

Gezien van de Riet. Alles! Overall!
Page-by-page English translation

Front Cover:

Gezien van de Riet. Alles! Overall!

Back Cover:

'Gezien van de Riet is an exceptionally gifted, motivated artist. Her relationship to nature in all its appearances is remarkable. The love with which she depicts these appearances in her paintings excites a special feeling of happiness in the beholder.'

Ernst van de Wetering, foremost international Rembrandt authority.

Who has seen Gezien van de Riet's trees, will discover them for oneself. 'Hey, a Gezien tree!' Nature is her source of inspiration, she also likes to paint the human figure. She has developed a technique of her own with distemper and oil paint. She draws all the world. She writes about art, 'the own character', beauty, the artistic profession, observation, beyond matters of taste. Emotion is key.

She graduated in Sociology at the University of Amsterdam, with a minor in Art History, and she attended the Escuela de Bellas Artes in La Paz, Bolivia. Her first book appeared in 2008: *Gezien van de Riet, In 't leven vindtment al* (In Life One Finds All).

Nicolien Mizee, an author known for her books *Moord op de moestuin* (Murder at the Allotment) and *Faxen aan Ger* (Faxes to Ger), humorously recounts their first meetings at model drawing in the 1990s. Her story enriches written art history and throws a light on this less well known painters practice.

This is a book for tree lovers, nature lovers, and art lovers, for painters and drawers, students and art historians.

1:

Everything! Everywhere!

2:

Dead Pine Tree in the Spanish Pyrenees | alkyd and oil paint on wood | 60 x 80 cm

3:

**Gezien van de Riet Everything!
Everywhere!**

With a text contribution by Nicolien Mizee

Van Spijk

4:

Mirror Sea | alkyd and oil on wood | 60 x 80 cm

5:

Contents

6:

Nicolien, Model Study | water colour pencil on paper | 24 x 18 cm

7:

Everything! Everywhere!

By Nicolien Mizze

A long time ago I worked as a painters' model for amateur clubs. Two or three times a week I sat in a studio in Haarlem, Beverwijk, Castricum, Wormerveer or IJmuiden. Afterwards, I got into my clothes shivering, collected my fee, and went home again. It was heavy work, but also fun. People were absorbed in their work, always a sight for sore eyes. The sound of charcoal scratching on paper and the smell of paint gave me a pleasant sensation.

Artists' Association *Creatief* was established in an old school building. It was light and sunny. I liked to come there.

One day Gezien came walking in. It must have been some twentyfive years ago, at the end of the nineties, but Gezien looked exactly as she does now, except for a small pigtail she was wearing in her neck. She looked around her searchingly. It was a break, I was sitting in my dressing gown near the heating. Gezien spoke to me. She was thinking of joining a painters' association. As a model, I would surely frequent several clubs. What did I think of *Creatief*? Did they also sometimes work on one pose for several weeks?

I shook my head. 'No, that happens almost nowhere any more. First short poses, and after the break at the most one pose of an hour.'

She didn't like that. 'That way you don't get any further. I want to learn to keep working at something. I have lived and worked in Bolivia for years. Now I am trying to find out how to live as a painter here in the Netherlands.'

I politely swallowed my laughter. This lady had apparently been away for a very long time! Making a living by painting! You could just be so lucky as to have a very small job as a teacher in a community centre and when things weren't too bad once a year you might hang two canvases on the wall of an exhibition of local artists.

'Every one can do a little sketching,' said Gezien. 'I want to go further. Maybe it would be better to organize something myself. May I have your phone number? Would you care to sit, let's say, for two hours in one pose? I'll see if I can arrange that.' She hesitated. 'People look down on what they dub as 'copying reality'. But there is no such thing.'

Sitting man | charcoal on paper | 24 x 31 cm

8:

'No', I agreed. 'Because I am three-dimensional. And a painting is a flat surface.' 'Exactly! Exactly!'

The break was over. Gezien vanished. 'Next pose!', the teacher called. 'Ten minutes!' It was rather comfortable for me if a pose didn't take too long – I wouldn't get cramps. But I had wondered why those drawers were always only making quick sketches. Myself, I wanted to become a writer. Shortly before, I had finished a course at the Schrijversvakschool, the Writers' Professional School.

