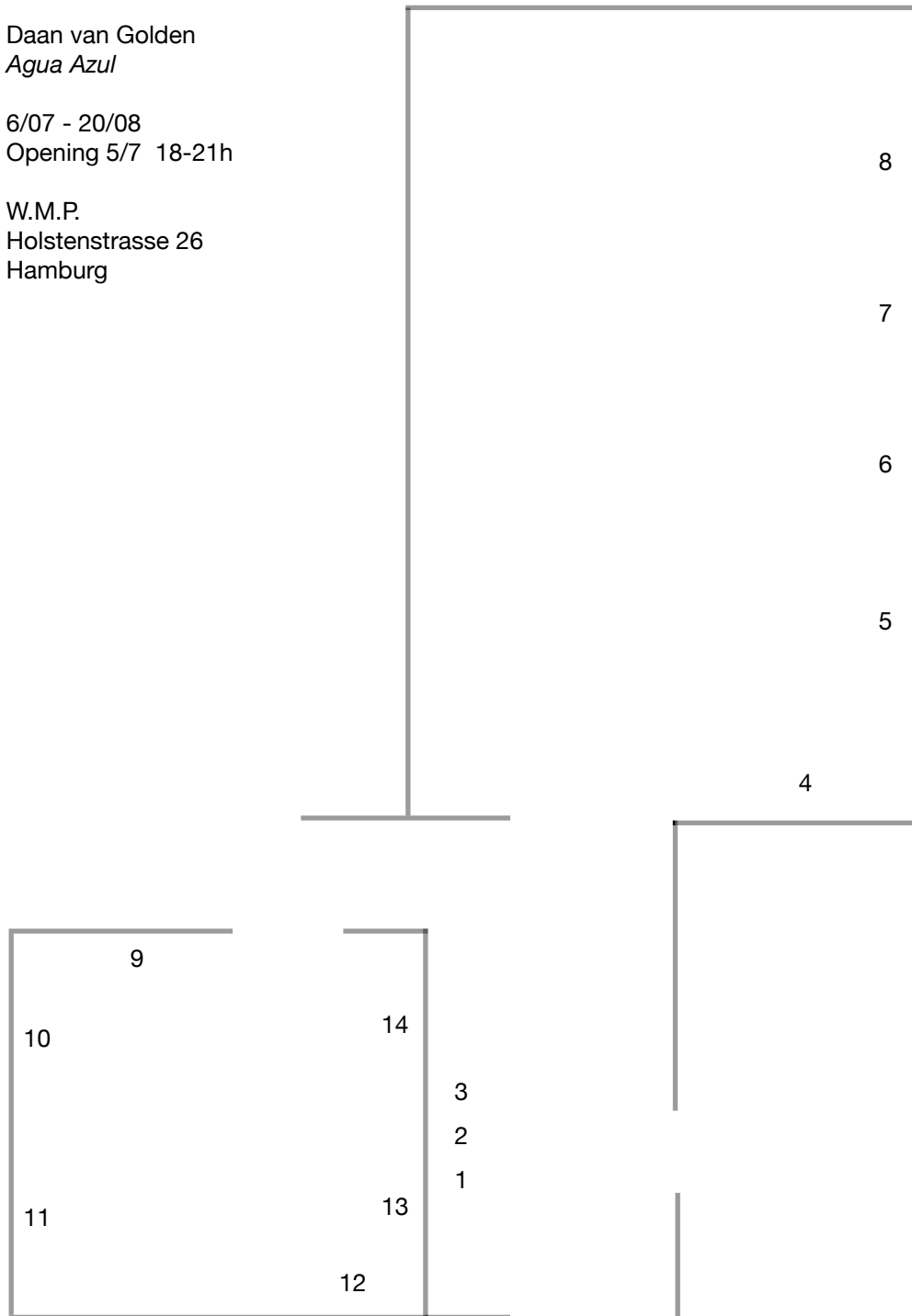
A special thanks goes out to Michelin Sz wajcer for the generous help in realising this exhibition.

Max J.P. Postma

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6/07 - 20/08
Opening 5/7 18-21h

W.M.P.
Holstenstrasse 26
Hamburg



- 1: Agua Azul - Red Flowers, 1987/2019
- 2: Agua Azul - Yellow Flowers, 1987/2019
- 3: Agua Azul - Blue Path and Trees, 1987/2019
- 4: Study Pollock / study H.M., 2012
- 5: Sleeping Buddha, 1975/2012
- 6: New York, 1978/2003
- 7: Insel Hombroich, solo, 1988/2004
- 8: Mexico, 1980/2016
- 9: Tokyo/Dijon, 1996/2016
- 10: Red Four-part on Photo, 1978
- 11: Untitled (Girl and Mirror), 1977
- 12: Blue Daisies, 1975
- 13: Red Study/Tokyo, 2012
- 14: Composition Red Drops, 1976