

## WILD WALLS #2

**Dear friends of the gallery,**

Since we are all confined to our homes, we will be taking this opportunity to introduce you to *Wild Walls #2*. Exhibitions in museums, galleries and cultural institutions unfortunately are 'invisible' right now. We feel that this time urges us to ask ourselves how it feels to depend mainly on online communication, to ask ourselves what a community really is and how we want to approach each other. What we miss the most these days is meeting each other, the conversations in the gallery with artists and visitors about art and how it relates to life.

Yesterday I saw two goldfinches in the garden, joyfully playing around between branches with their beautifully colored feathers. Immediately the image of the small painting that Dutch painter Carel Fabritius painted of a goldfinch in 1654 and that is part of the collection of the Mauritshuis in The Hague came to my mind. The image of the *Goldfinch* painted by the most talented pupil of Rembrandt made the experience of the real goldfinch even more real.

This is the power of art. It makes reality more real. It can inspire, comfort, incite reflection and above all art can set our imagination in motion. While selecting the works that we installed as an exhibition for our second *Wild Wall* Martin and I were happy to be able to see all the art works with different eyes, as physical objects generating an experience that opens up a mental space. Carrying the works around, trying out different positions on the wall while discussing the images and the way they affect us was a moment of connection with ideas and - through the dialogue with the works of the artists - with a feeling of community in days of forced isolation.

The frayed donkey in the photo by Paul Kooiker is a real eye catcher! The photo is part of a series of "portraits" of donkeys that, in combination with a photo of a naked female figure, form the installation *The Rumor*. The installation was made for the exhibition *The Tears of Eros* in the Centraal Museum in Utrecht, focussing especially on the work of the Dutch surrealist Joop Moesman. Kooiker photographed the donkeys as fashion models in a specially equipped studio. They are all real characters and they form, as it were, a cordon around the nude. The title *The Rumor* refers to a painting by Moesman of a naked woman riding a bicycle through a dead-quiet street. The work was labeled lewd and often removed from exhibitions. That empty street has now - at the moment of social distancing- become exactly the surreal image that is almost normal. Kooikers appealing little donkey, appears to be black and white but, with a nod to amateur photography, is printed in a light sepia tone. (1)

Anna Ostoya strongly believes in the power of art as an instrument of change. She once wrote: "It influences how people experience the world, how they judge the past, the present, and the future. Through art, identities and sensibilities are being formed." The two works of her *Demos* series in Wild Walls #2, are collages that combine fragments of newspaper images of mass demonstrations with a colorful abstract composition that refers to historical avant garde images. Ostoya produces aesthetic objects that repeatedly direct the viewer toward the historical and institutional contexts of artistic production. Her work is always on the edge and in our view shows great courage in the way it advertises a kind of powerful vulnerability. (2,3)

Hamza Halloubi's work can be read as a journey in time, forward and backward. As a young art student in Morocco Halloubi started to work on a series of paintings of human figures. He then erased the figures by painting them white. The canvases were rolled up, accompanying the artist on his journeys to different countries. He thought of using the canvases again. And recently he began sanding them. This intense process made the paintings look like weathered murals, sometimes even with holes in them. The outlines of the figures appear and disappear at the same time. They seem to refer to the idea that cultures - and people - collide and merge time and again. Halloubi's work raises questions about the concept of a community. Who are we as individuals? What do we share? What distinguishes us from others and what connects us? Martin often describes the artistic position of Halloubi as that of an archeologist, digging in his own and our history. (4)

The paintings of Sanne Rous are always touching you in the heart. Her painterly thinking is all about observing and activating the gaze. Painting offers opportunities in this age of digital manipulation: it can be disobedient, even subversive, because - after being endlessly declared dead - it has sung away from the ballast of traditional expectations that it holds on to. The works of Rous have various starting points. They come from observations and memories as well as from stories and photos. It's not so much a narrative aspect that connects the works, rather they share a world in which the sensory experience of looking (a looking that is also feeling) is central. As Rous says: "The painting becomes an expanding mental space where the possibilities of the image can be tested." (5, 6, 7)

Cuban curator and art-critic Gerardo Mosquera wrote about the work of Cristina Lucas: "An artist of ideas and provocations, Cristina Lucas uses any medium to critically debate a wide range of historical, social and cultural issues. Armed with a social conscience that underscores the complexity of her themes, she always avoids any

hint of 'militant' simplification. Lucas is a 'political' artist who does not ignore the power of the image and its poetry, a conceptual poetry that, far from detracting from the social message of her work, reinforces it in a kind of 'aesthetic activism'. On a different level, Lucas uses art to conduct direct historical research. She blends art and historiography, making art media simultaneously delve into, represent, construct and communicate history with their own innate force. Thus is apparent in *Unending Lightning*' (2013 -), a monumental video installation and an ongoing research project. It is a comprehensive record to dates of air raids on civilian targets. Lucas's *Lightning* is also the basis of the embroidered anti-maps in *Tufting*, with 'blemishes' created by bombs dropped from the sky". Lucas used stills from the video as a basis for embroidered maps on artificial silk. By embroidering, the fabric contracts and the idea of a landscape arises. The bombed spots lie in the landscape like inky black scars. It is confronting the way the works in this series evoke associations with the maps that are published daily on the spreading of the Corona virus. (8)

