

# Special images with special effects

Rein Janssen has a passion for elaborate experiments. He reveals how he achieved three of his most recent creations

Most innovations are brought about by combining elements or disciplines that usually aren't associated with each other, and that's certainly the case with Rein's work. The commercial photographer went from studying engineering to fine art, and all his disciplines overlap in his work. Rein likes to experiment with sculptures, photography, special effects and

engineering to push boundaries and come up with new and unique images. He works closely with Erik Voors, a special effects specialist, who is the technician behind the splashes and spray of the cans and bottles in Coca-Cola and Heineken ads.

He uses a D800 and says, 'I like the high pixel count and working with the PC-E lenses. They have superb contrast and the images are always crisp. I also really like using the Nikon wireless remote transmitter WR-T10 – it's always attached to my belt and it feels odd if it's not there. It's really handy because it allows me to work very quickly, especially as I experiment a lot.' Here Rein explains how he arrived at these three abstract shots:

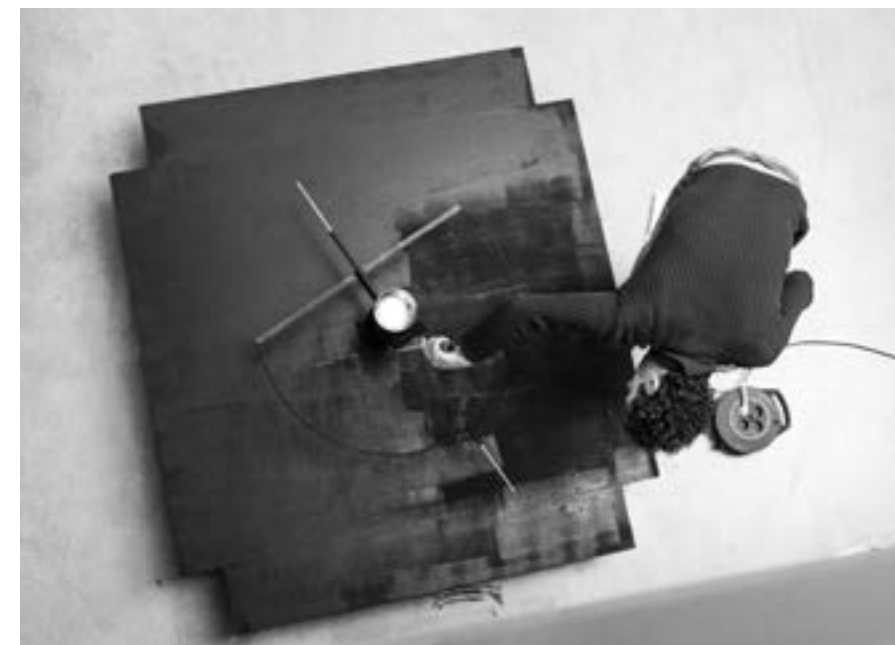
## SETI

When Rein was commissioned to shoot cookies in an innovative way for the Dutch newspaper *Volkskrant*, he used a special effects machine borrowed from Erik Voors to detonate powders and liquids behind 'Although you have some control, you can never predict how the image is going to look'

the biscuits. The project had what his appetite to experiment with mini explosions, which turned into his SETI series.

The special effects contraption he used consists of a lead pipe with a 3cm diameter and an air compressor on one end that blasts air through the pipe. He filled the pipe with Holi powder (used by revellers to celebrate the Indian Holi festival), poked it through a 1m-wide, wooden board and set off the compressor.

Rein lit the clouds of powder with Broncolor flashes from the sides, angled slightly upwards. He used a sound trigger for the camera, which he set a few milliseconds after



Set-up image by Oliha Osazee

the blast, capturing the powder mid air.

'It took a lot of trial and error to get these images', Rein says. 'Although you have some control, you can never predict how the image is going to look, because sometimes there is more or less powder coming out of the pipe and every time it reacted slightly differently.'

He took this series of images in his studio and even though he sealed the scene with plastic sheets it still made a lot of mess. 'It was really messy,' he says. 'I ended up with powder everywhere – even inside my nostrils.'

But the result was certainly worth it and you can see why Rein has called these unique images SETI, which stands for Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence.

