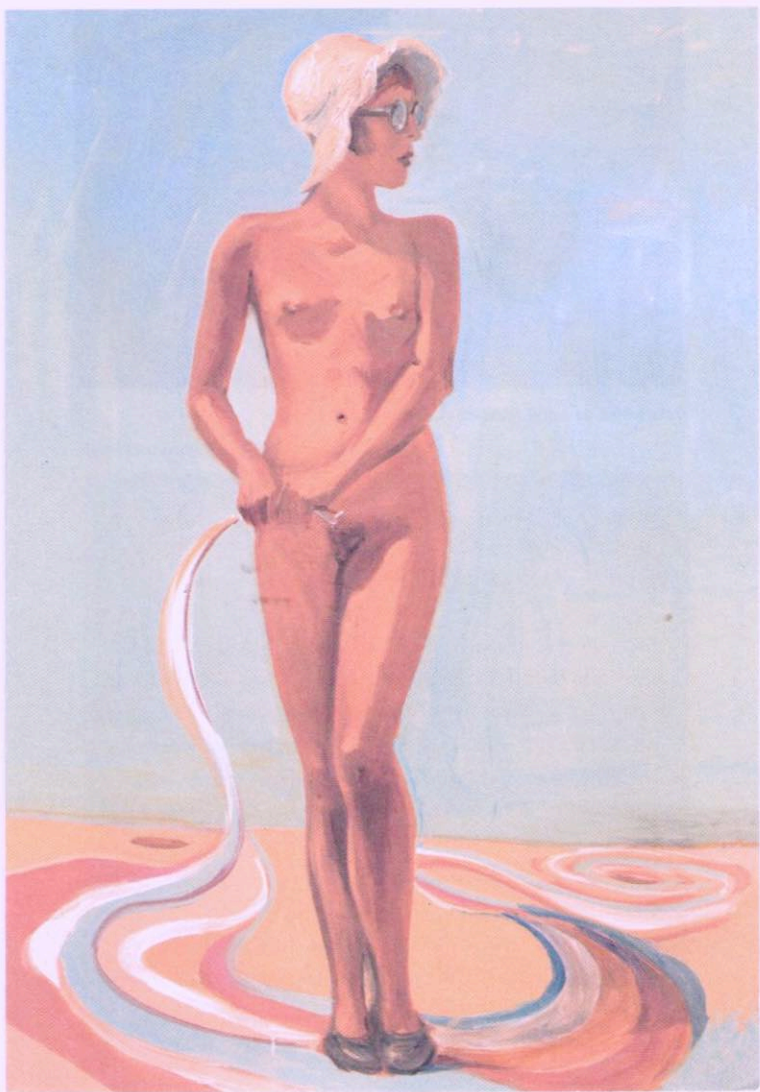


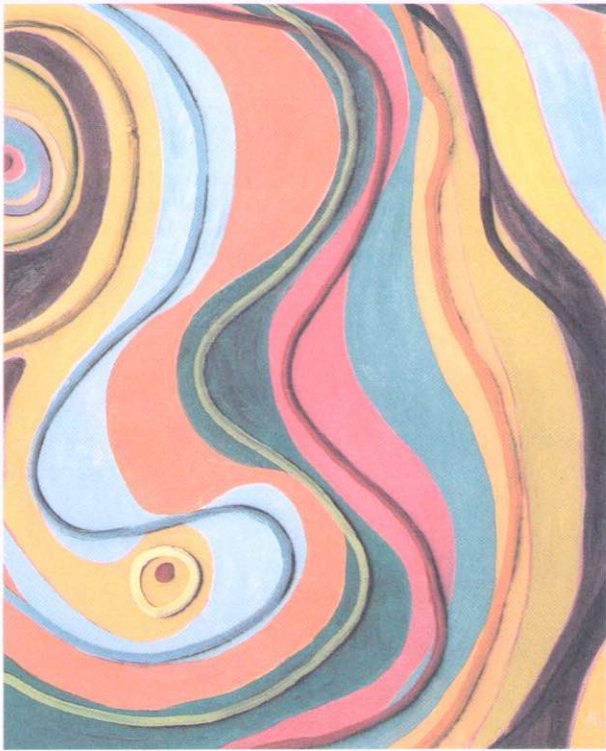
# De Pont

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*Interior No. 64* 2000 Sanders collection, Amsterdam

