

## NEONLICHT#5

### PIERRE GARNIER IN THE PAUL DE VREE ARCHIVE

Beginning in 1962, the French author and poet Pierre Garnier (b.1928) announces himself as a poet of 'spatialism'. In 1963 in the review *Les Lettres*, of which he is co-editor, appears his *Manifeste pour une poésie nouvelle, visuelle et phonique* [Manifesto for a new poetry, visual and phonic]. Garnier sends De Vree a copy with the telling dedication: 'Without the amity of Henri Chopin and in the hope of an active collaboration'. With his 'visual' and 'phonic' poetry, Garnier indeed explicitly positions himself against the 'phonetic' and 'objective' poetry which at that time was being propagated by Chopin in *Cinquième Saison*. In the summer of 1963 Garnier nonetheless launches his ambitious 'pilot project' to bring together the diverse groups and isolated authors who up to then had operated under various headings such as 'concrete', 'visual', 'objective', 'mechanistic', 'phonic' and 'phonetic' poetry into a single international movement. Chopin reacts with an open letter (published in *Les Lettres* no.31, p.4-5) where he dismisses Garnier's manifesto as 'incomplete', because it appears after the exhaustion of all poetic means. A subsequent version, co-signed among others by De Vree, with the title 'Position I du Mouvement International' is again rejected by Chopin. In his detailed exchange of correspondence with De Vree, Garnier undertakes to clarify his conceptions regarding spatialism as compared to concrete poetry ('... *a fundamental difference between concrete poetry that creates linguistic objects and spatialism that is above all an energy, a dynamic of thought.*') (Garnier to De Vree, 14.10.1966, archive PDV). In the meantime, Garnier adds as subtitle to *Les Lettres* the appellation *Poésie Nouvelle. Revue du Spatialisme*, and it becomes his mouthpiece for the newest tendencies in concrete poetry. As for the relationship between Chopin and Garnier, it is to remain in tatters. And all the more so when Garnier envisions plans to compile an international anthology devoted to concrete and 'spatial' poetry with comprehensive contributions from some 35 poets from nine countries. He asks De Vree to lend his aid to this prestigious project, which for budgetary reasons encounters a bumpy ride. Chopin's reaction to Garnier's project is particularly negative and denies him any authority in the matter, something that results in a definitive parting of the ways between the two French protagonists of concrete poetry. The upshot is that the terrain of concrete poetry anno 1966 is taken up with territorial disputes and entrenched positions. The fact that De Vree in 1965 publishes a composition in *Les Lettres* and that the following year - together with Ian Hamilton Finlay and the 'accursed' Garnier - is named to the editorial board of Frans Vanderlinde's new Dutch review *Vers Univers*, will go no way towards improving the relationships. The year 1968 sees publication, by Gallimard, of Garnier's anthology *Spatialisme et poésie concrète*.