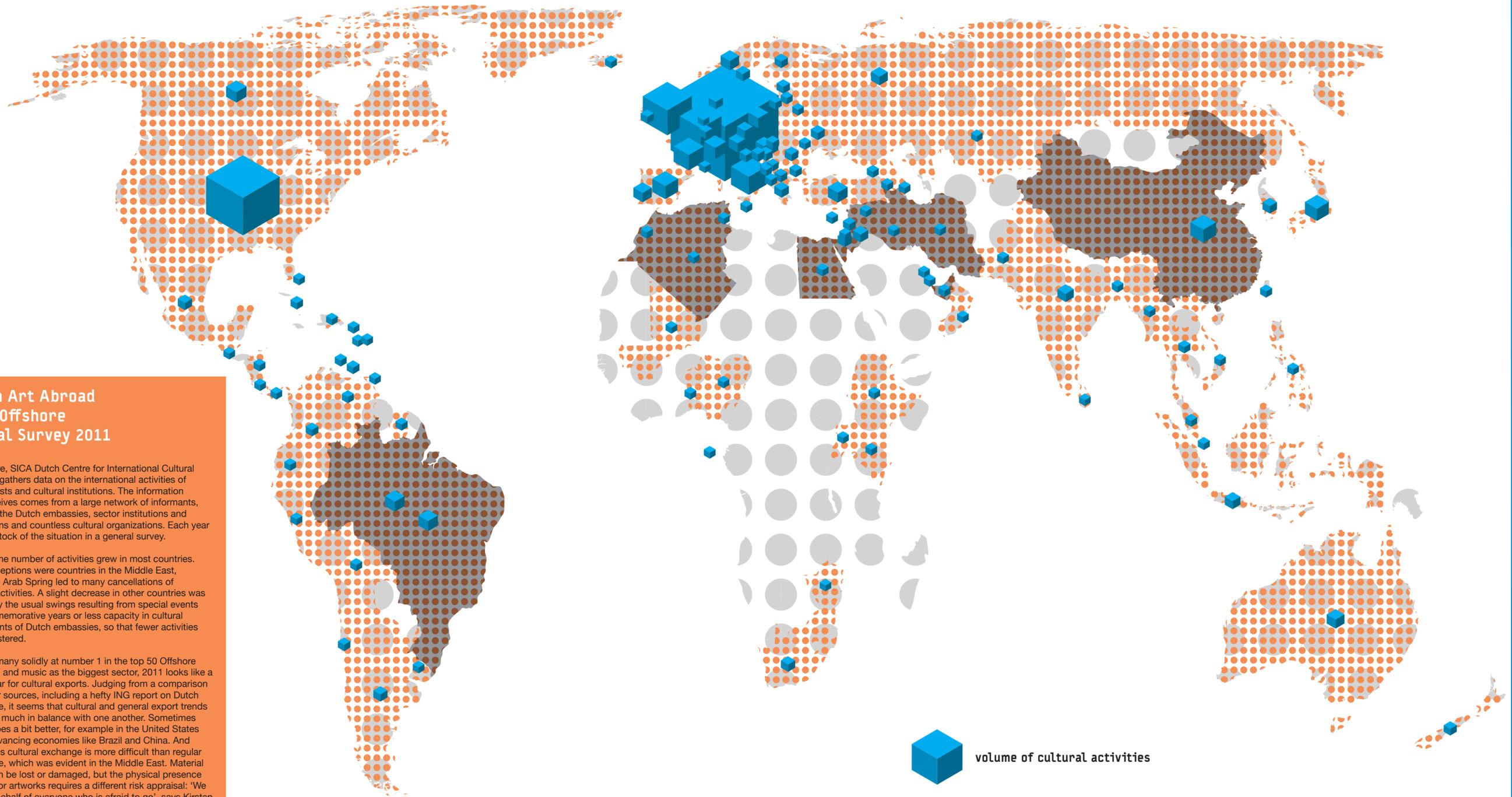




sica dutch centre  
for international  
cultural activities

# Buitengaats | Offshore

## Export of Dutch cultural activities 2011



### Dutch Art Abroad SICA Offshore Annual Survey 2011

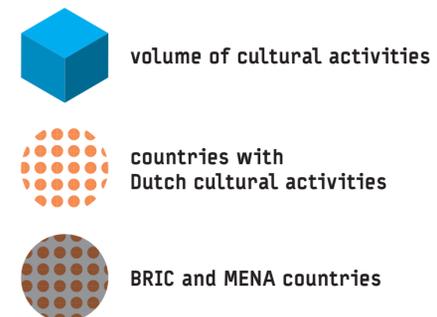
In Offshore, SICA Dutch Centre for International Cultural Activities gathers data on the international activities of Dutch artists and cultural institutions. The information SICA receives comes from a large network of informants, including the Dutch embassies, sector institutions and foundations and countless cultural organizations. Each year we take stock of the situation in a general survey.

In 2011, the number of activities grew in most countries. Major exceptions were countries in the Middle East, where the Arab Spring led to many cancellations of planned activities. A slight decrease in other countries was caused by the usual swings resulting from special events and commemorative years or less capacity in cultural departments of Dutch embassies, so that fewer activities were registered.

With Germany solidly at number 1 in the top 50 Offshore countries, and music as the biggest sector, 2011 looks like a stable year for cultural exports. Judging from a comparison with other sources, including a hefty ING report on Dutch commerce, it seems that cultural and general export trends are pretty much in balance with one another. Sometimes culture does a bit better, for example in the United States and in advancing economies like Brazil and China. And sometimes cultural exchange is more difficult than regular commerce, which was evident in the Middle East. Material goods can be lost or damaged, but the physical presence of artists or artworks requires a different risk appraisal: 'We went on behalf of everyone who is afraid to go', says Kirsten Heshusius in portraying artists who went off to work in the region anyway.

