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NIASD Newsletter December 2007

1. Introduction

We are happy to inform you about the activities which have recently taken place in the Netherlands Institute for Academic Studies in Damascus (NIASD).

2. Institutional & Organizational

NIASD 2008 Year Plan finalized and submitted (23 September 2007)

On the 23th of September, the NIASD finalized its 2008 year plan and sent it to Leiden University. Through that university, the plan was subsequently submitted to the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Visit deputy director NIASD to Leiden University and to the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (12 October 2007)

NIASD deputy director Mr. Taco van der Zwaag visited Leiden University and the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science on the 12th of October to talk about current affairs regarding the NIASD as well as its 2008 year plan. On the 6th of December 2007, Leiden University informed the NIASD that a positive subsidy decision for 2008 had been received from the ministry.

NIASD present at NWIB board meeting and Institutes' Day in Leiden (23 November 2007)

NIASD director Mrs. Astrid Rijbroek was present at the NWIB board meeting in Leiden, The Netherlands, on the 23rd of November. The NWIB institutes are six Dutch institutes abroad, including the ones in Cairo, Rome and Athens, which are set up and financed by a consortium of six Dutch universities (see also: www.nwib.nl). The NIASD, the NIHA in Ankara and the NIMAR in Rabat are three so-called NIB institutes, which are financed by the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and which do not belong to the

NWIB structure. Nevertheless, the NWIB board kindly invites the directors of these three NIB institutes to attend its board meeting.

After the NWIB board meeting, the yearly Institutes' Day took place at Leiden University. At the Institutes Day, the Dutch institutes abroad present themselves to Dutch students, scholars and other interested persons. This year Mrs. Kim Duistermaat, director of the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC), gave a presentation on possibilities for co-operation between the Dutch institutes in the Mediterranean region. Preceding her presentation, there were two lectures about the importance of the Dutch institutes in the Mediterranean region, delivered by — respectively — prof.dr. E.J. Zürcher of Leiden University and dr. L.J. Roborgh, the Director-General for Higher Education, Professional Education and Science at the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.

Courtesy Visit to dr. Aqeel Mahfoudh, the new Director International Relations of the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education (2 December 2007)

NIASD director Astrid Rijbroek visited dr. Aqeel Mahfoudh, who recently became Director International Relations at the Syrian Ministry of Higher Education. In that capacity dr. Mahfoudh is the official contact person of the NIASD in Syria.

3. Science and Education

Dutch Lecture Series in Aleppo (29 October – 3 November 2007)

Upon the request of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus, the NIASD organized a Dutch lecture series in Aleppo on the occasion of 400 years Dutch Consulate in Aleppo. Each lecture was followed by comments from a Syrian counterpart, after which there was time for questions from the public. In total seven lectures were delivered at the 'Cultural Department in Aleppo', a governmental cultural facility. Simultaneous translation into Arabic or English was provided during each lecture, through power point projection or orally with head phone sets.

Unfortunately, due to family circumstances, the first Dutch lecturer — Archaeologist prof.dr. Peter Akkermans of Leiden University — was unable to come to Aleppo. His Syrian counterpart, dr. Hamido Hamade, professor of Archaeology and Assyriology at Aleppo University, delivered a lecture in his place. He focused on the work of prof.dr. Peter Akkermans at the archaeological site Tell Sabi Abyad in northern Syria and on his important publication 'The Archaeology of Syria' (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

The next day, Tuesday the 30th of October, dr. Maurits van den Boogert, of Brill Academic Publishers in Leiden, delivered the lecture 'The Dutch Consulate in Aleppo in the 17th and 18th Centuries'. This lecture dealt with the consulate's pre-modern history, with a particular emphasis on what the Dutch merchants and consuls at the time knew about the Ottoman society in Aleppo, about Islamic law and about their legal status as foreigners in the Ottoman empire. Van den Boogert's lecture was commented on by dr. Mahmoud Heretani, former lecturer at the University of Aleppo.

