

ARTIST ARNE HENDRIKS IS INSPIRING PROTEIN RESEARCHERS

WUR artist in residence Arne Hendriks says art and science go together perfectly. Over the next few months, he will help scientists to look at the transition to a more plant-based diet from a different perspective. On 6 February, he gave his inspiration talk as part of Protein Transition Community Day.

‘I am an artistic researcher,’ says Hendriks. ‘That means I use artistic methods for my research rather than scientific methods.’ Hendriks doesn’t make sculptures or paintings: ‘It’s much more about the stories, ideas, presentations, conversations, encounters and hopefully the inspiration. Sometimes all I do is to create space for other people to shine or to meet each other.’

In his talk, Hendriks introduced eight archetypes that he had come up with as a way of collating, exploring and understanding the stories about the protein transition. They included the ‘ocean farmer’ who farms at sea, growing

seaweed and algae, and the ‘chick-etarian’, who believes a visit to Kentucky Fried Chicken can save the world. With ‘The Incredible Shrinking Man’, Hendriks is continuing with the project of the same name that he started 10 years ago. ‘This is a central theme in my work. The Shrinking Man is based on the naïve idea that we human beings need to become smaller, because then we won’t need to consume as much and we’ll be more capable of living in equilibrium with the planet.’

BUBBLE

Gijs Kleter of Wageningen Food Safety Research, who works on the safety of novel foods and GMOs, thinks it is a good idea to have Hendriks involved in the protein transition programme. ‘Because he helps you to see it through a different lens. That produces new insights and ideas. It draws scientists out of their bubble.’

Food researcher Diederik Esser of Wageningen Food & Biobased Research thought at the start of the

presentation: ‘What’s all this about?’ But as the talk progressed, he was won over. ‘I see a role for Hendriks in putting the protein transition on the agenda. He can get people talking about it.’ Since September 2019, Hendriks has been spending two days a

week on Wageningen campus in an arrangement due to last eighteen months. He feels very welcome. ‘When you are doing scientific research these days, there is not much room for stepping outside your own straight lines, whereas scientists are generally very creative people. I try to provide a creative space they can step into, and where we can collaborate.’   AJ

‘First I thought: what’s all this about?’

