

## De Groene Amsterdammer

About: independent **Dutch** weekly **newsmagazine** published in **Amsterdam** and distributed throughout the **Netherlands**. It is conventionally considered to be one of the four most influential written media in its sector

**weekly circulation 19.446**

### Balls and blocks

At Museum Arnhem, there is a small presentation of the work of Levi van Veluw (1985). On view are a couple of photographs that earned him his first fame, funny and ghostly images of his own head, completely covered in ballpoint pen, covered with hair or sporting an entire miniature Märklin train landscape. There is also a full size bedroom, a dark brown space, every part of which is covered with wooden balls and blocks. A video shows how a human figure, covered from head to toe with balls and blocks, sits waiting in the space, breathing gently. The space, writes of Veluw, is his boy's room at his parents' house; the mathematical order with balls and blocks symbolized my desire for order and the fear of losing control.'

This desire demanded something much greater, and that is what van Veluw has now created in Marres, Maastricht. The entire building has been converted into one installation, *The Relativity of Matter*, a dark universe. Van Veluw has succeeded in constructing it down to the last detail. Whoever enters it, disappears. Any reference to a 'museum' has disappeared, all the outlets, windows, ceilings, etc. have been made invisible, there are no disturbing EXIT signs, there is nothing to hear aside from a gentle mechanical drone; all there is, is this universe of van Veluw, a work that finds its completion in the presence of the visitor.

You have to go to Maastricht to see it, you have to purchase tickets in advance, only two persons are admitted every fifteen minutes, and so it would be handy if I said a little more about what there is to see, but I hesitate with great hesitation, precisely because the immersion-surprise of the spectacle in the darkness is of great class and very powerful. There are no titles, no imposed narrative; there is a succession of dark spaces, the one more impressively designed than the other, and an attempt to explain the effect would, I think, lessen the experience. Van Veluw himself writes that the installation is about laws of nature, about the construction of an alternative, underlying reality. You could say that some of the work has something to do with archiving, with that which is underground, with dark matter, indeed: with coal. You might think that the other part has more to do with abstraction, the magic of geometry, indeed: with science fiction. Hopefully, that is saying very little.

What there is to say, is that this reveals a very impressive level of artistry, that *The Relativity of Matter* is among the best there is to see this year in the Netherlands, and that I was stunned by its sheer vigour. Van Veluw is now considering, so he says, an even larger version, possibly with dancers or actors. I say, give him the

Dutch Pavilion at the next Venice Biennale, if only to make us forget all that shoddy work of this year, and then give him carte blanche at the Dutch Opera.

Koen Kleijn

Levi van Veluw, *The Relativity of Matter*, Marres, Maastricht. Extended until January 17. Tickets to be booked online [marres.org](http://marres.org).