Chetana, Model Study | 2004 | distemper and oil on wood | 30 x 40 cm

9:

For all the fun the exercises were ('write with your eyes closed', 'write on music'), it only produced fragments. I wanted to learn how to write a complete story. Only after two years I had a teacher who taught me a few simple rules how to bring structure into a story. For the first time I succeeded in writing a piece with a beginning, a middle and an end. Finally. A few weeks after that first encounter Gezien called. She had found eight people who, just like herself, would like to work on one pose for two hours. Would I come to pose?

'Would it be lying down?', I asked.

'Sure! I found a beautiful couch.'

When I entered the studio a couple of weeks later, a pleasant surprise awaited me: Gezien had built a complete set, with a couch, a side table and a flower vase.

All that afternoon I lay in the same pose. Some of the artists just started anew every now and then, from different angles. Not so Gezien. She worked on determinedly. During the break I said, surprised: 'But this is great! Isn't it finished now?'

'No. This is just the stage you have to go through. Look, it's not just a question of a good likeness. That's an intermediary stage. Then you have go further. You have to find your own way.'

I agreed. First you should master the technique, and then work further and see where it gets you. This view of mine was seldom well received. Technique was 'passé', anyone could master that – what mattered was self expression.

Gradually I had become convinced that self expression, whatever that might mean, would only become possible after you had mastered the technique.

In Dorothy Sayers' *Strong Poison*, set in artists' circles, Lord Peter Wimsey remarks, looking at a clumsily painted portrait: 'There is a difference between a painter who is able to paint but can't be bothered to, and a painter who is simply unable to paint.' *Strong Poison* was published in 1930.

It is very hard to capture the posture of a model correctly. You can hide it a bit with a lot of expressive strokes, but it will come to light without mercy if you keep on working at a drawing or painting.

Liliana | crayon on paper | 31 x 23 cm

10:

Maya's Back | charcoal on paper | 30 x 40 cm *Nicolien, Model Study* | 1999 | alkyd on artificial linen | 60 x 45 cm

The tortured painter Bavink in the Dutch novel *Titaantjes* by Nescio, who goes mad because he can't capture nature the way he wants to, mocks: 'You should make a painting with two lines and a yellow blot. And then we write in the catalogue: No. 666 *The Thought*, painting. And we price it at 800 guilders. You will be amazed at what they discover in it. All kinds of stuff you never even thought of.' That is another way to hide you lack of talent.

Van Gogh was also hesitant about abstractionism. In the eighties of the nineteenth century he wrote to his brother: 'I have let me be tempted once or twice into abstractionism. But my dear, that is enchanted territory! And soon enough one runs into a wall.'

Friends of mine who had attended the art academy in the eighties, lived off social benefits or had a career change.

11:

The compensation arrangement for artists had been abolished and painting didn't make enough money to live on. 'I wanted to learn how to depict an apple', a woman friend told me. 'I got it in the neck. I was almost a fascist. Biscuit-box art! To work commercially was all wrong. In six years at the academy I didn't even learn how to organize my palette.'" Gezien had fought a similar battle. It had probably been her luck that in Bolivia classical and modernist currents existed fraternally side by side, she had enjoyed working 'after nature' and earned lots of praise. Back in the Netherlands she decided to follow her own path. *Spanish Dancer Resting; Study | 2003 | oil on panel | 30 x 40 cm*

12:

She sought association with the 'new realists', artists like herself working 'after nature'. 'Whatever that may be', said Gezien, who always hastened to add that she didn't oppose innovation. The question what 'realistic work' was came back time and again in our conversations, without us finding a pat definition.

My first book was published. Friends and family thought that I had portrayed all kinds of characters in a very realistic manner. They were exactly like that! But how they themselves appeared in the book, no, that was all wrong! I had made them into caricatures. And the story itself wasn't right either. In reality it had gone all different. I had made it my own version. That was true. Maybe that was what it meant to 'work realistically': making it into your own version.

I had tried to capture reality as precisely as possible, but it made one reader cry and the other laugh and a third wrote disparagingly that I presented the reader with a freak show. The book became a modest success. I started teaching how to write stories at the People's University and was allotted the room I had posed in naked in earlier days. I stopped modelling and lost sight of Gezien.

Many years later I visited an exhibition of contemporary realist art, together with my husband. 'Come and look at this', my husband said to me. 'There is a painting over here of a tree, you must see it. It is just like a portrait.' Every furrow sharp as a knife, every bend of the tree represented. Breathtaking.

'That guy knows a thing or two', my husband said with admiration. I looked at the name tag: *Gezien van de Riet*.

