

Annika von Hauswolff, *Untitled*, 2003, Han Nefkens H+F collection

Pictures from Another Wall

The collection of *Huis Marseille* at De Pont Museum
15 February - 5 July 2020

Huis Marseille, Museum for Photography has now existed in Amsterdam for twenty years. This anniversary is being celebrated with an exhibition comprised of roughly one hundred works from its collection, to be shown in the New Wing at De Pont, its sister institution in Tilburg. Over the past two decades Huis Marseille has built a beautiful collection of more than 750 photographic works. The blurring of boundaries is one of the outlooks of the exhibition, which focuses on acquisitions from the past five years.

Jan de Pont, the Tilburg attorney and entrepreneur whose bequest made it possible for De Pont to open in 1992, began his law practice in Huis Marseille on Amsterdam's Keizersgracht. When his son Jos de Pont, having lived there during his university years and developed his negatives in the bathtub as an amateur photographer, was able to purchase the building in 1995, there arose the idea of using the location to establish a museum for photography – the first in the Netherlands.

When its doors opened to the public in 1999, Huis Marseille had not only the use of a monumental canal house but also a collection consisting of about fifty photographs which formed the basis for its acquisition and exhibition policies. A major part of this initial donation was made up of work by the *Becher school*, which included Thomas Struth, Thomas Ruff and Andreas Gursky, who studied under Bernd Becher at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf during the late 1970s. The collaborative duo Bernd and Hilla Becher had acquired an international reputation with their series of black-and-white photographs of industrial architecture, which they recorded in a consistent and objective manner. Although their work is not part of the collection, their formal, conceptual approach can be discerned in the work of their pupils. In the series *Places of Worship* Struth, for example, photographed the interiors and exteriors of famous churches and temples, with visitors. In the work *Chiesa dei Frari, Venedig* (1995) from this series, a small group of tourists is dwarfed by the impressive Venetian basilica and Titian's equally imposing *Assumption of the Virgin*. What are they experiencing there, and what does the photographer want us to see?

While the Becher photographs remain modest in size, the dimensions of *Chiesa dei Frari, Venedig*, 231 x 183 cm, demonstrate that photography has entered the domain of visual art once and for all. The black-and-white photographs of the Bechers are mainly associated with art movements such as minimalism and conceptualism, whereas the large-scale color photographs of the new generation assertively engage in a dialogue with painting. Characteristic of this develop-

Huis Marseille (2017), foto Eddo Hartmann

Torbjørn Rødland, *Old Broom*, 2014

ment is the fact that Gursky presently no longer teaches *photography* but rather *autonomous art*. Nevertheless it was precisely his experimentation with digital techniques that led him to create the most unforgettable photographs. Louisa Clement, who studied under him, also explores the digital potential of photography and, in doing so, even makes use of a smartphone. This has resulted in strange, sensual photographs that reveal their secrets only after careful examination.

The chemistry generated by exhibiting and collecting has led to strong accents in Huis Marseille's collection, an example being South African photography, where David Goldblatt can be regarded as the 'pater familias' and well-known figures such as Zanele Muholi as representing the younger generation. Japanese photography constitutes another point of emphasis. On view in the exhibition is work by Mikiko Hara, Yuki Onodera and Lieko Shiga. The photographs of Hara seem to be coincidental snapshots, like those we all make on our phones. But don't be deceived: Hara works with a traditional analogue camera that she keeps tucked away in her handbag. Inconspicuously and without looking through the viewfinder, she takes the shot. Onodera manipulates her images on the computer. Due to photomontage and various printing techniques, the ordinary plastic water bottles in her photographs suddenly force us to think of happily dancing figures.