On Wednesday, dr. Nikolaos van Dam, Ambassador of The Netherlands in Indonesia, presented, in Arabic, 'A personal journey to Aleppo, Bilad al-Sham and the Syrian Arab Republic'. Apart from a personal account of the lecturer's experiences in Syria, reflecting his life long personal and academic fascination for Syria, this lecture dealt with a number of political issues, including the differences between actual state and ethnic boundaries in the region, Arabism, Islamic fundamentalism and different types of colonialism. Former Syrian Minister of Industry, and Director-General of the Arab Center for Strategic Studies in Damascus, dr. Issam al-Zaim, commented on Van Dam's lecture. On the 15th of December 2007, Syrian new agencies announced the sad news that dr. Issam al-Zaim died from a heart attack; our thoughts are with his family and loved ones.



Thursday the 1st of November, the floor was given to dr. Marcel Kurpershoek (on the picture, left), presently ambassador of The Netherlands in Turkey. His lecture dealt with the lives and works of early European travellers in the region, like Gertrude Bell, Glubb Pasha, T.E. Lawrence and Max von Oppenheim. Much of what these people described as passionate observers remains valid and pertinent to the drama that is unfolding every day in the region. Apart from political observations, their works contain

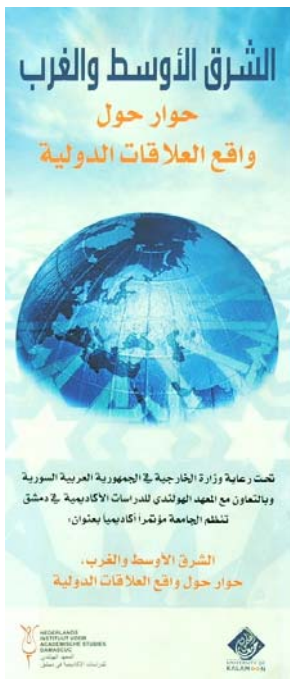
often poignant tales of personal struggles, which bring the age to life with a freshness and directness that cannot be rivaled by ordinary history books. Dr. Hamido Hamade (on the picture, right), professor of Archaeology and Assyriology at Aleppo University, commented on Kurpershoek's lecture.

On Friday the 2nd of November, two lectures took place. The first lecture, delivered by prof.dr. Jan Just Witkam (picture, on the right), professor of Paleography and Codicology at Leiden University, covered the manuscripts that Jacobus Golius (1596-1667) collected in the city of Aleppo and the wider region, and which he brought to Leiden. These manuscripts, many of which are unique copies of scientific Arabic texts, are preserved in the collection of the library of Leiden University. Commenting on this lecture, dr. Mustafa Mawaldi (on the picture, left), head of the Institute for the History of Arabic Science of the University of Aleppo, underlined the importance of these works and of the efforts to keep them available for continuous study.



The second lecture, titled ‘Perceptions of Islam in the West’ was delivered by dr. Maurits Berger, Senior Research Fellow at ‘Clingendael’ - Netherlands Institute for International Relations, in The Hague. Dr. Berger discussed various elements that constitute a general fear amongst Westerners of Islam coming as a tsunami in their direction. Dr. Mahmoud Akkam, Mufti of Aleppo, commented on his lecture.

On Saturday the 3rd of November prof.dr. Fred Leemhuis, professor of Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of Groningen University, gave the last lecture of the lecture series. Starting points for his reflections on the completeness, the clarity and the uniformity of the text on the Qur’an included a recent publication by C. Luxenberg on the Syriac origin of the Qur’an, and the discovery of rather late Qur’anic texts in the Dakhla Oasis, Egypt. The Vice Dean of the Sharia Faculty of the University of Damascus, dr. Imad Addin Ar-Rashid, gave comments on Leemhuis’ lecture.



Academic Conference ‘The Middle East and the West – Dialogues and Perspectives on International Relations’ (4 November 2007)

In co-operation with the Faculty of International Relations and Diplomacy of Kalamoon University, the NIASD arranged for the participation of two Dutch speakers at the Academic Conference ‘The Middle East and the West. Dialogues and Perspectives on International Relations’. This conference was attended by faculty students, as well as by civil servants of the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Using the analytical models which are applied to regions elsewhere in the world for predicting problems related to the influx of large numbers of refugees, dr. Reinoud Leenders (picture on the right) of the Department of Political Science of the University of Amsterdam, outlined the relevant factors in this field and analyzed the situation of Iraqi refugees in Syria. Dr. Maurits Berger (on the picture below sitting at the right end of the table), Senior Research Fellow at the Netherlands Institute of International Relations ‘Clingendael’ in The Hague, discussed shifts in Western policies



towards the Middle East and their reception locally. Refraining from action and taking action are both met with suspicion. One could argue that identity issues and gut feelings towards each other are at work here, which should be overcome. Dr. Berger also said Arabs and Arab nations should reach out to the world with their own ideas and action plans.