Shortly after that Gezien and I met again. Gezien hadn't changed a bit. 'You found your subject', I said. 'And your style. I remember you said you were looking for your own style.' 'I couldn't have said that. When I applied for the Rietveld Academy, I presented all different kinds of work. They asked me where 'I' was. What my style was. And then I exclaimed: "Everything! Everywhere!" I got really angry. You can't search for a style, a style is something that comes to you. And then they rejected me.'

'So much the better', I said. 'Otherwise you would have been allowed only to make daub paintings for years. But now you are making this, beautiful!'

'Oh but with those trees I am not going on. I am looking for something new. I want the human figure back.'

That's Gezien for you.

Mensinghe Forest near Roden | distemper and oil on canvas | 30 x 30 cm

13:

Gold Leaf | distemper and oil on wood | 40 x 30 cm

14:

White Poplars in the Egmond Dunes | alkyd and oil on wood | 90 x 60 cm

15:

Notes

By Gezien van de Riet

Sketchbook 25 | *White Poplar branch* | crayon on paper | 15 x 15 cm

ITS OWN CHARACTER – Totally absorbed I read about painting trees in Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst: anders de zichtbaere werelt* (Introduction to the High School of Painting, Otherwise, the Visible World; 1677). He had been a pupil of Rembrandt's. What was proper art according to him and his contemporaries? For instance, when representing trees you should hit on the 'own character' of bark, branches or foliage.

'Look ye, if thou copiest with a loose flourish the floundering foliage of the trees, thou shalt depict them each in its own character; for the broom-like Cypress, and the curled Oak-branch do not resemble one another. Linden and Willow differ too much; so do the stems of the Chestnut and the Beech.' (Fifth Chapter. On Landscape. P. 139)

This struck me because I had just been painting white poplars or abeles with the intention not just to pay attention to the light, but also to the tree bark. And the leaves you could see separately had to be like little individuals – no mechanical touches, nothing average. Where necessary, parts could be out of focus. In my search for beauty, this was where I arrived at.

16:

Tessa in Lavender | distemper and oil on linen | 80 x 40 cm

Tessa's bright youth reminded of flowering lavender

THE BEAUTIFUL – My first lesson in aesthetics I got at kindergarden. Colouring geometric patterns, a preparation to Paul Klee as it were. I enjoyed it a lot. The teacher stood by my table. 'Very good, little Gezien! Neatly within the lines! But what's that, blue next to green? That clashes!'

The Dutch expression for clashing colours is 'swearing', and swearing was strictly forbidden and I was a religious kid. But later in puberty, a friend gave me a booklet about Van Gogh. The cover featured *The Potato Eaters* and she argued why blue next to green actually was beautiful. At a stroke, they became my favourite pair of colours. Was this a question of beauty or taste?

The ancient Greeks linked the beautiful to the godly, the perfect. On the way to the ideal, you joined the best elements together. If the model for your work of art had a beautiful head, but too fat ankles, you looked for another model with thin ankles. By the way, a beautiful person in a work of art is not necessarily a beautiful work of art, they knew that of course.

A permanent prerequisite for beauty in art is a good composition. In Renaissance art this was based on order in numbers, like the golden ratio that exists in nature as well. It gives cohesion and enhances the expression.

Normes on beauty change. Shortly after World War II the Dutch poet Lucebert wrote: 'Beauty has burnt her face.'

17:

Little Oak Tree in the Dunes of Bergen | distemper and oil on wood | 30 x 40 cm

It came to pass even in the last century that beauty was declared a taboo. That is a pity, mark you, Lucebert's phrase itself is of great beauty. And wasn't there always beauty next to misery?

Visual beauty, what is it, you experience it. Is it harmonizing light waves finding a welcoming reception in the brain? Yes, definitely an emotion arises, a feeling of well-being. I encounter beauty mainly in nature. To capture it I have to look long and hard. Then the experience deepens and a personal selection is made. That is how the work of art comes into being. The human figure also evokes different feelings in me. Rembrandt's Lucrece doesn't show a beautiful nude, but a sad woman, and that is just what is touching.

Nature or human figure, in both cases emotion is the key. That is my compass, the truth, beyond matters of taste.

18:

There Once Was a Beech Nut | distemper and oil on wood | 100 x 35 cm

SKILL – There are first lessons you never forget. When I was twelve, I received one about skill. It was autumn. Through the window of the classroom I saw the trees standing along the lane. I drew them, first with a black pencil, then in colours. The teacher looked at it, took an orange pencil and hatched lightly over one of the trees. 'Go over the next tree with yellow', he said, 'of course you can also blend the yellow with the orange. See for yourself.' Excited I rode home on my bicycle that day. I had learned something special! The colours had started to tingle, my drawing had gained in cohesion, it had become a being of its own.

