

# The New York Times

## *Jacqueline de Jong, Rediscovered Avant-Garde Artist, Dies at 85*

A Dutch painter, sculptor and engraver, she worked in experimental mediums, founded an influential multidisciplinary journal and enjoyed a late-career resurgence.



Jacqueline de Jong in 2021. She was associated with the Situationist International movement of the 1960s, which combined elements of Dada, Surrealism and Marxism in its critique of capitalism. Gert Jan van Rooij, via Pippy Houldsworth Gallery

**By Nina Siegal**

Reporting from Amsterdam

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Jacqueline de Jong, a Dutch artist who was at the forefront of a 1960s avant-garde movement that critiqued postwar capitalism, and who enjoyed a career resurgence in her last decade, died on June 29 in Amsterdam. She was 85.

Her brother, Philip de Jong, said her death, in a hospital, was caused by liver cancer.

Ms. de Jong was associated with the so-called Situationist International movement, which combined elements of Dada, Surrealism and Marxism in its condemnation of capitalism. She founded and edited *The Situationist Times*, a multidisciplinary journal, published from 1962 to 1967, that included essays, artwork and groundbreaking graphic design.

For many years she was associated and romantically involved with [Asger Jorn](#), a Danish painter and writer who was 25 years her senior and married.

But her artistic career was entirely independent of him, and, in spite of scant recognition over a long period, she continued to explore her unique artistic style for the rest of her life. She never settled on a single style, but bounced among Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art and New Figuration, a movement that rejected abstraction.



“La Vie Privée des Cosmonautes ‘le Cosmonaute Invisible’” (1966). Ms de Jong’s experimental work drew on Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art and other influences. Jacqueline de Jong, via Pippy Houldsworth Gallery

Ms. de Jong had lived and worked in Amsterdam since the 1970s, and since the 1990s had kept a country house and studio in Bouan, in southwestern France. She was a painter, sculptor and engraver who also worked in unconventional media. One recent series of works was inspired by sprouting potatoes she found in her cellar in France; she depicted them in paintings and also made them into [objects d'art and jewelry](#), coating them in 18-carat gold.

In 2012, the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University acquired her papers, generating new interest in Ms. de Jong's role in Situationism. Her art was discovered and featured in several exhibitions, including a 2019 retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

"She kept that Situationist spirit throughout her life," said Jaring Dürst Britt, an owner of the Dürst Britt & Mayhew gallery in The Hague, which had worked with Ms. de Jong since 2017.

"Poking, playing, being discursive are all at the core of being in the Situationist movement," he explained. "They tried with those types of interventions to poke at or frustrate society. In all of her artistic output, in whatever decade it was, you find elements of this type of interference."



Ms. de Jong in 1982. As a child, she and her mother fled the Netherlands to Switzerland after Nazi Germany invaded and persecuted Jews. Her father went into hiding. Rob Bogaerts/Anefo, via National Archives

Jacqueline Beatrice de Jong was born on Feb. 3, 1939, in Enschede, the Netherlands, and grew up in the nearby town of Hengelo, where her father, Hans de Jong, a Dutch textile manufacturer, had a lace and stocking factory called De Jong & Van Dam.

A year after Jacqueline was born, Germany invaded the Netherlands. Hans de Jong's company was expropriated under Nazi anti-Jewish ordinances. Her mother, Alice de Jong-Weil, escaped with Jacqueline to her native Switzerland, where they lived with her family in Zurich while Hans went into hiding in Amsterdam.

All of them survived the war and reunited in Amsterdam. Later, they returned to Hengelo, where Hans de Jong was able to get his stocking factory back. The couple's son, Philip, was born in 1949.

In the 1950s, Ms. de Jong briefly entertained the idea of becoming an actor and went to London to study theater at the Guildhall School. "I absolutely wanted to be on the stage," she [told Frieze magazine in 2017](#). "Luckily, we can say, I failed."

Her parents were art collectors with an avid interest in the performing arts. Through them, she met leading members of the avant-garde movement Cobra, which emphasized art with childlike playfulness, bold colors and animal forms, and which derived its name from Copenhagen, Brussels and Amsterdam, the cities from which its members mostly came. Among them were [Karel Appel](#), a Dutch expressionist painter, and Mr. Jorn, who would become Ms. de Jong's lover and artistic confidant for a decade.

