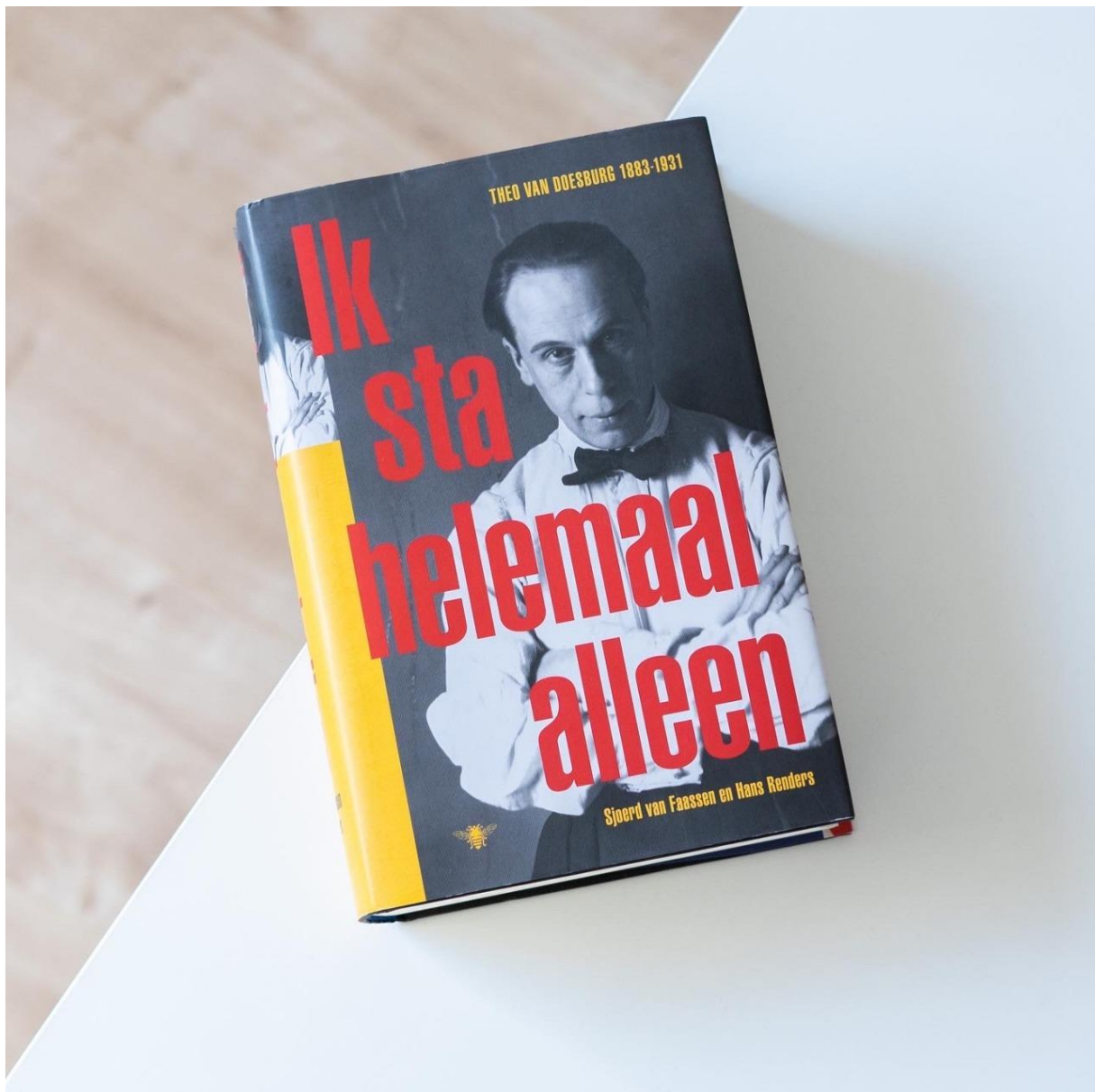


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As editor, artist, critic and poet Theo van Doesburg has had a profound influence on the Dutch as well as international avant-garde. But although his significance is undisputed and manifold books have been written about him the person behind the art has remained strangely opaque. Recently this gap has been closed by Hans Renders' and Sjoerd van Faassen's monumental biography „Ik sta helemaal alleen. Theo van Doesburg 1883-1931“, published by De Bezige Bij: the authors recount the artist's eventful life from his upbringing as Emile Küpper, son of German photographer Wilhelm Küpper, in Utrecht until his early death in Davos in 1931. What immediately becomes clear is that he was a difficult and erratic character, prone to quarrel and intransigence: armed with a big ego and absolute confidence in his own abilities he didn't accept dissent. He was hotheaded but also quickly felt offended, a combination that drove away even the most good-natured allies. At the same time Does was a creative powerhouse: from an early age on he drew and painted, fervently read about religion and sociology, dealt with philosophy, literature and art and eventually also became an art critic. This position soon confronted him with the latest developments in art, namely Cubism and Abstract Art,

that opened his eyes for these currents. Leaving behind his earlier portrait and landscape paintings Van Doesburg embraced the new and soon associated with like-minded artists and architects like Mondrian, Oud or Van der Leek. With the De Stijl magazine in 1917 he then established an outlet for his many interests. In the years following he became a salesman for his own ideas, accompanied by his wife Nelly, holding lectures, organizing exhibitions and frequently visiting the Bauhaus hoping for a teaching position. Disillusioned they later settled in their house in France where Theo struggled with asthma and a deteriorating health that eventually caused his untimely death.

With their archive-based biography the authors finally draw attention to Does the human: without leaving out his artistic development they paint a detailed portrait of the man behind the famous name, vividly written and eye-opening.

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