

PHOTOGRAPHY INTERVIEW

# Paul Brouns' photos were already exhibited in Seoul, New Delhi, London, Moscow and Los Angeles, and now finally in his own Limburg: 'The circle is complete'

Ronald Meeus

09-01-2026, 11:30



Photographer Paul Brouns exhibits in Fotomuseum aan het Vrijthof. ©Rob Oostwegel

**Maastricht/Ittervoort. Transforming photos of beautiful buildings into something new: with this approach, artist Paul Brouns brings together photography, architecture and visual arts. In the Photo Museum at**

## the Vrijthof, the emigrated Limburger comes home with his fascinating visual universe.

He exhibited in Seoul, New Delhi, London, Moscow and Los Angeles. Museums in several Dutch cities have also already exhibited his works. But in Limburg? Paul Brouns had not yet been there. Until now at least, because since last Sunday, fifteen of his intriguing works can be found in the Fotomuseum aan het Vrijthof in Maastricht. Barely 50 kilometers from Ittervoort, the village where he grew up. "I feel a circle that is suddenly round," he says.

The night before we speak, Brouns stayed with his parents in Wessem, but since he graduated from the Tilburg Art Academy in 1990, he has left Limburg. Soon, after he has taken a tour with us along his exhibited works, he will return to his home in Almere.

### Experimenting

In Tilburg, Brouns learned to paint and draw, but by experimenting with photography he discovered something completely new: photographic compositions. He extracts elements from reality – mostly buildings – and then builds something different with them. Like *Banquet of the Spirits*, based on a sepia facade in Milan, or *Autumn tetris*, a patch of windows in a dark red apartment building in Brooklyn.

"For me, photography is more of a material than an art discipline," says Brouns. „As with painting and drawing, I take elements out of reality to place them in a different context. Even when I painted, I liked abstract-geometric shapes and very clearly delimited structures. From that way of thinking, I also started working with digital photography, because I saw opportunities to develop the same kind of visual language.”



Paul Brouns checks a work in the Photo Museum on the Vrijthof. ©Rob Oostwegel

*Urban tapestries* he calls them: urban tapestries. Works in which geometric patterns and rhythm prevail. Sometimes in the form of blocks, such as the *Venice Beach Fugue*

or *Palace of Hidden Desires* built from several pastel facades in Los Angeles, based on a building in Hilversum. But there are also lines with the main role, such as *Walking the line*: an Amsterdam facade with colorful horizontal lines became a rhythmic tableau, only interrupted by a dog on the sidewalk.

"I've always had a strong affinity with patterns and rhythms, that's something that's just in me," says Brouns. „As a teenager, I often sat at home drawing with music, and that automatically brought me to certain forms and structures. Without a very literal connection, music is an important source of inspiration: it turns me on to look for rhythm in what I see.”

His eye can fall on buildings from all over the world, he says. From classic New York facades with the well-known iron fire escapes in his *Fire escapism* series to voluptuous buildings in Tilburg and The Hague.

### **Many trips**

Or he just builds his own futuristic city with components from another. As in *Finding Neverland*, a landscape of glass and steel based on just one Berlin facade. Or in *Fountain of coolness*, in which he rotates a building from Montpellier around an axis. "Fortunately, I travel a lot, including to art fairs," says Brouns. „Sometimes I spend an extra week on my visit to explore the city and get inspiration.”



©Rob Oostwegel

Other times Brouns pays tribute to other artists, such as *Entering the looking glass*: a reinterpretation of a facade of a building in Hilversum, with windows in bright colors reminiscent of Piet Mondriaan. Other great examples he likes to mention are the Swiss painter Paul Klee (for his geometric shapes) or the American artist David Hockney (who sometimes also worked with photo collages).

"I'm inspired by artists who work a lot with colors," says Brouns. „Color sets a composition in motion and gives it energy. By connecting colors across a plane, a liveliness is created that breaks open and activates the image.”

### Architecture

Another source of inspiration is, of course, architecture. "What interests me in that is the tension it evokes," he says. „For example, I have less with New York skyscrapers: they are too far away from me, they are distant constructions of glass and metal." He prefers to have buildings in which people live visibly.



©Rob Oostwegel

Like the hussar' piece of the expo: *Corridors of insomnia*, a large black tableau with parts of a night-photographed Hague apartment building, where only what he could see from the outside through the windows is visible. Mostly interior doors and furniture, but here and there a resident can also be seen. This construction is lived, even though it is not entirely real.

"I'm looking for places where you can recognize human activity," says Brouns. „On the one hand, this creates an almost abstract composition, which could just as well be a painting. But through photography you can see at the same time: this is not a painting, people live here.”