## EYE

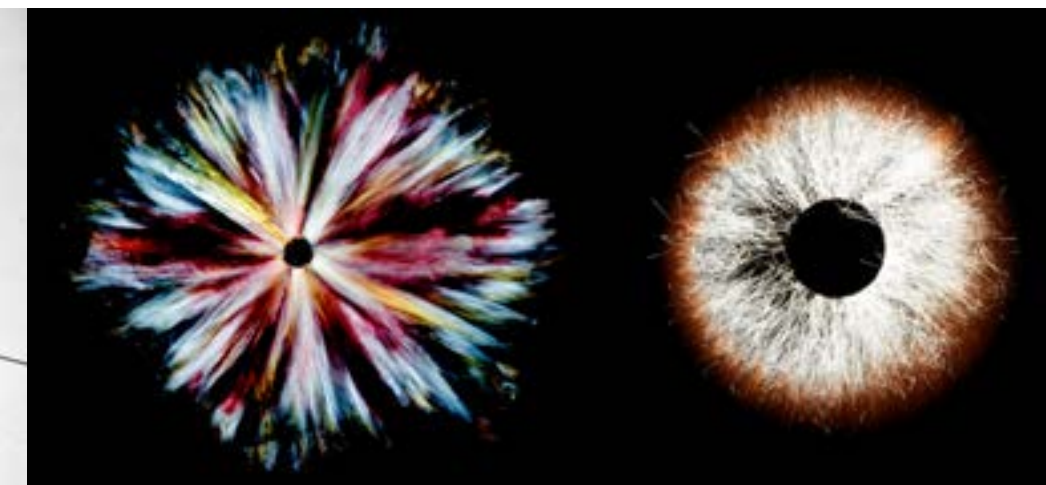
'Eric Voors and I wanted to make an image of an eye using fireworks,' says Rein. 'It took a lot of preparation. We had a machine with a rotating plate a bit like a record player. To get

the circle, we had to weld a hoop to it so we could affix holders for small indoor fireworks, the kind that is often used on birthday cakes. The fireworks needed to point inwards to create what looks like an iris. The inner circle, which looks like a pupil, was formed by a sewer pipe, which we placed in the middle, so that the sparks would bounce off it defining the iris. The welding took a couple of hours and we spent the whole next day shooting.'

Rein and Erik experimented until they had the right shutter speed that would cover exactly one rotation to create a perfect circle, and this image is the result.

## BURST

'For the eye images, we had bought a lot of different indoor fireworks and spent the whole day shooting, but only managed to get two images we were happy with. We were a bit disappointed so we wanted to try something different,' says Rein. 'I started



photographing colourful foil I had thrown on the rotating machine. Long shutter speeds turned them into spinning wheels, which turned into the GONG series.'

That led to another experiment. Rein and Eric wanted to create the effect of a burst, so he started to knot different kinds of foils into a long rope. He used a mixture of tin foil, a first aid blanket and colourful lighting gels. He then constructed a round wooden plate and pulled the foil rope on a loop through the middle of the plate. Each exposure was between six and eight seconds.

Each shot is composed out of six separate segments, stitched together in Photoshop. It was a bit of an exception, as Rein uses Photoshop very sparingly to keep a feeling of authenticity. He says, 'My style is to create as much as possible in front of the camera, using special effects. I want the viewer to believe that it's really there, but make it look like it could be CGI as well. Doing Photoshop well takes much longer, and you have to be very skilled.'

'I also enjoy experimenting – it's what I live for. I like that you don't know exactly what will happen and what the outcome will be – there are a lot of surprises. I work

intuitively, so I often end up with something I wouldn't been able to think of or plan ahead, but that's where the fun is.'


**MAIN IMAGE:** The title SETI, or Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, seems very apt for this image. D800, PC-E Micro NIKKOR 45mm f/2.8D ED, ISO 100, 1/160s @ f14

**ABOVE LEFT:** Rein and Eric like to experiment with different set ups. Here Eric is painting the base of the setup for the EYE shots.

**ABOVE CENTRE:** BURST is a composite of six exposures of foil pulled through a hole. D800, PC-E Micro NIKKOR 45mm f/2.8D ED, ISO 100, 8s @ f16.

**ABOVE:** Rein created this iris using indoor fireworks on a rotating plate. D800, PC-E Micro NIKKOR 85mm f/2.8D, ISO 100, 4s @ f22

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