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N.B : The article was written in 2009 but the *Dictionnaire* is a real *magnus opus* and took six years to complete (over 1600 collaborators in countless countries) and is really impressive. In my blog (under events) I have an entry about the book and also more information at [www.desfemmes.fr](http://www.desfemmes.fr) . Please also note that this is an unedited version of this entree, in anticipation of the official English translations and the online version of the volumes.

## WOMEN FILMMAKERS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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As in most other countries until the 1970s filmmaking in the Netherlands was by and large a male enterprise. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century this picture has changed completely. In all types of cinema women are well represented and produce interesting and award winning films.

### HISTORY

In 1911 **Caroline van Dommelen** (1874-1957) was the first female film director in the Netherlands. She wrote and co-directed the film, *The Exiles (De Bannelingen)* in which she also acted. During the 1910s Dutch feature film production was considerable, dominated by Maurits Binger's studio Filmfabriek Hollandia (1912-1923). There were no other women directors during this period, but Filmfabriek Hollandia's leading actress, **Annie Bos** (1886-1975) became Holland's first film diva. She was immensely popular for her natural style of acting, and was therefore called 'the Dutch Asta Nielsen'. Annie Bos' career ended in the 1920s when she was considered too old for the screen.

In the silent period **Adrienne Solser** (1873-1943) was the only actress (initially famous in variety theatre) who started her own film company Eureka (1924-1928) to produce and (co-)direct her own films. In these films, such as *Bet, Queen of the Jordaan (Bet, koningin van de Jordaan, 1924)* Solser plays Bet, a woman of the people with a golden heart, who lives in the working class district in Amsterdam, de Jordaan. The films are farces full of comic acts and sketches. Solser usually accompanied the film projections herself with life performances of explications, commentaries and songs.

After these exceptional female voices during the silent cinema period, for a long time no women directors participated in Dutch film productions. **Nouchka van Brakel** (b. 1940) is the first female film director in the Netherlands after the 1920s. She was the first woman who graduated from the Dutch Film Academy (Nederlandse Film en Televisie Academie) that started in 1958. In the 1960s she directed several documentaries and two short features, *Sabotage* (1966) and *Baby in the Tree (Baby in de boom, 1969)*. In the 1970s her feature films *The Debut (Het Debuut, 1977)* and *A Woman like Eve (Een vrouw als Eva, 1979)* were commercially very successful. The latter film features **Monique van de Ven** (b.1952), one of Holland's most famous actresses who was discovered in Paul Verhoeven's *Turkish Delight* (1973). In 2008 Monique van de Ven directed herself the film *Summer Heat (Zomerhitte)*. Later works of Nouchka van Brakel include *The Cool Lakes of Death (Van de Koele Meren des Doods, 1982)* with actress **Renee Soutendijk** (b. 1957) in a versatile role as the tragic Hedwig Marga de Fontayne, the main character in a famous Dutch nineteenth century novel

by Frederic van Eeden; *Aletta Jacobs, the Highest Ambition* (*Aletta Jacobs, het hoogste streven*, 1995) about the life of Aletta Jacobs, the first Dutch girl that went to high school and university and became the first female doctor; and a documentary about Mary, *Ave Maria* (2006).

Since the 1970s and especially in the 1980s an interesting generation of female directors started to mark their presence in the Dutch film landscape, sometimes with acclaimed national and international successes. **Marleen Gorris** (b. 1948) won the Golden Calf (Dutch Film Award for best film) in 1982 with her controversial film *A Question of Silence* (*De stille rond Christine M.*), a film about three ordinary women who kill the owner of a women's clothing boutique. And in 1996 she won the Oscar for best foreign film for *Antonia's Line* (*Antonia*), a portrait of three generations of independent women. Antonia is played by Dutch film diva **Willeke van Ammelrooy** (b. 1944), who since her breakthrough in Fons Rademaker's *Mira* (1971) has had an intense acting career and has also directed a feature film *The Butterfly tips up the cat* (*De vlinder tilt de kat op*, 1994) and television drama. Marleen Gorris also worked in Hollywood and directed among others episodes of the series *The L-World* (2007).