To learn is wonderful. Specially when it is about your favourite subject. To discover how picture elements work: lines, blotches, colours. Skill is a precious possession. Art can not do without it.

When a line bounces off two opposite sides of a painting, what happens? It could mean that the image is cut into two. Was that what was meant to be? Or: if you arrange your light and dark like a chess board, it may fragment the representation. If all objects have sharp edges, you may lose spaciality. Multicolouredness may weaken the forms.

The greater the skill, the richer and more striking the work of art. The history of art contains a treasure trove of experiences. It is very exciting, I feel like I am in art history's school. First you learn general basic techniques and insights. Then you develop further to be able to express what floats before your mind.

19:

King of the Wood, Duin en Kruidberg | distemper and oil on wood | 40 x 30 cm

20:

Beech tree in the lane near Kijkuit II | distemper and oil on wood | 45 x 30 cm

21:

Sled tracks in Driehuis Forest | distemper and oil on wood | 25 x 40 cm

OBSERVATION – Observe the *visible world*. Observe your *painting*.

Suppose you stand on a dune top in a enormous space. You see a tree, and dunes further off. Then you make a painting, an illusion on a flat surface. Everything is there, as if they were

real things. But wait! Space is not a thing. Still it must be evoked on that flat surface, that is the miracle of realistic art. Inside the illusion, you must be able to walk around that tree over there.

Applying perspective doesn't help a lot here. Rembrandt and other seventeenth-century painters were aware of the thickness of the air. You can see that phenomenon also in the overwhelming, wide landscapes of Frederic Church, like a breath floating around.

22:

Beech tree in the lane near Kijkuit I | distemper and oil on wood | 45 x 30 cm

THE BEECH TREE NEAR KIJKUIT – This is a portrait of a beech stem. I often walk past it. The stem's colour changes with the weather. When it is dry, you see a posh light greygreen, sometimes with beige-pink shimmering through.

In damp weather with some sunshine: bronze green. A lot of rain makes the stem almost black-green with some violet-brown. The bark of the beech tree on this page is still damp from the melting snow and therefore even deeper in colour. The scars bear witness of human presence here.

In winter I sometimes stand still near the stem and look up. First the branches go boldly into the sky, then they narrow down till they almost disappear. If the treetop has enough space a breathtaking pattern of branches unfolds against the sky. I studied this beech repeatedly this way.

Trees attract me, they touch me deeply, especially their reaching for the sky. But I can also pause to observe the ends of floating branches, growing upward again just before touching the ground. I am thinking of abdominal exercises and I see them dancing. I bow to this beech.

23:

Bulb Flower Field near Castricum | distemper and oil on wood | 20 x 30 cm

24:

OUR GINKGO – The ginkgo is seen as a living fossil of a millions of years old genus. We planted one at the time we entered our new home. I painted it in these autumn colours. *Our Ginkgo* participated in a travelling exhibition named "20 años, en 20 x 20" (20 years in 20 x 20). It was in celebration of the twenty years of existence of Galería Artelibre, an art centre promoting realism on an international scale out of Zaragoza. In this endeavour Artelibre finds at its side the European Museum of Modern Art (Museo Europeo de Arte Moderno – MEAM) in Barcelona. Jointly they organized this exhibition.

180 artists from countries all over the world made paintings of 20 by 20 centimeters. The exhibition survived through the COVID pandemic, and travelled from 2019 to 2021 to Zaragoza (Palacio Bantierra), Barcelona (MEAM) and Turin (Palacio Einaudi in Chivasso) and back to Zaragoza. What remains are two marvelous catalogues, also 20 x 20 cm.

Our Ginkgo is one of my paintings that made it to the finals in several art competitions; in this case the 14th International Salon of the Art Renewal Center (ARC), in which around 5,000 artists from all over the world participated. The ARC promotes realist and figurative art on an international level, and has a physical and a virtual museum – in which I am a participant. Like many of my paintings, *Our Ginkgo* has an underpainting in distemper. You can mix distemper with oil, but also with water. With water it is just like water colours. I did a lot of water colouring in the beginning of my painting career. The light in the colours always cheered me up, since the white paper shone through the paint. This experience I took with me

in working with distemper and oil paints. In *Our Ginkgo* the brightest leaves are not bright because of white paint, but because of the thin layer of yellow on top of the white background. This way the light can flow out of a painting.

