**Unimaginable. How Antoni van Leeuwenhoek discovered the micro-world**

**A tiny microscope was all he needed to uncover an entirely new world, a world nobody had seen before. From 18 April 2023, National Museum Boerhaave revisits a world first discovered by Antoni van Leeuwenhoek 350 years ago. The amazing microworld becomes visible in the special temporary exhibition *Unimaginable*. *How Van Leeuwenhoek’s microscope changed the world*.**

Fun and science, they seem unlikely twins. And yet it is really amazing and incredibly fun to learn what can be seen and discovered under a microscope. And new observations are still being made today. We have by no means exhausted the microworld that was opened up ‘to us’ no less than 350 years ago.

**Antoni who?**

Antoni van Leeuwenhoek was a Dutch textile merchant who made a name for himself with his self-made microscope. He saw things that had never been seen before, discovering an entirely new world. It may be a rather unusual combination, a trader who is also a microbiologist, but Antoni regularly used magnifying lenses to check fabrics. Working with metal plates and glass globules, he eventually created a small device, a microscope that proved so excellent that it was the first ever to reveal the microworld.

Van Leeuwenhoek made hundreds of microscopes, yet only a few have been preserved worldwide. This makes it rather special that National Museum Boerhaave has no fewer than five of them in its collection. Van Leeuwenhoek’s microscope is so special that it was finalist in the national masterpiece contest *Pronkstuk van Nederland*, leavingRembrandt’s Nightwatch behind.

**Find out for yourself!**

In the *Unimaginable* exhibition, we will bring you as close to Antoni van Leeuwenhoek as possible. You will be peering over his seventeenth-century shoulders, as it were. What did he see? And what made it so special? As visitors, you will experience the sense of wonder and fun of those very first peeks into the microworld.

We show the fine and unique collection of items Van Leeuwenhoek and his contemporaries were working with. These microscopes, sketches and letters literally make the microworld visible. We will also focus on current developments in microscopy and the techniques used. *How do you actually look at something under the microscope? How do you record what you see? And how far are we by now able to zoom in?*

Intrigued? After your visit to *Unimaginable*, you will no longer feel uncomfortable about that seemingly scary microworld. Find out why Van Leeuwenhoek got so much pleasure out of his work and learn more about microscopy. How do you get to understand a world you have never seen? Look, see and enjoy!

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[www.rijksmuseumboerhaave.nl](http://www.rijksmuseumboerhaave.nl)

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Photo impressions and a selection of the items on display can be downloaded from the press file on the museum’s website.