This first generation of Dutch female directors also include **Heddy Honigman** (b.1951 in Peru), who has been living and working in the Netherlands since 1978. She directed feature films, such as *Mindshadows* (*Hersenschimmen*, 1988) and *Goodbye* (*Tot ziens*, 1995). Her documentaries include *Metal and Melancholy* (*Metaal en Melancholie*, 1994), *The Underground Orchestra* (*Het ondergronds orkest*, 1998) en *Forever* (2006). **Digna Sinke** (b. 1949) and **Annette Apon** (b. 1949) also have made both remarkable documentaries and feature film. Annette Apon's filmed Virginia Woolf's famous book in *The Waves* (*Golven*, 1982) and Digna Sinke's made *Belle van Zuylen* (1993), on the life of Belle van Zuylen, known in France as Madame de Charrière who lived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 1990s another generation of female directors started to make films. **Frouke Fokkema** (b. 1952) impressed with *Vigour* (*Kracht*) which won the Golden Calf for best Dutch feature in 1990, and with *It will never be Spring* (*Wildgroei*, 1994). She also wrote the script of *Suzy Q* (1999), the remarkable debut of director Martin Koolhoven and acclaimed actress **Carice van Houten** (b. 1967), who became famous in Paul Verhoeven's *Blackbook* (2006). **Mijke de Jong** (b. 1959) has been directing since her debut *Squatters Delight* (*In Krakende Welstand*) in 1990 and powerful second feature *Love Hurts* (*Hartverscheurend*, 1993). She won several award among others for *Bluebird* (2004; script by **Helena van der Meulen**, b. 1957), a film about a girl that is teased at school and *Stages* (*Tussenstand*, 2007) about a divorced couple who meet regularly about their son. **Maria Peters** (b. 1958) and **Esmé Lammers** (b. 1958) are known for their excellent children's movies, respectively *The Purse Snatcher* (*De Tasjesdief*, 1995) and *Long Live the Queen* (*Lang Leve de Koningin*, 1995). **Ineke Smits** (b. 1960) has made documentaries and fiction films, among which the internationally acclaimed feature *Magonia* (2001). Remarkable actresses of this generation are Anneke Blok (b. 1960), Johanna ter Steege (b.1961) and Marieke Heebink (b.1962).

In the 1990s Dutch television started to produce so called 'television films', low budget films made for television, usually grouped around a (very loosely defined) theme such as 'No More Heroes'. The television films created new opportunities for many (female) talents. **Paula van der Oest** (b. 1965), **Nicole van Kilsdonk** (b. 1965), **Simone van Dusseldorp** (b.1967) and **Nanouk Leopold** (b. 1968) have made remarkable television films at the beginning of productive careers. *Coma* (1994) was Paula van der Oest's first film that immediately won a Golden Calf. Her film *Hotel Paraiso* (*Zus & Zo*, 2001) was nominated for an Oscar; *Swimmers in the morning* (*Ochtendzwemmers*, 2001; script by **Mieke de Jong** (b. 1957)) is Nicole van Kilsdonk's refreshing musical comedy about a group of swimmers. *Deep* (*Diep*, 2005) is Simone van Dusseldorp's intensely filmed coming of age story of a teenage girl whose parents have divorced. Nanouk Leopold made among others *Îles Flottantes* (2001) for

television, a film about three young women who let themselves be carried on the floating steam of life. Her film *Guernsey* won several awards and was selected for the Film Festival of Cannes in 2005. **Eugenie Jansen's** (b.1965) *Sleeping Rough (Tussenland, 2002)* was also made for television and her film *Calimucho*(2008) was much appreciated by critics and public. **Dana Nechustan** (b.1970) has made very interesting films for television such as *Necrocam* (2001) and *Offers* (2005), and the beautiful and witty television series *Dunya and Desi* (2002) and *Annie MG* (2009). Her films *Nightrun* (Nachtrit, 2006) and *Dunya and Desi* (2008) equally prove her talent.