## Anton Henning

### *Surpassing Surplus*

September 14, 2002 through January 12, 2003

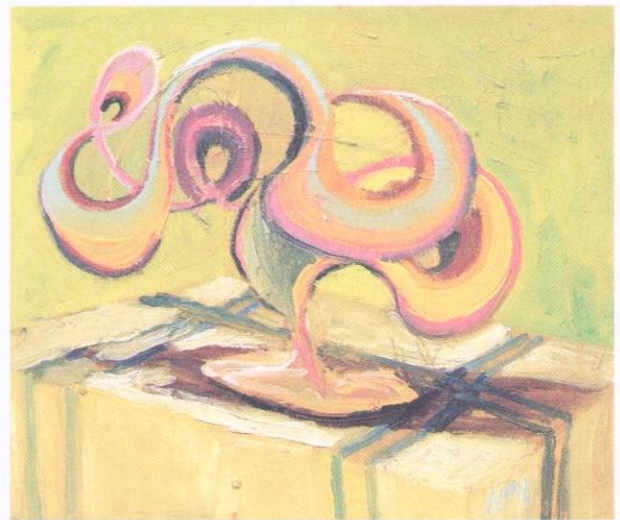
Until now, scarcely any work by Anton Henning has been shown in the Netherlands. Yet international concern for his paintings and installations has grown recently. Henning is regarded as one of the younger artists in Germany who, in the wake of established celebrities such as Richter, Polke and Baselitz, approach painting with new verve. This does not mean that he rebels against his older colleagues, but that he does take the liberty of adopting his own singular stance. That stance is characterized by great vitality and a nearly eclectic use of all sorts of images, motifs and visual quotations.

For De Pont, Henning's work constitutes an unusual addition to a number of distinct painterly viewpoints represented in its collection by now.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue containing a text by Dominic van den Boogerd.

*Surpassing Surplus* resembles an overview of the wealth of possibilities still offered by painting. The German artist Anton Henning (Berlin 1964) seems to maneuver these possibilities with zeal, using a wide range of subject matter. In 1998 and 1999 he exhibited, in the traveling exhibition *Too much of a good thing...*, the considerable diversity of his work, which involves practically every technique and discipline – painting, drawing, photography, collage, objects and installations. Abstraction and figuration are used interchangeably and sometimes literally converge. Still lifes of flowers become flamboyant arabesques, interiors are painted in exuberant hues, landscapes and nudes are quaintly realistic; at the same time, all of these display Henning's unmistakable handwriting and use of vivid patterns. Often he paints multiple versions of an image or allows certain images to recur as a 'painting within a painting'. A frequently used motif is the 'Henning': an

*Blumenstilleben No. 74* 2001





Tanz 2001 Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main

elegant propeller form that appears in many paintings as an object, decoration or as jewelry. It is the hallmark, so to speak, of an Anton Henning image.

Many of Henning's paintings allude to the work of other artists. His fascination with the nineteenth-century painter Gustave Courbet can be seen, for instance, in the work *La Rencontre* (1996), and *Interior No. 83* (2001) is a free variation on Van Gogh's bedroom. Henning finds his examples not only in 'official' art history but also among photographs of German nudist associations (*Tanz* 2001 and *Spiel* 2001), and his painted *Pin-ups* are reminiscent of the 'kitsch paintings' of Francis Picabia. Such references are employed by him with intent and irony. *Mein Vater, mein Richter* (1994) and *Polke-Würstchen auf Palermo-Tischdecke* (1993) are playful visual quotes from other well-known fellow artists. In Henning's hands Polke's famous painting *Höhere Wesen befahlen...* (1968) becomes a partially painted-over Van Gogh portrait: *Befehl ist Befehl* (1998). Nonetheless, his objective is not to render a painterly pun but rather to focus on the sheer delight of painting. This can be sensed in Henning's work. Color and line execution betray a skillful touch

and form the essence of the work. Particularly in the abstract paintings (*Interiors*) Henning attains fascinating results with his compositions of meandering bands of color and whirling patterns that resemble *trompe l'oeil* painting. With their eddying patterns, such paintings bring to mind the 'psychedelic' interiors of the seventies and convey an entirely personal realm of color and movement.

This sense of hallucination is equally strong with the 'lounge' works, rooms that the artist furnishes, carpets, wallpapers and decorates with paintings. In recent years he has produced a variety of these 'lounges'. Not only does the 'lounge' serve as a complete spatial context for Henning's paintings; it also functions as 'the modern interior' in countless depictions of his. That gives rise to a peculiar sort of chemistry. At De Pont as well, Anton Henning is constructing a 'lounge' as a present-day *Gesamtkunstwerk*. It is a spatial interpretation of his paintings: colorful, sensual and slightly over the top.

Interior No. 93 2001