Comparing cultural exports and regular exports has its limitations, but it does show how culture and commerce from a small country find their way in the world and where opportunities lie for their eventually going together. In this annual survey, SICA gives an initial impetus toward drawing a relation between cultural and economic exports from the Netherlands. For deeper insight into the underlying patterns and ways in which to classify the returns, further research is necessary.

[sica.nl/en/buitengaats](http://sica.nl/en/buitengaats)



Germany	2507
USA	1616
UK	978
Belgium	790
Italy	626
France	483
Spain	372
China	369
Japan	323
Switzerland	270
Canada	258
Poland	218
Turkey	213
Israel	208
Norway	208
Portugal	183
Austria	177
Russian Federation	163
Austria	163
Hungary	158
Czech Republic	153
India	124
Indonesia	118
Denmark	108
Sweden	78
South Korea	77
South Africa	75
Mexico	72
Argentina	70
Ukraine	67
Romania	62
Bahrain	49
Finland	45
Estonia	44
Ireland	44
Croatia	40
New Zealand	40
Luxembourg	38
Slovenia	37
Lithuania	34
Malaysia	34
Colombia	34
Netherlands Antilles	31
Slovakia	30
Latvia	30
China	28
Dominican Republic	25
Burkina Faso	22
Thailand	20
Jordan	19
Armenia	17
Morocco	16
Burkina Faso	16
Egypt	15
Venezuela	15
Tanzania	15
United Arab Emirates	12
Aruba	12
Bolivia	11
Georgia	10
Taiwan	10
Singapore	10
Armenia	9
Latvia	9
Malaysia	9
Malta	9
Paraguay	9
Cyprus	9
Uzbekistan	7
Azerbaijan	7
Algeria	6
Bahrain	6
Ecuador	5
Kenya	5
Maldives	5
Ethiopia	5
Iran	4
Kuwait	4
Paraguay	4
Puerto Rico	4
Singapore and Prince	4
Guatemala	4
Iraq	3
Mali	3
Morocco	3
Pakistan	3
Panama	3
Paraguay	3
Uruguay	3
Aruba	3
Costa Rica	3
Montenegro	3
Tanzania and Togo	2
Togo	2
Vietnam	2
Aruba and Barbados	1
Burkina Faso	1
Bahrain	1
Burkina Faso	1
Dominican Republic	1
Philippines	1
Kazakhstan	1
Nigeria	1
Qatar	1
Sri Lanka	1
Uganda	1
Bahamas	1
Zimbabwe	1