25:

Our Ginkgo in Autumn | distemper and oil on wood | 20 x 20 cm

26:

Tree stumps near Bakkum | oil on wood | 22 x 40 cm

NATURE WITH A ‘?’ – I never thought nature would throw me into confusion. Nature is a constant source of inspiration and enchantment to me. Specially trees are my favourites. In the Belgian Ardennes I once walked by a pine forest and I was struck by the rhythm of those straight stems. I wanted to paint them. I was still ignorant.

Lately more and more becomes known about life in the soil, under the trees and among the roots that connect to one another and work together with fungi that can extend for miles... fascinating! But there is also a serious warning there. Forests are weakened by the cutting down of ancient deciduous trees, by plantations of coniferous trees, and much more. Is forestry equal to timber cultivation, is cutting down trees equal to logging, is forest equal to money? How natural is nature anymore?

Art, drawing from nature’s beauty, produces beauty in its turn. Has this become *Art with a ?* Art is supposed to bring pleasure, is it not?

27:

Pine Forest in the Ardennes II | distemper and oil on wood | 40 x 30 cm

28:

All autumn leaves, Castricum Forest | distemper and oil on wood | 30 x 40 cm

ALL LEAVES – The sun is shining through the leaves in the two paintings: *All Autumn Leaves*, *Castricum Forest* and *Light Catcher in Autumn*. The bright white of the underpainting is lightening up yellow of the leaves – that’s how I did it.

Distemper is very suitable for corrections: I can daub out a wrong colour with water and because it dries quickly I can continue soon to work on that spot. If the light on a stem has been lost under the paint, I use my finger nail in a wet cloth to bring it back again. Painting with distemper is great fun, either if you lay it on in a thick layer, or apply it very sparingly. The stems I painted in oil paint because of its flowing property. The rest is mainly distemper.

29:

Light Catcher in Autumn | distemper and oil on wood | 40 x 30 cm

30:

TENDER BUT BRAVE – Until her passing away Laura Møhlmann-De Grijs, together with her husband Rob, managed Museum Møhlmann. The last years of her life she was seriously ill, but she moved about deftly with her crutches. In those days I used to send her an e-mail from time to time, adding a picture of something I had just made. So also a photo of the painting on the next page, *Tender But Brave*.

She wrote back instantly:

March 9, 2010:

Wow my dear Gezien!

How touching!... It's silly, but it might be a 'portrait' of me, the way I feel right now.

Battered, full of punctures, hollowed out, but still there!!!

In the middle of the snow... which I love so incredibly much, all my life. Thanks for this beautiful leaf as a greeting!

Love, Laura

Kennemer Duinen | pencil on paper | 20 x 14 cm

31:

Tender But Brave | distemper and oil on wood | 40 x 30 cm

32:

PLEIN AIR – Painting outside is like model painting in one sitting: it must be finished far enough in a couple of hours. I finished *Magpie in the Egmond Dunes* at home from memory; I added a magpie and some branches in the forefront. I was lucky with *Spring and the Old Mill Stone*, the next day was sunny also, and the stone was quite near, so I could finish it. Messing about with distemper and water for the mosses: that was just like playing outside.

Magpie in the Egmond Dunes | oil on wood | 17.7 X 23.7 cm

33:

Spring and the Old Mill Stone | distemper and oil on wood | 24 x 18 cm

34:

PORTRAIT. WHAT DO YOU SEE? – Of a portrait the greatest possible likeness is expected. The famous philosopher Hegel saw this differently. He got worked up about the portrait 'resembling to the point of being horrifying'. (*Norbert Schneider, *Portretschilderkunst. Meesterwerken uit de Europese portretschilderkunst 1420–1670*, P. 14.) You had to embellish, to evoke the spiritual character and leave out incidentals. A pimple in Rembrandt's self-portrait? No!

Different from an apple, a face has an expression, of feelings, of something of the inner life of precisely that one person. That should find its way into the portrait. A minute dot at the corner of the mouth might be decisive. So does that make Hegel right with his attention to the spiritual character?

Already Darwin was interested in the visibility of emotions in the facial expression. It is after all essential for survival. How is that human being looking at me? Am I going to blush? It is surely a miracle that we are able to see the non-tangible emotions. That's because of all the little muscles. The face has more than fifty of them, and together they can make a few thousand combinations. Look, there is the inner life appearing on the exterior. True likeness shows both at once, thus capturing life. Hegel hadn't thought of that.