Besides the already mentioned Carice van Houten actresses of this new generation determine in important ways contemporary Dutch cinema: **Monic Hendrickx** (b. 1966), **Rifka Lodeizen** (b. 1972), **Ricky Koolen** (b. 1972) **Halina Reijn** (b. 1975), **Thekla Reuten** (b. 1975), **Katja Schuurman** (b. 1975), **Tamar van den Dop** (b. 1970) and **Kim van Kooten** (b. 1974) should be mentioned. Monic Hendrickx gave an excellent performance in *Nynke* (Pieter Verhoeff, 2001), a film about the life of Nynke van Hichtum, writer and wife of Dutch socialist leader Pieter Jelles Toelstra at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tamar van den Dop has also directed film such as *Blind* (2007). Kim van Kooten is besides actress an excellent screenwriter who has written among others the script for the popular film *Love is All (Alles is Liefde, Joram Lürsen, 2007)*. **Maryam Hassouni** (b. 1985) and **Eva van de Wijdeven** (b. 1985) are *Dunya and Desi* in the serie and film with the same name which launched there acting careers in promising ways.

Among the more experimental film makers **Barbara Meter** (b. 1939), **Babeth van Loo** (b. 1948), **Moniek Toebosch** (b. 1948), **Marijke van Warmerdam** (b. 1959), **Clara van Gool** (b. 1960) and **Fiona Tan** (b. 1966) are noticeable. **Esther Rots's** (b. 1972) short features *Play with me (Speel met me, 2001)* and *I Originate (Ik ontspruit, 2003)* were selected for Cannes and *Exercises in Dialogue (Dialogoefening, 2005)* won a Golden Calf. *Can Go through Skin (Kan door huid heen, 2009)* is her equally remarkable feature film debut. In documentary filmmaking salient films made by women include the work of **Aliona van der Horst** (b. 1970), who won the Silver Wolf award at the International Documentary Festival (IDFA) for her intense portrait of the Russian poet *Boris Ryzhy* (2008, with **Maasja Ooms**, b. 1967); **Sunny Bergman** (b. 1973) who created controversy with her film about the beauty industry *The People versus the Beauty Industry (Beperkt Houdbaar, 2007)*; and **Jiska Rickels** (b. 1977). Her film *4 Elements* opened the IDFA festival in 2006 and was acclaimed for its audacious and poetic filming of the fight of men against the elements. This overview is not all comprising. Many other women make films in the Netherlands at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF EXPRESSION

The first generation of women directors were true pioneers. Their films took often an explicit female point of view and the vibes of the politics of feminism the 1970s and 1980s are present. Nouchka van Brakel and Marleen Gorris are most direct representatives of this generation's concerns and work. Some of their films, such as *A Woman like Eve* and *A Question of Silence* are therefore also documents of their time and mark an important phase in women's liberation. The generations that came later have been able to take advantage of these fights in that they could make all type of films and not necessarily be concerned with political issues, choosing from all ranges of stories and point of views. Sometimes the theme of their films and approach are clearly feminine. In *Deep* for instance, all is seen from the point of view of a teenage girl who is confused about the discovery of her sexuality. All images are shot very close, the spectator can touch and feel what it is to be a teenage girl who wants to loose her virginity, is scared and fascinated at the same time. But at other moments gender does not play an important role. In *Nachtrit*, for instance, Dana Nechustan presents a story of

a cab driver, placed against the background of the so-called cab war in 2000 in Amsterdam. *Boris Ryzhy*, deals with the tragic life of a poet and paints a very strong portrait of the Russian perestrojka generation. And *4 Elements* presents very masculine worlds of fire fighters in Siberian woods, fishermen in heavy weather in Alaska, mineworkers in Germany and cosmonauts who prepare for a mission in the International Space Station. Sometimes, however, an explicit feminist point of view is raised again. Sunny Bergman's *The People versus the Beauty Industry* is a case in point. In this film Bergman undertakes a personal and shocking investigation into the American beauty industry of plastic surgery and photoshoped models that dictate new and impossible beauty norms. Although production budgets in the Netherlands are never high and not always easy to assemble, contemporary female directors in the Netherlands seem to have the opportunity to express them selves creatively in many different ways. That this is not a self-evident fact can be seen in the many stories of struggles of women in the past that have found there way to the screen in films made by female directors and/or performed by contemporary actresses.

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