

## Sophisticated Dutch abstract artist who made his reputation in Australia and England

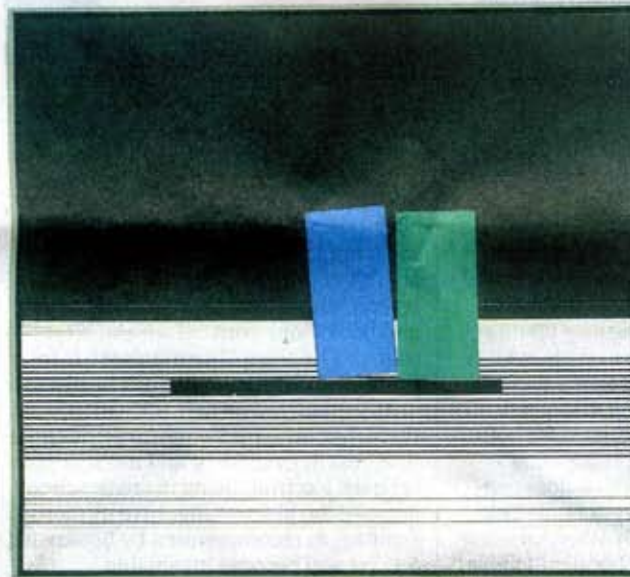
Although the artist Jules de Goede, who has died aged 70, had left Holland in 1959 when he was only 19, and had lived in Australia and then in England for many years, his pictures – and even the large, light studio where he created them – remained unequivocally Dutch.

For the most part, de Goede painted highly sophisticated and intellectually coherent abstract canvases, wholly contemporary in their feel. However, the long tradition from which they came was that of artists such as Pieter Saenredam, a painter of starkly beautiful Calvinist church interiors, Dutch landscape artists – in his youth de Goede copied postcards of old masters – the de Stijl school and his beloved Mondrian. His studio in Stepney Green, east London, was minimalist, sophisticated and carefully ordered. De Goede's most satisfying hours were spent here. "A reflection of the world like it visually appears is not quite enough," he wrote. "It is what things could be that matters. Abstraction

should bring forth another kind of reality. I try to show what is invisible. I try to create happiness out of unsatisfactory situations. To make the impossible seem possible. I try to create order out of chaos. I try to bring conclusions rather than just ask questions. Art is where there is no question."

He was born in Rotterdam, the oldest of seven children. His father, part French and part Dutch, was a carpenter, his mother, of German origin, a teacher. In 1939 the family went to a village outside Nijmegen, where they lived through the Nazi occupation and subsequent liberation of Holland. By the age of 14, he had already gained a diploma in decorative arts from the Nijmegen technical college. Subsequently, he attended the Arnhem Academy of Fine Arts and the more progressive Eindhoven school of art. In 1956 his mother died and the family emigrated to Sydney, Australia, where he studied at the Julian Ashton and Desiderius Orban schools of art, and from 1959 to 1960 at the Canberra school of art. He also worked for the Australian News and Information Bureau and the National Capital Development Commission. He took part in some 30 exhibitions, including his first three solo shows.

De Goede moved back to Europe in 1965 and took one of the studio spaces set up by Bridget Riley and Peter Sedgely in St Katharine docks. On their sale to a developer, he was one of 33 artists who moved to Stepney Green;



there he became one of the first to open his studio to the public. In 1972, he was invited by Hubert Dalwood to teach at Hornsey College of Art in north London, which had been notorious for student occupation and unrest. But in de Goede, his students found an immensely encouraging and enthusiastic teacher who retained the friendship of many. He retired as a senior lecturer in 2003 and became a full-time artist.

De Goede's dedication was unrelenting. The 1950s had stimulated

a change from figurative to abstract art. His work – of consistently high quality – is full of visual illusions and unsettling perspective; mostly it is in black and white (the black hole is the greatest enigma of all). Aside from these very large works he made prints, charcoal drawings and small-scale sculptures like three-dimensional versions of his paintings. Although, as with most artists, success fluctuated, it was never his main motivation; for him the activity of the creation was the achievement in

**ZZZ11 (2002, above) and Still Life 3 (1997, left) – two paintings by de Goede, pictured last year**  
Photographs: Broadbent



itself and allowed him to live life as he wanted, content with his own company.

Aside from taking part in many group exhibitions in Australia and Great Britain between 1967 and 2005 de Goede had solo exhibitions at the Grabowski gallery and House gallery in London, the Riverside studios in Hammersmith, the OXO gallery in South Kensington, London, and the Stephen Lawrence gallery at the University of Greenwich. His final one-man show, *Tracing the Black Hole*, was held at the Angus Broadbent gallery in Bayswater in June 2006. A book by Mel Gooding and Corinna Lotz was launched documenting his life and work. In 1996 he joined the London Group and was a Jerwood prize finalist.

However intellectual de Goede's art might seem, he was a warm, humorous and gentle man, who enjoyed friendship – especially the company of the young (it amused him that his penchant for young women was a matter for gossip) – a good meal and a bottle of wine. He was committed to the left, but his politics were motivated by his optimism. "Art has much more to do with being oneself than it has with any particular art theory or philosophy," he wrote. This deep-seated confidence kept him buoyant and full of ideas – and kept him working until the end.

**Simon Fenwick**

*Jules de Goede, artist and teacher, born May 20 1937; died September 19 2007*