Daphne | distemper and oil on linen | 80 x 40 cm

35:

Portrait of Jeroen, Cheers! | distemper and oil on wood | 50 x 80 cm

36:

THE PERSONAL – It often happens in a flash, something special hits your eye. Immediately the creative process begins: these colours... that pattern... this should go in... that should be left out... Atmosphere and experience imprint themselves in your memory. You see the grand movement, nuances, peculiarities. A selection arises, prompted by your personality.

During the painting process the original experience works as a propelling force and a severe judge: is the atmosphere still there? Then pick up that brush, choose that colour. Experience merges with technique. You are involved, hide and hair. It can't get any more up close and personal.

Olive Tree in Spain | distemper and oil on wood | 30 x 30 cm

37:

Jonna | distemper and oil on wood | 55 x 40 cm

38:

These beech trees in the Spanish Pyrenees seem to be made of the same mineral substance as the surrounding rocks. The forest offers a lush of tempting details. I keep them in check.

There is no clock or watch in my studio.

Beech Forest near Espitau de Vielha, Spanish Pyrenees | distemper and oil on wood | 40 x 60 cm

39:

The unfathomable quiet pond near Llep in the Spanish Pyrenees fascinates me. As a painter you can let fall one drop of rain into the water.

Pantà de Llep | distemper and oil on wood | 23.5 x 30 cm

40:

The Church of Torre de Obato | distemper and oil on wood | 30 x 23.5 cm

41:

Spanish Pyrenees, Turbón Mountain With Cloud | acrylic and oil on linen | 60 x 92 cm

42:

Sitting on Bench CA-55, Castricum Forest | distemper and oil on wood | 45 x 30 cm

43:

Snowy Flowers | distemper and oil on wood | 30 x 45 cm

Sitting on Bench CA-55, Castricum Forest. Snow in Castricum, March 2006. After breakfast we venture out into the woods, taking a flask of coffee with us. We sit on what we since call 'our bench'. A surprising treat: the shadows in front of us from the trees behind us. You couldn't make that up. I left out the thermos flask.

44:

Turbulent Clouds II | alkyd and oil on wood | 150 x 100 cm

45:

From Camping Bakkum to the Beach | alkyd and oil on wood | 150 x 100 cm

46:

PASTELLING – Pastel crayon, that is drawing-painting. Nothing is mandatory, a lot is possible. I made these drawings with soft and hard pastel crayons. Soft: pasty, powdery. Hard: thin, sharply defined. I generally prefer nature by itself. Sometimes I allow a single human in it.

Heavy Weather near IJmuiden | pastel on paper | 20 x 27 cm

47:

Hiker on Wintry Coast | pastel on paper | 23 x 31 cm

48:

Wind Surfing in the Storm II | pastel on paper | 13.5 x 24 cm

49:

Ebb, Near Castricum On Sea | pastel on paper | 24 x 36 cm

In the pastel drawing *Ebb, Near Castricum On Sea* it was the sand, wet and dry, that was the most exciting to depict. Especially the sand in the lower left corner, with those minute stripes, got a lot of attention. Wiping away, drawing again, wiping away again, drawing again... till your brain says: you're there!

50:

The chestnut tree. In winter you can observe its powerful and elegant build. The branches' ends always curl up again. I like to see the bark's colourfulness and pattern. The weather does have to cooperate a bit, of course.

The small island of Tiengemeten, a beautiful natural reserve, lures birds and people. Scottish Highlanders live there. The heat wave made it all still and motionless.

Chestnut Tree in the Snowy Dunes near Heemskerk | pastel on paper | 30 x 40 cm

51:

Bathing Scottish Highlanders, Tiengemeten | water colour and pastel on paper | 34 x 26 cm

52:

Clouds form endless surprising shapes, they play to their hearts' content, at flying speed they leave you perplexed. The dunes below them seem like immobile real estate, the growing of the plants is invisible to the human eye.

The underpainting in water colour of *Cloud, Wind, Dune near Heemskerk* and *Cloud Rising over the Dunes of Heemskerk* is a dark pink, and has been given a clear role.

Cloud Rising over the Dunes of Heemskerk | water colour and pastel on paper | 26 X 42 cm

53:

Cloud, Wind, Dune near Heemskerk | water colour and pastel on paper | 60 X 40 cm

54:

What else is there to be said about the beauty of snow, about the importance of snow, about mankind and snow.

