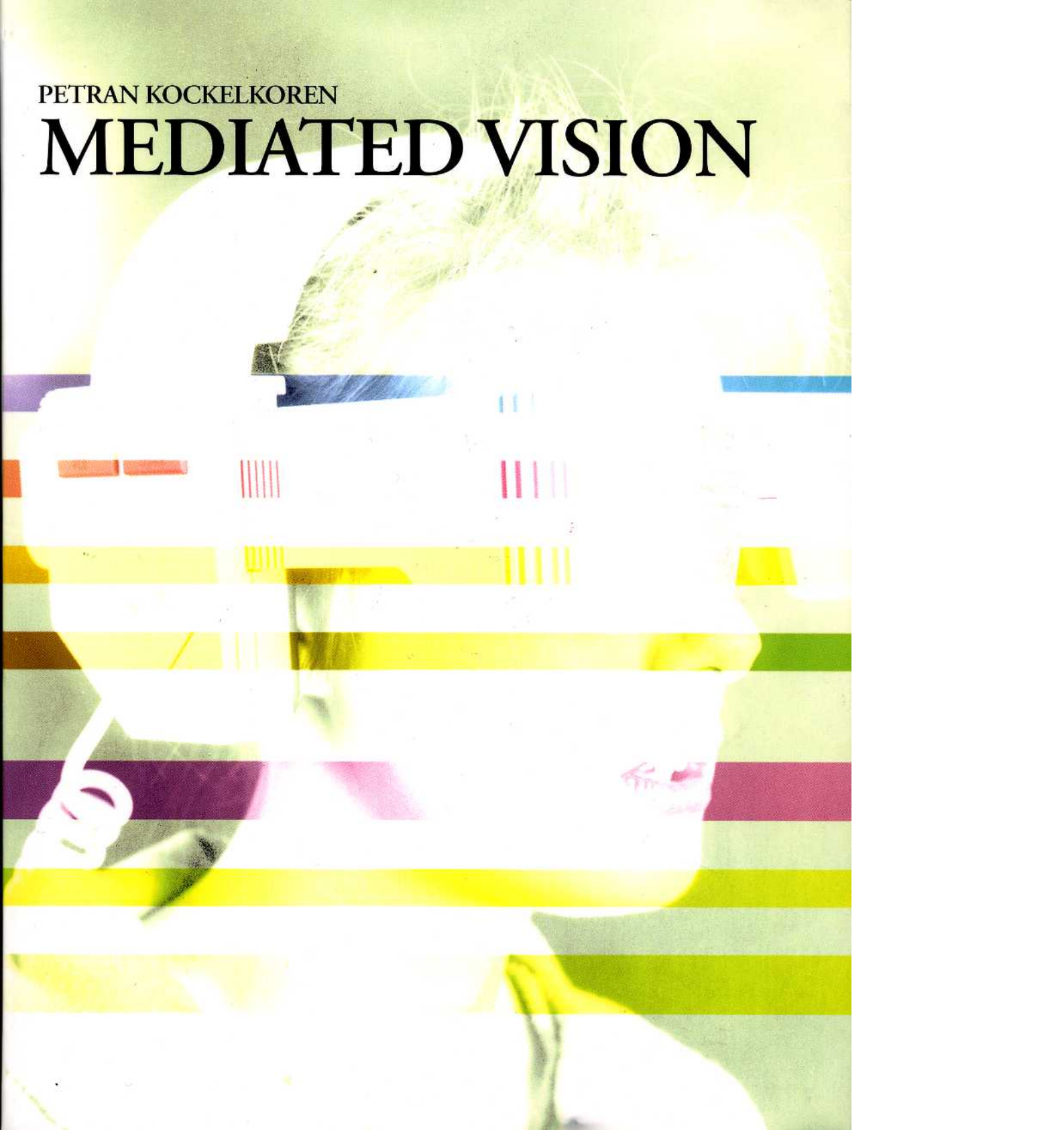


PETRAN KOCKELKOREN

MEDIATED VISION





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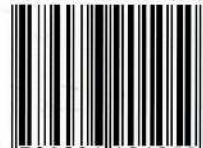
PETER SONDEREN – THE SUBLIME

JEROEN VAN WESTEN

PETRAN KOCKELKOREN –
THE ARTIST AS RESEARCHER

WOUTER HOOIJMANS

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The work of the landscape artist Jeroen van Westen centres on an examination of the relation between nature and culture. He sees the history of a particular landscape as consisting of various stages, with traces being left that are simultaneously present in different layers in the landscape. For a long time it was nature that shaped culture in the history of landscape, but man has gradually cultivated nature to the extent that nature has become completely subservient to culture and is no longer free. The next stage sees culture reevaluating nature and wanting to give it space again. Van Westen defines the new layer in the landscape history that is then created as 'new culture'. His work concentrates on this latter stage. The basic idea of his work is that the landscape is 'legible': "a landscape tells how the culture that has created it relates to the nature in which and whereof the landscape is constructed."

Van Westen graduated from the St Joost Academy in Breda in 1978. He repeatedly stays for a long period in a particular landscape, analysing the different layers in its history. Van Westen then produces a unique, site-specific work of art that interprets the relationship between nature and culture in that landscape's past and present and furthermore presents developments for the future. The process of creating a visual work is an integral part of the artwork itself. The form of Van Westen's works varies, depending on the landscape concerned. His pieces consist of permanent constructions, temporary installations, performances and books, as well as combinations of these.

The project *OerIJ – Voorbij het verleden* (2004–2005) is typical of his work. Together with team members Gerco de Ruijter, Ton van Vliet and Peter de Ruyter, Van Westen conducted visual and spatial research into the OerIJ, an estuary that was intensively populated between 2,500 and 400 B.C. The aim of the project was to visualise the location of the estuary, resulting in a number of panoramas. Another example of 'new culture' is the stream in the project *Was getekend, de Runde* (1996–2001). Commissioned by, among others, the Northern Region Rural Redevelopment Committee, Van Westen and his team, instead of making the existing seepage in a former bog in Drenthe form a new stream in the historical bed, determined a new loop of the stream on the basis of how the area's inhabitants remembered the watercourse, as well as their wishes and proposals.

In other works, particularly his installations, Van Westen investigates sensory perception (*Suspensie*, 2000) as well as the instruments he uses (*Birdscape 1* and *2*, 2001) and the possible future of the landscape (*VerPlaatsEn*). He shows how man intervenes in natural processes, but sometimes also allows nature to go its own way. Jeroen van Westen turns intervening in a landscape into a meaningful cultural expression.