Workshop 'FACE2FACE – Interviewing Across Cultures' (25-28 November 2007)

In co-operation with the Department of Media of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of Damascus University, the NIASD organized a four day workshop for sixteen Syrian and two Dutch students of journalism. This



workshop, titled 'FACE2FACE - Interviewing Across Cultures', focused on interview techniques and explored insights of intercultural communication theories to see where these insights may complement classic journalistic standards for conducting interviews, for the situation of an interview between two people from different cultures. The workshop was delivered by a team of four teachers: dr. Loay Al Ziebi (Damascus

University), Anke van Haastrecht, M.A. (Groningen University), Marion Oskamp, M.A. (MediaMind) and Youssef Azghari, M.A. (Avans University in Breda and Den Bosch).

During the workshop theories and exercises, also in front of a camera, were mixed in an attractive manner, creating an exciting learning experience.

On the 25th of November 2007, after the opening by Prof. Ferial Mouhanna, head of the Department of Media, FACE2FACE started with a series of high speed interviews, by way of introducing the participants



and teachers to one another. After that, Mr. Youssef Azghari delivered a lecture on identity and diversity, in relation to the US and European immigration policies. The 26th of November was dedicated to the journalistic perspective on interviewing. After a theoretical part, which positioned the journalistic interview and covered the journalistic standards for interviewing, the participants had to exercise and to analyze the exercises of their fellow participants. On the 27th of November, the focus was on intercultural

communication. Hofstede's theories on cultural models were covered and video materials with examples of problematic intercultural situations were shown, next to various televised interviews, including a part of the interview by Joris Luyendijk with the boss of Al Jazeera. Also during this day, participants had to do





interview exercises which were analyzed afterwards. The FACE2FACE programme was finalized with an integrated workshop on the 28th of November, delivered by all teachers together, and combining the perspectives of journalism and intercultural communication. In the days following the FACE2FACE workshop, teacher Anke van Haastrecht of the Department of Language and Communication of the Faculty of Arts of

the University of Groningen visited the Department of Media of Damascus University and talked with Prof. Ferial Mouhanna about possible future exchanges.

Promotion Dutch Higher Education: Study in Holland - presentations at six Syrian Universities (21-28 October 2007)

In the month of October, the NIASD organized presentations at six universities in Syria about studying in The Netherlands. During these presentations NUFFIC CD-roms with complete overviews of the study programmes were demonstrated and distributed. Apart from information about courses, information was provided about scholarships for which Syrian students are eligible. The first presentation was delivered at Damascus University on the 21st of October. In the week after that presentations followed at Aleppo University, Ba'ath University in Homs, Tishreen University in Lattakia, the University of Kalamoon (about 90 km north of Damascus) and the Arab International University (about 40 km south of Damascus). At these presentations, representatives of the NIASD answered individual questions as well.



Promotion Dutch Higher Education: educational fairs 'Academia Syria' (Aleppo, 18-20 November 2007) and 'JETE' (Amman, Jordan, 6-8 December 2007)

The NIASD was present at two educational fairs which aim to provide local students with information about studying abroad: the Academia Syria fair in Aleppo, Syria, and 'JETE' in Amman, Jordan. At the two fairs information was provided about study programmes in Holland and about available scholarships.

Our presence at the JETE fair in Amman was coordinated with the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Jordan. It marks a further step in the regionalization of NIASD's Study in Holland promotional activities. Earlier this year, information packages with NUFFIC materials were sent to all major universities in Jordan and Lebanon.