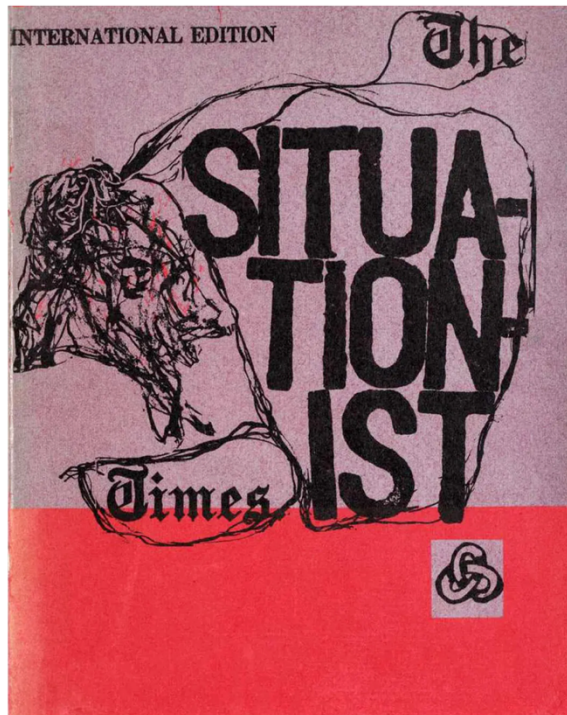
In 1957, Ms. de Jong worked briefly in Paris as an apprentice to the fashion designer Christian Dior. She changed course in 1958, when Willem Sandberg, the director of the Stedelijk Museum, hired her to work in the museum's applied art department.

About a year later, she moved to Paris, where she worked as a studio assistant to Mr. Appel, stretching his canvasses and cleaning his brushes. On Mr. Sandberg's recommendation, she studied etching at Atelier 17, the workshop founded by the influential printmaker [Stanley William Hayter](#).

"That was the only official artistic training she had," Philip de Jong said in an interview.

Nevertheless, Ms. de Jong began to paint contorted animalistic figures and abstract works, using a technique called impasto to apply thick layers of paint to the canvas. When she was 19, she became a member of the Situationist International, an anticapitalist movement led by [Guy Debord](#), a French Marxist theorist.

In 1962, there was a split in the movement, and Mr. Debord ejected all of the artists, including Ms. de Jong. "You know when I became a professional?" she said in [an interview with T: The New York Times Style Magazine](#) in 2021. "When I got thrown out of the Situationist."



The first issue of The Situationist Times, from 1962. Ms. de Jong founded and edited the journal, which included essays, artwork and groundbreaking graphic design. via Monoskop

Part of her response was to start The Situationist Times, using it as a platform for a broad range of artists. She produced six issues sporadically over five years, until she ran out of money in 1967.

“That journal was such a huge accomplishment,” said Karen Kurczynski, an art history professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, who curated an exhibition, “Human Animals: The Art of Cobra,” which included works by Ms. de Jong, at the university’s art center in 2016.

“She made it when she was so young,” she said, “and working surrounded by so many of these older male artists, some of whom rejected her. She made that journal in defiance of them, really.”

After her relationship with Mr. Jorn ended in 1969, Ms. de Jong moved back to the Netherlands. She married twice, first to the Dutch gallerist Hans Brinkman, whom she divorced in 1989. A year later, she began a relationship with Thomas H. Weyland, a lawyer, whom she married in 1998.



Ms. de Jong's 1981 painting "L'Âne du Liban," based on a novel of the same name by the Anglo-Lebanese writer Edward Atiyah. Jacqueline de Jong, via of Ortuzar Projects, New York and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London. Photographed by Gert Jan van Rooij

Mr. Weyland died in 2009. Ms. de Jong's brother is her only immediate survivor.

Ms. de Jong carried on working and exhibiting after her second husband's death, though she received little attention from critics or from the art market. "She wasn't much concerned with being in the middle of the art world," her New York art dealer, Ales Ortuzar, said in an interview. "She was very happy to keep moving and finding new styles and approaches to her art, with a radical fearlessness. It was only later in her life that she received so much attention."

The turning point came in 2012, when she had a major solo exhibition at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm and Yale acquired her archives.

"At that moment, a lot of people realized, hey, this is quite an interesting figure," said Mr. Britt, the art dealer. "People started to ask, Why haven't we paid more attention to her?"

The curator Alison M. Gingeras included some of Ms. de Jong's artworks in an important retrospective, "The Avant-Garde Won't Give Up: Cobra and Its Legacy," at the Blum & Poe gallery in New York and Los Angeles in 2015. Other exhibitions followed in Los Angeles, Brussels and Toulouse, France.



"Painters Thoughts," which Ms. de Jong started in 2023 and completed this year. Credit:, via Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, photographed by Todd-White Art Photography

"One of the most fascinating things about her was how she continued to evolve," Professor Kurczynski said. "She kept staying in touch with current politics and events and channeling them through these incredibly energetic paintings and objects."

Ms. de Jong, who was diagnosed with metastatic liver cancer in May, continued working on her art until she died, her nephew David de Jong, a Dutch journalist and author, said.

"She loved every minute of the successes of the last years," he said, adding: "She was a force of nature. We all thought she was going to live to 100 at least. She had the energy of a perennial 12-year-old, and she was very intense, and she lived intensely. She lived for art."