Dutch cultural activities  
per country

# The Art of Exporting in 2011

## Cultural and Export Trends: Focus on Western Europe and the United States

The Netherlands has one of the most export-oriented economies in the world. Due to its strategic location, the Netherlands is increasingly becoming a transit country for products made elsewhere. The export of our own products has also slightly increased over the last few years, but lags behind the growth of re-exportation activities.

One can compare the export of cultural productions to the export of other products. However, the nature of cultural exports differs considerably from our regular exports in one important aspect: in the area of culture, we are not a transit country, but send out our own productions. Our biggest cultural export product is music, with almost 5,000 performances in 2011, followed by film, art and theatre, ranging from 1,000 to 2,000 presentations each in 2011.

As an export country, the Netherlands is traditionally focused on Western Europe. In 2011, almost three quarters of our total exports went to Western Europe, namely Germany (24%), Belgium (12%) and the United Kingdom (8%). Outside Europe, the United States was our most important business partner, with an export share of 4%.

The export of our cultural products followed fairly closely on the heels of general export trends: almost two thirds of Dutch international cultural activities in 2011 took place in Western Europe. In culture, too, Germany was our most important market: over 20% of all Dutch cultural productions went to Germany. The United Kingdom also scored well. This country was noticeably popular with Dutch pop musicians in 2011.

If we look at the volume of our exports to the Western European countries of Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Austria, Spain, the United Kingdom and Switzerland in relation to total exports, we see that its percentage share was pretty much equal to that of our cultural exports to these countries in relation to total cultural exports.

Outside our most important market, Western Europe, culture also pretty much followed the trends of the entire Dutch export market, with the United States – just as with total exports – being the biggest customer for Dutch cultural productions. With 12% of all Dutch performances and exhibitions going to the United States, culture did even better here than commerce: the export share of Dutch cultural productions in the United States was three times as large as the export share of the United States in total Dutch exports.

## Belgium, the exception

Strikingly, the share of cultural productions that goes to Belgium was lower than with the rest of our exports. You would expect there to be a particularly lively cultural exchange between Flanders and the Netherlands, especially because the language barrier hardly exists. Yet only a bare 6% of Dutch cultural activities took place in the land of our southern neighbours. The absolute number of Dutch cultural productions in Belgium has risen particularly in the area of the performing arts.

## Poland, the most important East European country

We exported comparatively somewhat more cultural products to developing economies in Eastern Europe (9%) than we did other products (7.6%). Poland is an East European trade partner to whom we export relatively a lot, both generally and in terms of culture. The share of our regular exports to Poland was far greater than our regular exports to other East European countries (2%). And almost 2% of all Dutch cultural exports went to Poland, also far more than to other East European countries. Greece is a special case: seeing as it had the greatest economic problems in 2011, Dutch exports to Greece decreased somewhat. Remarkably, though, the share of cultural exports actually increased slightly. So the poor economic situation did not have a direct negative impact on Dutch cultural exports in every case.

## South America

Remarkably, trade with newly advancing economies in South America hardly grew at all, either in general or in the area of culture. In fact, these economies are not (yet) very important for the Dutch export trade. Some 2% of total exports was sold to Central and South America. In the cultural sphere, we did slightly better: around 4% of Dutch cultural productions were exported to Central and South America. What's more, Brazil can be considered an exception in the cultural sphere. Brazil is one of the BRIC countries, a leader in world economic growth. Exports to Brazil remained equal in 2011 to the year before (2% of all exports), but in the *Ano da Holanda no Brasil* the number of cultural activities rose considerably in relation to 2010. The most notable activity, of course, was the exhibition *The Magical World of Escher* in Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil in Rio de Janeiro, which drew as many as 9,700 visitors a day. That makes this the world's best-attended exhibition in 2011.