Three Dutch interns at the NIASD (September 2007 – January 2008)

In September three Dutch interns started their internships at the NIASD. Rahmetallah Badwi, of the Technische Hogeschool in The Hague, did research on the possibilities for creating online access to the NIASD library catalogue. Nicky Vinken, who just finished his bachelor degree in Arabic Language & Cultures at Utrecht University, participated in the daily work of the institute and helped during the Study in Holland presentations at six Syrian universities and with the organization of the Dutch Lecture Series and Dutch Film Week in Aleppo. Jacqueline Boer, of the Hogeschool Rotterdam, will stay until the end of January 2008. So far Jacqueline helped with designing the 'FACE2FACE' workshop and the opening of the exhibition of Theo de Feyter, as well as with preparations for the NIASD Film Programme 2008.

NIASD present at the study abroad fair 'Buitenlandmanifestatie' of the Hogeschool and University of Amsterdam (10 October 2007)

The NIASD was present at the so-called 'Buitenlandmanifestatie' of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (HvA) and the University of Amsterdam (UvA), which took place on the 10th of October at the premises of the Hogeschool of Amsterdam. The goal of this fair was to present Dutch students with information about studying or doing internships abroad.



Archaeological categorization research at the NIASD by dr. Bram van As and mr. Loe Jacobs (19-28 October 2007)

During the month of October dr. Bram van As and mr. Loe Jacobs, of the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University, stayed at the NIASD and made a categorization of pottery fragments found at the Tell

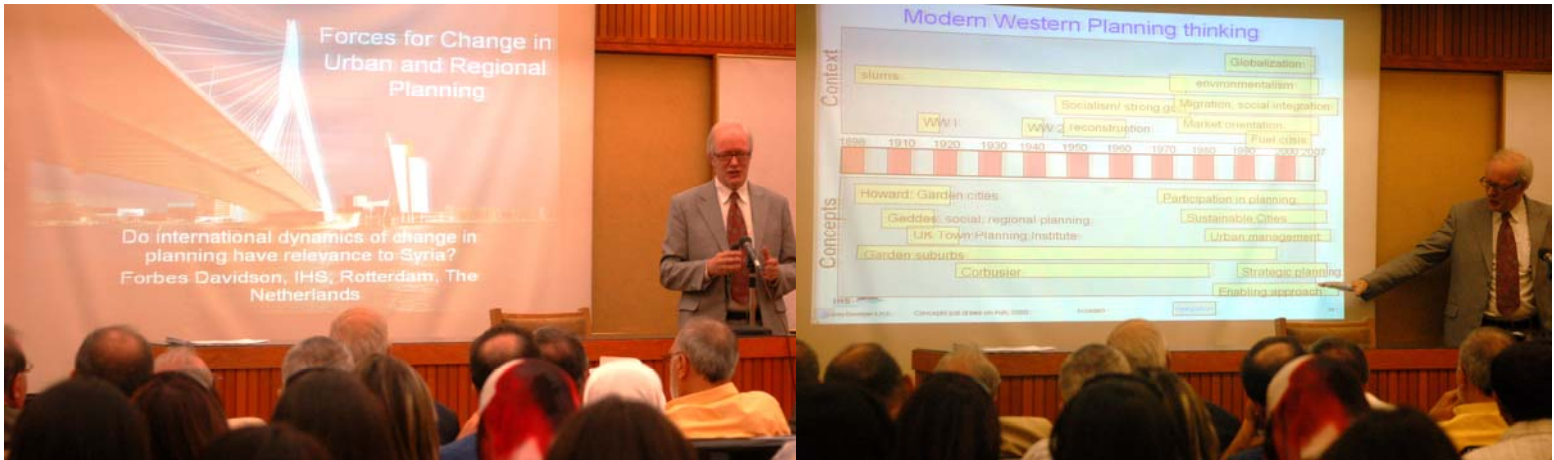
Sabi Abyad excavation site in northern Syria. The yearly excavations at that site are led by prof.dr. Peter Akkermans.

Two courses Dutch delivered at the NIASD (18 September – 4 November 2007)

In the period of September until November, the NIASD delivered two 40 hour courses of Dutch at the beginners level, for two groups of in total 15 students. New courses of Dutch are scheduled for January 2008.

Lectures by Mr. Forbes Davidson of IHS, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, at the Faculty of Architecture of Damascus University: 'Forces for Change in Urban and Regional Planning' (1 October 2007) and 'New Approaches to Urban Planning: Need, Demand and Capacity' (2 October 2007).