The transition from Japan to the Netherlands is a minor one if we look at the tranquil photographs made by Jacqueline Hassink (Enschede 1966-Amsterdam 2018) in Japan between 2004 and 2014. In every respect they comply with two key concepts in classical Japanese aesthetics known as *wabi-sabi*. According to an explanation given in *A Beautiful Moment*, the exhibition on Japanese photography held at Huis Marseille in 2018, *wabi* can be described as the 'serene attention to simple things' and *sabi* as 'beauty acquired through the patina of time'. Hassink is one of the 'house photographers': her work has not only been shown in various solo and group exhibitions, but is also well represented in the collection. Along with Scarlett Hooft Graafland, Dana Lixenberg and Rineke Dijkstra, Hassink was among the participants in *Digital? Analogue!* (2010-2011). This exhibition, which focused on the importance of analogue photography's continued existence and that of master printer and AAP-Lab co-founder Peter Svenson for both younger and more established photographers, pointed out a striking, international development: while many photographers do make avid use of the limitless possibilities that the computer offers in terms of digital photography, for their more personal work they are reverting with increasing frequency to the analogue camera and its roll of film, due to object-based and craft-related aspects. Particularly the singular style of British photographer Jamie Hawkesworth has inspired many young colleagues to work with the analogue process as well.

A look at the Dutch photographers in the collection of Huis Marseille is enough for us to see how broadly varied their work is. From a probing portrait of Rineke Dijkstra by Koos Breukel to the documentary photographs and the video made by Eddo Hartmann in Pyongyang, the capital of communist 'utopia' North Korea. Contrasting with this objective registration of a desolate urban landscape are the alienating still lifes of visual artist Ilona Plaum. In a single image she juxtaposes reproductions of fruits and plants with 'real' three-dimensional examples.

The boundaries between photography, visual art, fashion and commerce can no longer be clearly drawn. *Annabella for SEPP* by the American Roe Ethridge, for instance, is the direct result of an assignment, for the 'football and fashion' magazine *SEPP*, to produce new models from countries

Scarlett Hooft Graafland, *One Thousand Bananas*, Bolivia, 2016

participating in the 2012 European Football Championship. While the image of the young bikini-clad woman posing on a leather sofa may be reminiscent of sexy shots in *Playboy*, her attitude and disarming smile clearly speak another language.

In terms of scale and composition, the photographs of the American Andres Serrano display similarities with the old masters. Whereas the painterly depiction played the main role with the latter, though, Serrano straightforwardly shows us the dreadful reality. Following a series about the homeless in New York City, he gave us a look, in *Denizens of Brussels*, at the degrading situation of immigrants in the European capital. The never-ending field of tension between social wrongs and the visual beauty of the image is tangibly present. It puts the viewer in an awkward position. How does photography, as art, distinguish itself from the tidal wave of images that washes over us every day? In the catalogue accompanying the exhibition *The Rediscovery of the World* (2013) director Nanda van den Berg writes: 'If anything characterises the artistic idiom of photography today it is a burning curiosity: a desire to visualise what lies behind the visible, to discover the parts of which our perception is actually made, and to examine how "real" or "unreal" our perceptions really are.

Photos by Rødland, Hooft Graafland and Lixenberg: collection Huis Marseille.



Live, Laugh, Limerence, performance Ministry of Sound, London, 2019
courtesy the artist and DRAF, photo Mike Massaro

Marijke De Roover

A realistic portrayal of someone using love as an escapist drug
15 February - 3 May 2020

Captivating, incisive, ironic, honest, camp and vocally flawless. This is how a musical performance by Belgian artist Marijke De Roover (1990) could be characterized. At the HISK (Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunsten) in Ghent, she has developed her own distinct variety of performance and video art in recent years.

Marijke De Roover's works are musical bricolages: constructions in which the artist allows elements having very diverse origins to interact with each other and thus cause the material, in its new context, to assume unexpected connotations. She makes free use of opera, musicals, Disney productions, romcoms and karaoke and relies on feminist/queer theory as well.

In early October 2019, during Frieze Week in London, her animated performance *Live, Laugh, Limerence* had its debut at an evening organized by the David Roberts Art Foundation. In front of a large audience at the Ministry of Sound nightclub, she proved herself to be an irresistible stage personality. Dressed in a cloud of pink tulle and spotlighted by an array of floodlights, she masterfully interspersed her own lines with musical quotes from European and American pop culture. Throughout this she shared with the audience very personal experiences in love and displayed a subtle sense of perspective on herself.