## Asia

Exports to developing economies in Asia were approximately 6.5% of total exports. In terms of culture, we have especially strong ties with East

Asia: over 9% of our international cultural activities took place in Asian countries. China in particular is an important partner in the cultural sphere. The greater emphasis on China in the Netherlands' international cultural policy has led to a steady growth in its share of the activities: from 2.9% in 2010 to 3.5% of total cultural exports in 2011. We have similar cultural ties with Japan: around 2.9% of all our cultural productions found their way to Japan. When it comes to non-cultural exports, China is also our most important trading partner, while Japan is one of the three most important markets for the Netherlands in Asia.

There are other countries in Asia where the Netherlands also has strong economic ties, but where the cultural relation is clearly less close. For example, South Korea is the most important market in Asia after China. The share of cultural productions that goes to South Korea, however, is relatively small or even negligible. The same goes for Singapore: the biggest export market in Asia after Japan, but in terms of culture, an interesting destination for only a few Dutch artists.

## BRIC countries

We have seen that we export comparatively more of our cultural products to the BRIC countries of China and Brazil, than that these countries are part of our total export market. The cultural sector seems to find its way relatively quicker to new markets such as the BRIC countries. Dutch cultural activities certainly are meeting with a good response in China and Brazil, while Dutch traders experience the markets of the BRIC countries as inaccessible, among other things because of institutional and cultural barriers. Cultural entrepreneurs can possibly give commerce a helping hand in penetrating and successfully operating in these countries.

## The Arab Spring

2011 was the year of the Arab Spring: in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and a number of other countries in the Middle East such as Iran and Syria, the people rose up in arms against their leaders – with greater and less success and different outcomes. The revolutions had relatively little effect on the Dutch export economy: the share of exports to this region was and is not very large. To the Arab Gulf states (Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and others), we exported relatively the most: 1.4% of total exports in 2011 went to this region. The Near East and Middle East (Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and others) comprised only 0.6% of our export market. The North African countries – where the Arab Spring began – was also good for only 0.6% of our exports.

Notwithstanding the limited role that this region plays in our export trade, there is an interesting point to make about the impact of the Arab Spring in relation to our cultural exports. It is noteworthy that the relative share of cultural exports to the countries where the Arab Spring took place dropped more sharply than the share of overall exports. Overall exports to countries like Tunisia, Egypt and Syria declined very slightly, but the export of cultural products to these countries has been reduced to a minimum. It is also notable that there was not only a falling off of cultural activities in the countries where there actually was a question of a revolution, but also in the countries around them. Thus relatively less cultural activities also took place in Jordan, Morocco, Iran and the United Arab Emirates. The share of cultural productions in Israel, by the way, rose slightly in comparison with 2010.

Regular trade evidently suffers less from the political situation in a country than do cultural institutions. Perhaps that goes without saying: when there is fighting going on, there is still a need for the various services and products that can be provided from or via the Netherlands, but in such situations, people simply do not need our cultural products. What's more, the nature of cultural activities is completely different: supplying goods in politically tense situations might not always be risk-free, but it can be done in a relatively safe manner. Performances and exhibitions require the physical presence of artists, musicians, art objects and heritage in the country itself. In 2011, the risks in these countries were clearly too great for that. However some artists did go and we asked a few to share their experiences in quotes you can read ...

## Sources

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## Long term collaboration between Dutch and Iranian artists

Over the past few years, **Kirsten Heshusius**, a performance artist, and **Edd Vossen**, who deals in 'film, steel and theatre', have spent several months in Iran. Their first visit was in 2009, in the aftermath of the 'Green Revolution'; their last tour was in December of 2011. As Heshusius says on her website: 'We went on behalf of everyone who is afraid to go.'