In co-operation with the Faculty of Architecture of Damascus University, the NIASD organized two lectures at that faculty by Mr. Forbes Davidson of IHS, the Institute for Housing and Urban Development Studies in Rotterdam. On the 1st of October 2007, Mr. Davidson described and discussed the various factors that play a role and which should be taken into account in urban and regional planning processes, underlining that local situations regarding these factors should determine the appropriate steps to take. These steps will vary from place to place, not only from country to country, but also from city to city and even from neighbourhood to neighbourhood. A large number of faculty staff, urban planning specialists, consultants, architects and students attended this lecture, as well as dr. Nabil Al-Achraf, the Syrian Deputy Minister of Local Administration and Environment.



On the 2nd of October, Mr. Forbes Davidson delivered a second lecture at the faculty, under the title 'New Approaches to Urban Planning: Need, Demand and Capacity'. In this lecture he focused on new international trends in urban planning, discussing the question whether they are only fashions and what they mean for a country like Syria. After the lecture, possibilities for future exchanges were discussed in the office of the dean of the faculty, prof.dr. Mamoun Al Wareh.

Lecture 'Bread Ovens' by dr. Noor Mulder (30 September 2007)

On the 30th of September, Archaeologist, Art Historian and teacher of Art History and Archaeology at Maastricht University and HOVO, Dr. Noor Mulder, gave a lecture at the NIASD about bread ovens in Syria. Dr. Mulder did research in various areas in Syria on the production of bread ovens and ways of baking bread. She used this information for excavated ovens in the Near East, which



often have been badly preserved. A group of HOVO students on a study trip with Dr. Mulder attended this lecture as well.

Lecture 'The Dialects of Bedouin in the Sinai Desert of Egypt' by dr. Rudolf de Jong (22 October 2007)



On the 22nd of October, dr. Rudolf de Jong delivered a lecture at the NIASD on the various dialects spoken by the Bedouin tribes in the Sinai Desert in Egypt. He provided an extensive overview of all the dialects, and discussed the backgrounds and reasons of their differences and interrelations.

Lecture 'The Role of Technical Ceramic Research in Archaeology' by dr. Bram van As (23 October 2007)

In co-operation with the Department of Archaeology of Damascus University, dr. Bram van As of Leiden University, and editor of the Leiden Journal of Pottery Studies, gave a lecture for Syrian students at the Department of Archaeology about the role of technical ceramic research in archaeology, placing technology in a social, economical and cultural framework and considering the typochronological consequences of technological pottery analysis.



Lecture 'Getting IT right: Seven Principles for Aligning IT and Strategy in an Uncertain World' by Prof. dr. H.P. Borgman (5 November 2007)



This lecture at the NIASD was attended by a number of students of the Higher Institute of Business Administration (HIBA) in Damascus. For assisting us in the organization of this lecture, the NIASD thanks dr. Nabil Nassar. In his lecture, prof.dr. H.P. Borgman, Professor of Business Administration and Information Management at the Leiden University

School of Management (LUSM), demonstrated that despite the fundamental impact of IT on how we work, organize, communicate and play, IT departments in many organizations are under increasing pressure to cut costs, comply with regulations, show return on investment and even to defend their very existence in a world of outsourcing and increasing expectations. He then discussed seven principles which are important in meeting these challenges.

Lecture 'Identity and Diversity: Muslims in the US and Europe' by Mr. Youssef Azghari, M.A. (25 November 2007)



As a part of the FACE2FACE programme mentioned above, Mr. Youssef Azghari, M.A. of Avans University in Breda and Den Bosch, delivered a public lecture on immigration policies in the US and Europe, and their relation to issues of identity and diversity. Most

immigrants to European countries were invited as 'guest workers', while immigrants to the US went there mostly on their own initiative. The related differences in immigration policies show that Europe often acts like the intrusive mother, and the US like the tough father who says 'welcome, but take care of yourself'. Mr. Azghari connected the relative disinterest in the US in the backgrounds and minds of immigrants to the strong influence of behaviourism there. After the lecture, visitors discussed their preferences for either the 'I don't care about your background'- attitude in the US, or the European 'Participate in our society'- attitude.