The script of *Live, Laugh, Limerence* moreover serves as the basis for De Roover's new installation *A realistic portrayal of someone using love as an escapist drug*, created specially for De Pont. This (video) installation will be shown, in conjunction with two live performances, as part of De Pont's new project series *WOOL*.

In *A realistic portrayal...* De Roover undermines, with musicality and a touch of irony, institutionalized notions about love. Her eye focuses on mainstream culture – films, pop songs, videos – and how love is portrayed and sung about in this. Love, that is to say, between a man and a woman, a boy and a girl. For despite the success of an occasional Hollywood film or television series based on a gay or lesbian theme, in popular culture the course of love sticks to well-worn heterosexual paths.

In De Roover's universe love does not comply with social and cultural norms, roles and patterns of expectation, but it does manifest itself in many forms of queerness. Dominant ideas about male/female relationships, motherhood, sexual identity and reproduction race by and are cleverly written off by way of quotes from musicals, opera and films. In her work De Roover says she has been influenced by the American poet and essayist Adrienne Rich (1929-2012), who defended feminism and lesbian issues. In addition to her literary work, Rich also wrote critical nonfiction such as *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*. Despite situating herself within this critical feminist and queer tradition, Marijke De Roover does not consider herself an activist artist. Her musical performances and videos might, after all, be just a bit too idiosyncratic for this. But her wish to undermine the status quo as an artist is clearly

evident, just as it is in her 2018 interview with Romuald Demidenko: 'I think artists have a power and a responsibility to contribute to social issues. Although art doesn't produce immediate change, it can provide a voice, challenge normativity, reveal the unknown and create a new vocabulary for change.'

Job Koelewijn

Dedication means authority

Job Koelewijn and his team came to De Pont in November in order to re-execute one of his works in the collection.

Dedication means authority: it sounds like a catchy aphorism. The quote comes from the founder of Taoism, the Chinese philosopher Lao-tze, whose eighty-one texts containing wisdom on mystical and ethical matters were compiled in the *Tao Te Ching* (The Book of the Way and of Virtue). With fervent dedication the quote has been penned on the wall with the aid of a stencil that was shifted a bit each time. The slightly hallucinatory pattern created by this repetition yields a powerful image.

The artist first applied this work to the wall at De Pont for the anniversary exhibition *ReView* (2017). Whereas it then involved one wall, Koelewijn has now filled an entire space with it. The visitor is surrounded by the text from all sides. Each wall shows a variation of the work: in horizontal rows, in circular shapes and with a vertical orientation.

Job Koelewijn (second from right) during the installation of *Dedication means authority*, photo Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen



Marc Mulders

From De Pont's collection

As of 15 February

Selected work by Marc Mulders from De Pont's collection will be shown in connection with the publication *Marc Mulders, werken 1980-2020*, containing the essay *Hortus Deliciarum* by art critic Anneke van Wolfswinkel. The book chronicles, for the first time, the course of the artist's development over a period of nearly forty years. This departs from the notion of the garden as a bountiful place, an important source of inspiration for Mulders.

Philippe Parreno & Liam Gillick

4 April - 30 August

The French artist Philippe Parreno and the New York-based British artist Liam Gillick have been collaborating intermittently since 1990. This spring and summer De Pont will show their first joint retrospective, comprising installations, videos, photographs and objects. The two are known for their openness to working with set designers, architects, writers, illustrators, filmmakers, philosophers, politicians and musicians.

www.depont.nl

Every Thursday evening De Pont is open until 8 pm. Admission is free after 5 pm on what we call *donderdagavond@depont*. On these evenings we offer visitors *Eten wat De Pont schaft*, a meat-free buffet-style meal. See www.depont.nl for more information about the activities in De Pont, such as free concerts, gallery talks and Evening School.

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right: Dana Lixenberg, *Wilteysha 1993* (detail),
from the series *Imperial Courts 1993-2015*,
collection Huis Marseille

DE PONT MUSEUM

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