Eternal snow, Huaraz 6, Andes, Peru | water colour and pastel on paper | 40 x 60 cm

55:

Top, Huaraz 5, Andes, Peru | water colour and pastel on paper | 60 x 40 cm

56:

SKETCHING – Mountain hiking, sketching during the breaks, what a joy. Pencil, kneaded eraser, sketch book, 15 x 11 cm.

A small sketch with a sharp pencil for me is just as much fun to do as a great mural with a broad brush. We have to move on.

59:

A line drawn over an empty surface, how exciting!

60:

Three sketches of trees, made during a hike, in a booklet of 15 x 11 cm.

On the right: Portrait of Baby Charlie, on commission, 41 x 20 cm. The thoughtful approach.

62:

Do as you like. Pencil, pen, ink, charcoal, biro with correction fluid, like the one at the bottom right. Bottom centre: an expression of the mind.

The washed drawing at the top left I made in Bolivia. Left: design for an etching.

Most of the drawings on these two pages are studies ‘after life’, in ‘short poses’, that is to say a few minutes.

63:

The drawing above is after a photo by Ernst Coppejans, Volkskrant, May 12, 2009; cautious, what do you leave out, what do you elaborate.

64:

Three poses of a few minutes each: put your crayon flat on the paper, make blots for forms and shadows, draw the necessary lines.

65:

Woman Lying Down on a Blanket | pencil on paper | 24 x 32 cm Woman Lying Down with her Hand under her Head | red crayon on paper | 17 x 30.5 cm

66:

A drama took place here, admittedly only in the model’s head, lightning could strike any moment and the drawers were drawing. What an evening!

An extraordinary model on an extraordinary evening, charcoal on paper, each 31 x 24 cm.

67:

Anton Assies in his legendary studio at the Lijnbaansgracht in Amsterdam. At the end of last century you could go there to draw and paint models. The large stage had room for props and beautiful hangings.

Classical music, one record always stuck at a scratch. To everyone's amusement Anton would dash towards his record player in his bedroom. He designed his own costumes and would stroll about, proud as a peacock. When I was on leave from Bolivia, I would run straight to his studio.

Three times Anton Assies, charcoal on paper, 30.5 x 23 cm

68:

At the airport, all flights delayed: I grab for a biro and a piece of paper.

A little while later my husband surprises me with sketching paper and a pencil. Drawn from life, Ezeiza Airport, Buenos Aires, pencil on paper.

69:

Time flies with a pencil and a sketchbook during a train journey. I just make sure not to draw attention to me.

Drawn from life, on the train, pencil and kneaded eraser in a sketchbook of 15 x 11 cm.

70:

BOLIVIA – I went there as a sociologist...

In the mid eighties I went to Bolivia. For more than ten years I worked there as a sociologist in close cooperation with the indigenous population, which brought me to remote parts of the country. I also made drawings and water colours for education materials. People would model for me and help me with suggestions: 'Oh, you should include the duck!' 'Ah no, that's the wrong kind of hat, you have to do that all over again!'

Their own culture, and daily life, that was the basic idea. Sometimes into the middle of the night, in the freezing cold, the participants would critically examine the texts and illustrations. There would be unforgettable comments: 'The droppings of the guinea pig are to round!' The illustrating work aroused my old wish to practice free art and to learn the painting profession at an art academy. That happened at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in La Paz, in the evenings, because of my day job. This classical academy has meant an immeasurable amount to me.

They arranged to have models posing specially for me. When I went home late at night, with my painters' box, in the light of the street lanterns, there was not a happier soul to be found on the streets.

... and I returned as an artist.

P. 70 top: From the series *Usurjak'e (Pregnancy)* | water colour on paper | 20 x 30 cm
Girl Carrying Water, Altiplano, Bolivia | ink on paper | 20.5 x 16 cm

71:

In 2022/23 a few hundred illustrations have been accommodated in the Museo Nacional de Arte in Bolivia. (See my blogs nrs. 16 and 17 at www.gezienvanderiet.nl/blog)

P. 71: *The Tiahuanacu Stadium* | 1991 | acrylic on canvas | 120 x 85 cm

72:

About my work

‘Gezien van de Riet’s work for instance covers almost everything that is possible with charcoal and crayon. (...) The three-dimensional form, the space around it, all is folded together into an assembly of a few lines.’

‘Without a lot of fitting and measuring, but in a single gesture, she summarized in *Judith 2* the physical effort poor Judith had to make to persevere in this pose. Scanning the contours of her model with her eyes, she pressed the little piece of charcoal extra hard onto the paper wherever the outlines made an extra sharp turn or twist. That’s how you get tension in your drawing. Actually, this happens automatically, if you are into the flow. In passing, here and there she put down some blots with the flat side of the charcoal, just enough to make the drawing stand out from the flat surface. This is true mastery. Needless to say that to be able to draw so easily needs a lot of study and training.’