Lecture 'How do we deal with the history to create drama on television?' by Mr. Muhammad Ali Bahri (29 November and 10 December 2007)

With financial support of the NIASD, Mr. Muhammad Ali Bahri, who is currently preparing his PhD on 'The stories of the Qur'an' at the Arabic Language Department of Damascus University and who is one of the NIASD Summer Course teachers, presented his lecture at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo (NVIC), Egypt, on the 29th of



November, in the workshop 'Fictionalizing the past: Historical Characters in Arabic Popular Epic', which was organized by the NVIC in honor of prof.dr. Remke Kruk of Leiden University. On the 10th of December, Mr. Muhammad Ali Bahri delivered the lecture at the NIASD.

The lecture covered various issues concerning historical drama including: which mistakes have been made in historical drama? What can history offer us in our present day society through televised drama? How does a drama writer combine his historical knowledge, his insights in drama, and the reality in which he lives. The difficulty of properly representing historical figures in television drama was the core theme of the lecture.

Mena Scholarship Programme for mid-career professionals (August – December 2007)

In the second half of 2007, the NIASD held talks and agreed with the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus to cooperate within the framework of the recently launched Mena Scholarship Programme of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This programme offers scholarships for courses in The Netherlands at Wageningen University for Life Sciences, Maastricht School of Management, UNESCO-IHE Institute for Water Education in Delft and the International Institute of Geo-information Science and Earth Observation in Enschede. It is intended for mid-career professionals employed by relevant organizations or institutions in the fields of Water Management, Environmental Sciences, Business Administration and Management, Agriculture and Geology and Earth Sciences. See for more information about the MENA Scholarship Programme: www.niasd.org.

Advancing academic relations (August – December 2007)

During the past four months the NIASD was regularly involved in advancing the new and still developing student exchange relations between the Faculty of International Relations and Diplomacy of Kalamoon University in Syria and the Department of Political Science of the University of Amsterdam. In this context, student exchange visits both by Syrian students to The Netherlands and by Dutch students to Syria are to take place in January 2008. On behalf of the Department of Political Science of the University of Amsterdam, the NIASD also initiated a meeting between representatives of that department (Paul Aarts and Boris Westering) and the Dean of the College of Political Science of the University of Damascus. This meeting took place on the 30th of October in the presence of NIASD director Astrid Rijbroek, Dutch Ambassador Désirée Bonis and the president of Damascus University prof.dr. Wael Mualla.

In the field of Business Administration, the NIASD kept close contact with, and attended meetings between Fontys Hogescholen en the Arab International University in Syria, which concluded a co-operation agreement in March 2007.

In the field of Archaeology, academic relations have been advanced following the lecture of dr. Bram van As in October 2007. Permission has been obtained through the NIASD for the delivery of a workshop on ceramic research at Damascus University in the first week of March 2008.

In 2008 the NIASD intends to work further on the advancement of academic relations in the field of Urban Planning, following up on the NIASD programme on ‘Stakeholder Participation in Urban Planning’ in March 2007 and the lectures of Mr. Forbes Davidson of IHS at the Faculty of Architecture of Damascus University in October 2007. Likewise, the NIASD intends to work further on academic exchanges and relations in the field of intercultural communication (and media), following the FACE2FACE workshop in October 2007.

Meetings Syrian Alumni Association at the NIASD (August – December 2007)

The recently established Syrian Alumni Association for Syrians who studied in Holland, made use of the facilities of the NIASD for its board meetings on several evenings in the second half of this year (13th of August, the 29th of October and the 11th of December).

And furthermore...

The NIASD accommodated archaeologist Lione du Pied of the University of Amsterdam and Stanford University, together with three colleagues, on the 13th of September and the 13th and 14th of October. They were in Syria for archeological research in Lattakia. <> In the period between 7-12 December the NIASD accommodated Mr. Sam van Vliet, Dutch student of Arabic and Anthropology at the University of Amsterdam. The NIASD helped him find accommodation in the old city centre of Damascus. Mr. Sam van Vliet will be in Syria for a couple of months to study Arabic and to prepare for his masters thesis.

