In its dual function as both documentation/representation of actual "social events" and the creation/presentation of an "aesthetic event," documentary film, at an early stage, started posing questions that have become central to the emergent field of visual culture; in W.T.J. Mitchell’s terms, “the visual construction of the social field.” Rather than merely raising questions about meaning and being, however, documentary film & photography foreground the (inherent) ambivalence in any form of endlessly reproducible visual culture, i.e., its function as at once the inscription of some form of external (social, cultural) reality, and its immanent reality as an aesthetic event. Focusing on the work of the prolific Dutch documentary filmmaker & photographer, Johan van der Keuken, whose (filmed) portraits of individual artists are as outspokenly “political” as his political films are emphatically and self-consciously “aesthetic,” I will explore this ambivalence at the heart of the photographic/documentary image, and argue that an approach of van der Keuken’s work from an explicitly (and radical) aesthetic, rather than a hermeneutic or semantic perspective, i.e., to move “beyond” representation, is necessary in order to grasp their operation as affective events.