‘A wonderful drawing is Van de Riet’s charcoal drawing *Sitting Woman Seen Half From the Back*. The body rises up in its full, sensual forms from a few charcoal sweeps, the face hardly more than a blot – while the shawl is almost purely linear in its representation. Two different methods of drawing are opposed here, but in such a way that the drawing does not disintegrate, but is welded together in ultimate fashion. A few dots on the shawl, a few lines at the edges of arms and hips and all visual tensions are brought together in harmony – ‘harmonieuein’ is Greek for the clamping together a shipwright does, who bends the planks under enormous tension and fixes them with slats to make the hull. One clamp too few, and the whole thing explodes; one dot or line too few, and the drawing loses its obvious unity.’

‘Harmony, equilibrium, rest, aren’t manifestations of a standstill, but on the contrary the highest form of movement.’

Leo van Heijningen, gallery owner Kunstzaal Van Heijningen Palet,
Het feest van de tekening, 2005, nr. 320.

Judith II | charcoal on paper | 40 x 30 cm *Sitting Woman Seen Half From the Back* | charcoal on paper | 31 x 24 cm

73:

‘Van de Riet very skillfully brings to expression nature and life, in a free and spontaneous manner. Through her innate drawing skill she is to be appreciated as a versatile artist, who handles different techniques simultaneously.’

‘She has absolute sureness in her touch and line drawing. Her sense of proportion allows her to represent the human figure first hand with great mastery.’

Alberto Medina, Director, Escuela de Bellas Artes. Catalogue ‘Gezien van de Riet’, Galería Arte Único, La Paz, Bolivia, 1991.

Woman in the night | pastel on black paper | 29 x 40 cm

74:

‘On these paintings and pastels with tree trunks, branches and crowns, there is always some special natural phenomenon to be seen. Like enigmatically illuminated open places in a forest.’ ‘Van de Riet can draw, as well. Her crayon of a formation of trees roots near Lochem is wonderful.’

Lida Bonnema, KunstKijken in West-Friesland, Noordhollands Dagblad, June 2, 2016.

Ernst van de Wetering

Ernst was a fan of my work. Shortly before his passing away he came to visit me to look at my drawings. I had just had them all framed in passepartouts. There were many and the next day I asked him if it hadn't been too tiring, because of his fragile health. ‘No, it was delicious, inspiring! Great variety, incredible richness in human postures, compositions, a whole population, the play of lines, brilliant! The multiplicity of forms of expression speaks for itself. And also your paintings, like that dune landscape, the clouds: monumentous, daring, those trees. The way you handle nature and the human figure, that deserves attention. If I can do something, just ask, maybe a letter of recommendation?’ I didn't want to burden him with that, in his vulnerable condition. ‘Then just mention I give you all the praise!’ (2021)

The Pit of the White Witches near Lochem | crayon on paper | 28 x 40 cm
Woman Standing | charcoal on paper | 40 x 30 cm

75:

‘Gezien van de Riet shows in her work an unconditional love for the observable beauty and what is more: she knows how to express that in her own way. That results in a poetic realism, firmly based on the non-fictional, inimitable, abstract patterns in nature.’ Rob Møhlmann, Museum Møhlmann, Art Renewal Center 2016, and own website: www.artrenewal.org/Artist/Index/7562

Snowy Branches | distemper and oil on wood | 50 x 60 cm

76:

Horses' Heaven in the Spanish Pyrenees | alkyd and oil on wood | 50 x 70 cm P.

77: At work drawing at the foot of the Spanish Pyrenees.

77-79:

Biography

(...)

80:

Colophon

(...)

Nicolien Mizee (1965) broke through to the general public with the thriller *Moord op de Moestuin* (Murder at the Allotment), and had written before that *En toen kwam moeder met een mes* (And Then Mother Arrived With a Knife) (2003, nominated for the Libris Literature Award). Recently she gathered praise for her autobiographical series *Faxen aan Ger* (Faxes to Ger); for *De kennismaking* (The Introduction) and *De porseleinkast* (The China Cabinet) she

received the Henriëtte Roland Holst Award in 2020; in 2022 *Een licht bewoond eiland* (A Lightly Populated Island) appeared.

Translation NL – EN door Jeroen Strengers.

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