

# playbill

V VI VII ACT VIII

playbill begins 2024 with our eighth act: a screening of a film by Hetty Huisman (1941–2017). Upon graduating from the ceramics department at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in 1962, Huisman soon turned away from the more traditional outcomes of pottery that litter her early practice, and began researching materials and methods that are resultant from the combustion of earth. In this way, she was still busy with the processional shift of wet to baked earth endemic to ceramics, but moved towards examinations of each stage of this process, rather than focusing on the final 'product' itself. These investigations unfolded through installation, video, artist's books and poetry (through which her own handwriting made regular appearances), as well as a publishing imprint she edited called *Void Editions*—the name again a reference to the basics of ceramics, in which vessels are formed in their relation to the interior voids they generate. Additionally, in 1972, she was also the co-founder of the In-Out Center, Amsterdam's first independent artist-run space.

At the time, Huisman's conceptual approach to ceramics—one characterised by an interest in their deconstruction and destruction—was not at home in the Netherlands. This was most notable in 1968 when her inclusion in a survey exhibition on ceramics at the Stedelijk Museum was skipped over, resulting in her adding 'CeragenetiCs' to the end of her name—a contraction of 'ceramics' and 'genesis', a move which meant that her work would no longer be confused as anything other than originating from ceramics.

Between 1975–1978 Huisman frequently spent time in Curaçao, from which point on red clay originating from the Hato Plains would be present in many of her works. This is mostly the case with her sculptural and painted works, but clay eventually also made its way into some of her videos too. Through recording techniques inspired by the firing of a kiln, Huisman explored the so-called 'immateriality' of video art by focusing on physical material and the manipulation of the materiality of film itself. To emphasise this, Huisman would project her video works on specially prepared paper. Coated in graphite, this key element of her practice was developed to have a specific structure that would soften the projected image.

Featured as part of ACT VIII, Huisman's film *Not the First Not the Last Sun Under Your Feet* (1984)

depicts an orangey-brown structured surface that resembles a rugged landscape, a sunrise or the surface of an abstract painting. The video, which proceeds at a very slow pace, is divided into five parts that are each punctuated by the repeated reading of the poem *A Letter to Pyth*, written by Huisman in 1983. Voiced by Moniek Toebosch, the image almost imperceptibly brightens or changes focus through the poem's repeated recitation and can be perceived as a 'moving painting' or 'painted video.'

Accompanying the film, and featured on the playbill, is an image of a rubber stamp made by Huisman, for whom stamps were an important part of her practice. The stamp features

several sentences from the poem *A Letter to Pyth*, which also form the title of the video and which are, characteristically, rendered by her own hand. On her investigations into earth's combustion, Huisman once said, 'Ceramics is the field of binary oppositions. What is organic is burnt to arrive at the inorganic. Earth and air, water and fire, are important factors. Earth is as valuable as heaven, mankind and the gods.' In combining her experimental approach to clay with various analytical processes like mathematics—as present in *A Letter to Pyth*, which is addressed to Pythagoras—Huisman's work is a fortuitous tale about the destruction of earth, and the ways in which we are accounting for this now.

PROGRAMME

8pm  
Introduction to Hetty Huisman

8.10pm—Screening  
Hetty Huisman  
Not the First Not the Last Sun Under Your Feet  
1984, 48:22min

IMAGE Hetty Huisman, *Een brief aan Pyth, dus niet aan Jan en Klaas*, postcard and rubber stamp, published by Time Based Arts, Amsterdam, 1984.

