

THE COLORS OF EUROPE

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HANS KELLER, 1992

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There was no Mondrian lecture in 1992, but instead there was Hans Keller's poetic film, which was commissioned by the Sikkens Foundation: "Stories about the colors of Europe". The starting point of the film was the legend of the monk, Brendan, who sailed along the coasts and rivers of Europe as a travelling hermit shortly after the start of the Roman calendar. He originated from Ireland where, according to legend, light was created. St Brendan became the patron saint of lighthouses, the patron saint of light in the night, and he taught those he met about the different light during the day, the difference between sunrise and the approaching night. These aspects of travel, light and the shades of color gave Keller the ideal starting point for his own documentary, which deals with the ideas of the Sikkens Foundation. The film provided Brendan with fellow travelers on his mythical trip: Odysseus, Joyce, Flaubert, Monet, Proust, Goethe, Kafka, Luciano Fabro, Seamus Heaney, Casimiro de Brito and Per Kirkeby. Increasingly their specific use of color and light were clarified in a panoramic story of cause and effect, astonishment and recognition. This trip took Keller to Ireland, England, France, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Malta, the Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic, Norway and Denmark.

The colors which Keller showed us were related to places and provided an identity for the people who belonged there. The fact that this film was released in the year of the unification of Europe was therefore not surprising, and corresponds to the ideas of the Sikkens Foundation, which had been advising European cities for some years about their color policy in urban planning.

Hans Keller was born in Haarlem in 1937 and grew up in what he considered the restrictive years of the 1940s and 50s. After his military service in 1957, he opted for journalism. He started as an apprentice journalist for De Volkskrant. He soon moved on to editing articles about art and became a television reviewer. In 1961 he was behind the initiative to award the Silver Nipkow disc. From 1962 to 1964 he made the programme *Literaire ontmoetingen* (Literary Encounters) for the AVRO. Between 1964 and 1968 he particularly made a number of documentaries for the KRO program *Kijk op Kunst* (Focus on Art). In 1968 he moved to the VPRO, where he made information and art programs which determined prevailing views for eleven years, including the famous program *Het Gat van Nederland* (1972-1978), in which Kees van Kooten and Wim de Bie also collaborated as satirists.

Over the years he made an impressive number of documentaries, including the thought- provoking *Alone in the world*. He made some small late evening gems which were broadcast by the VPRO TV, the *Dode Dichters Almanak* (Dead Poets' Almanac), in which the already deceased poets read pieces from their own works – often in black and white. In 1983, Keller was the editor of the literary journal *De Revisor*.