**Heshusius:** 'During the last visit, we encountered all sorts of practical problems. Our workspace was suddenly unavailable; some of the artists we had contacted before were almost impossible to reach. But these are the circumstances that Iranian artists deal with every day. We talked to a lot of artists before we started, to see who we'd like to work with, and we ended up with the ones who bonded with us "in their hearts and minds", three young documentary filmmakers. Later, we found out that their names had popped up in other people's email correspondence. That meant they were under observation. You have to be particularly careful when you walk in there as a foreigner, keen to do a project. You don't really know if you're endangering the very people you'd like to work with.'

'Artistic practice is restricted anyway – you can't use nudity, you can't show your film at a foreign festival – but it might also mean being called in for interrogation. So if you want to do your thing, you follow the rules, at least outwardly. Which is difficult, because the rules change all the time. There is a lively art scene in Tehran, with lots of shows and openings. The government sometimes funds certain activities, possibly to get a foot in the door, to get some idea of what is going on. But what is all right today could be off limits tomorrow. You never know.'

'We'll be going back this year. We intend to organise a show, and we're currently talking to a gallery. We're also going back to work with the three filmmakers we met earlier. I think it's important to build a long-term collaboration. It's easy to drop in for a short visit, but it's vital to prove that you're not there just to take something away.'

## Dutch graphic designers in Cairo

In March of 2011, **Sandra Kassenaar** and **Bart de Baets**, graphic designers, arrived in Cairo for a four-month residency in the Townhouse Gallery. President Mubarak had resigned in February, the revolution was winding down but the situation was still very volatile.

**Sandra Kassenaar:** 'The events had an enormous impact on our stay. Before we left, we had planned to do a project on censorship, but once we got to Cairo, that notion became more important than we had ever imagined. We felt it was our responsibility as outsiders to do something with it, but things were so much up in the air, we really had no idea where to start. After all, it wasn't our revolution, we didn't speak the language, we didn't have much of a clue of what was really going on. Occasionally, that was not an easy situation.'

'We made 21 posters that we had translated into Arabic, so 42 of them in all. These were displayed on a large light box on the front of the Gallery and in the street. They contained observations, headlines of what was going on then and there, in the aftermath of the revolution and Mubarak's resignation, but in a fairly light, almost comical tone. Around the Gallery there is an *ahwa*, a teahouse, where locals meet for their cup of coffee or tea. In due course we gathered something like a regular audience. People would drop by to see the 'new poster'. To hang a new one, I had to climb out the window, a slapstick performance that would draw quite a crowd. The fact that we were able to spend a longer period of time there allowed us to gauge the response. Sometimes that was just a 'thumbs up', but there were questions, too: Who were we? What were we doing there? Why did we put Mubarak's face on that poster?'

## Intense experience with musicians in Egypt

**Onno van Swigchem** is a member of 'Waterproof live', a multi-disciplinary group whose concerts involve music, dance, and film, all inspired by the theme of 'water'. In October of 2011, Onno van Swigchem and Hermine Schneider, the artistic directors of the group, travelled to Egypt for a series of performances in Cairo, 'Waterproof on the Nile', based on four days of workshops with local musicians. They were invited by the Makan centre for Culture and Art.

**Onno van Swigchem:** 'We were in Cairo when things were relatively quiet, between the February Revolution and the run-up to the elections of 2012. You find that daily life does go on, of course, but people were very worried. They clearly had their mind on other things. In the Makan Centre they kept showing us things on the Internet – Facebook messages on how Christians and Muslims should resist being pitted against each other, for instance.'

'The events didn't influence the production itself: we did what we came to do, but it made the whole experience so much more intense. We once found ourselves among a demonstration of Coptic Christians, which later got out of hand. People were killed. That really gets to you: You are there to make music, to put up a show, to work with people, you're doing something really positive – and 500 meters away the army drives trucks into the crowd of demonstrators. And then, in the evening, after Friday prayers, everything goes quiet. It's hard to really know what's going on.'

'Since we're back, we've heard no disturbing stories about people we met, but when we see the news, how people have died in demonstrations, you can't help asking yourself: "Who were they?"'

Buitengaats | Offshore  
Dutch cultural activities and the  
most frequent travellers per sector