4. Culture

Exhibition Theo de Feijter 'Where are you from: A journey through Syria' in the NIASD (18 November – 18 December 2007)

The opening of the exhibition 'Where are you from: A journey through Syria' took place at the NIASD in the evening of Sunday the 18th of November. The exhibition featured a



number of paintings and sketches which De Feijter made in Syria. Following the official opening by the Dutch Ambassador to Syria, Mrs. Désirée Bonis, some of the works were brought to life by reading out loud the specific texts that De Feijter wrote to accompany those works. Earlier this year the NIASD produced a small catalogue book with all texts together with prints

of the works. During the opening evening, dr. Abdulnaser Wanus of the Faculty of Fine Arts of Damascus University conducted a public interview with De Feijter.

Dutch Film week in Aleppo (28 October - 3 November 2007)

Upon the request of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus, the NIASD organized a Dutch Film Week in Aleppo on the occasion of 400 years Dutch Consulate in Aleppo. Each day a Dutch film or documentary was shown, with Arabic subtitles, at two different

locations: Chahba Cham Cinema and the Department of Culture, a governmental cultural facility. The following films were screened: 'De Aanslag', 'Karakter', 'Nynke', 'Dutch Light', 'Schnitzelparadijs', 'Oeroeg' and 'Shouf Shouf Habibi'.

NIASD Film Programme 2007: 'Wilde Mossels', 'Beat', 'Ochtendzweppers', 'Pretpark Nederland' and 'Off Screen' (September - December 2007)

During the last few months of its own film programme, the NIASD produced DVDs with Arabic subtitles of – and screened – the Dutch movies 'Wilde Mossels' by Erik de Bruyn (5-6 September), 'Beat' by David Verbeek (24-25 October), 'Ochtendzweppers' by Nicole van Kilsdonk (14-15 November), the documentary film 'Pretpark Nederland' by Michiel van Erp (28-29 November) and



'Off Screen' by Pieter Kuijpers (12-13 December). On the 29th of November, Monique Busman, documentary researcher at the Amsterdam based production company 'De Familie' (see picture, on the left) introduced 'Pretpark Nederland' at the NIASD and answered questions from the audience.

Production of DVDs with Arabic subtitles of three Dutch movies (14 June - 21 October 2007) for the Dutch film weeks in Morocco (2-29 November 2007)

Upon the request of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Morocco, the NIASD produced DVDs with Arabic subtitles of three Dutch movies ('Polleke', 'Ik ben Mohammed' and 'In Oranje') for the Dutch Film Weeks in Morocco in November 2007.

NIASD present on the 'Landenbijeekomst' at Felix Meritis in Amsterdam (13 June 2007)

Former NIASD intern Meltem Halaceli was present on behalf of the NIASD at the so-called 'Landenbijeekomst' in Felix Meritis in Amsterdam on the 13th of June. At this meeting cultural attachés of the Dutch embassies in the Mediterranean region met with Dutch artists and cultural organizations to discuss cultural exchanges in countries in the region.

And furthermore...

In view of 'Damascus, Capital of Culture of the Arabic World 2008' the NIASD kept contact with and advised various Dutch artists who want to participate in this program, and attended a briefing on the 27th November given by representatives of the Syrian committee responsible for the organization of this cultural year. On the 29th of November NIASD director Astrid Rijbroek visited the committee together with Mr. Hans Kruishoop

of the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Damascus. <> In the second half of November, the NIASD initiated talks at the Faculty of Fine Arts of Damascus University for the Dutch artists Maarten Rens, Anita Mizrahi and Theo de Feijter, to discuss possible exchanges with that faculty in 2008. <> Austrian reporter Martin Staudinger was accommodated between 3-5 October 2007 in guestrooms of the institute.

5. Co-operation

Upon the request of the team leader of the EU project 'Upgrading the Higher Education Sector in Syria', Mr. Michel Crepon, NIASD welcomed project communication expert Rinda Bosker on the 3rd of December 2007, to discuss various issues related to the communication aspects of the EU project.

Furthermore the NIASD accommodated Mrs. Lisa Gilliam, deputy director of UNWRA Affairs in the Syrian Arab Republic (from the 31st July until the 18th August 2007) and Mr. Lex Takkenberg of UNWRA on 29-30 September, 1 October, 13 November and 15 December 2007.

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We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy 2008