NEVER ODD OR EVEN is a palindrome, a phrase that reads the same whether you read it forwards or backwards. The word palindrome derives from the Greek roots 'palin' ('again') and 'dromos' ('way, direction') and thus literally means 'a running back'. The phrase NEVER ODD OR EVEN could loosely be translated into Dutch as never equal or unequal, as never bizarre or ordinary. The work *Body Double* by Tom Callemin was part of a duo exhibition (together with the work of Italian artist Giovanni Giaretta). The title of the show implicitly suggested the search for the meaning and interpretation of images and the reality they reflect. Callemin's work magically echoes the title of the exhibition in the sense that the work is an ode to all senses that can, repeatedly, expose the illusion's 'make-ability'. Fact and fiction are never one or the other but are always fluid and conditioned constructs that are also permanently subject to change. The *Body Double* works by Callemin also share a direct link with the illusion of cinema. Here, an object is portrayed in such a way that it attains the aura of a body. The object is a husk that is suddenly brought to life. Images are projected as never equal or unequal, as never bizarre or ordinary. (9)

In 2017 Daniëlle van Ark made a brilliant presentation entitled *I wait, I wait, I wait, I wait* at the Kunstruimte of the Nederlandsche Bank. The concept of that exhibition arose from the realization that we spend a lot of time in our lives in transition spaces. According to philosopher Ton Lemaire, contemporary man is inwardly separate from the space in which he finds himself. He is, in Lemaire's words, "delocalized". This means that we feel more or less at home everywhere. At the same time, we are nowhere really at our place. We are often tourists in everyday places such as shops, roads, airports and stations. You cannot attach yourself to such places. The waiting room is also such a non-place. Van Ark based the concept of her exhibition on Lemaire's theory, the function of the exhibition space in the Nederlandsche Bank itself and the song 'Waiting Room' by post-hardcore band Fugazi. This 80s song still addresses current issues such as identity, self-esteem, fear of the future and people's need to make it today. She turned the exhibition space into a place with cliché images such as obsolete magazines, wall art, a coat rack and display cases. A non-descript space where it is unclear what or who you are waiting for, and where you are confronted with life itself. Van Ark re-photographed and enlarged postcards with landscapes and turned them a quarter turn, making them resemble Rorschach tests. The two works by Van Ark in Wild Walls # 2 underline the realization that we are currently also in a non-descript transition-time space.

(10, 11)

A recurring thread in the multidisciplinary corpus of works by Sander Breure & Witte van Hulzen is their interest in various codes of human behavior. Since antiquity, a person's face and appearance have been considered 'the mirror of the soul'. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, (pseudo)scientific treatises such as those of Swiss theologian Johann Kaspar Lavater caused physiognomy – the theory that character traits can be discerned from a person's outward appearance – to become hugely popular. Wealthy ladies used the Lavater method to analyze the facial features of their secret lovers. As a result of this fashionable pastime, some people adopted the habit of wearing masks outside their homes.

In 2017, Breure and Van Hulzen began making sculptures – assemblages in the form of human figures, and also separate heads in ceramics. The basis for these first sculptures was the notion that people are, in a sense, always playing a role, performing the self. Such a role is accompanied by certain personality traits, a specific 'mask', an individual body language, and deliberately chosen attributes such as clothing. The sculptures try to inhabit these 'roles'. They function as actors in an equally realistic and fictional theater of the everyday. The clay-modeled portraits and assembled figures of Breure & Van Hulzen constitute a collection that can be performed and displayed in many different – and changing – constellations. (12)

Evi Vingerling's work is a reflection of her daily life experiences of beauty. The way sunlight throws shadows on trees and branches, the way a landscape can be deconstructed in fields of color, the way light can glow up against a dark sky: in the paintings of Vingerling all these experiences are assembled and generously shared with the viewer. For Evi Vingerling the awareness that every individual is part of the same world, that essentially we are all bits of the here and now, is an invitation to portray, directly, her own individual experiences. Her work has developed via unconventional motifs, not based on theories but found in the immediacy of life. As an artist she doesn't oppose the course of things, but spontaneously and consciously goes along with it. The work of Evi Vingerling attests to a belief in the liveliness of the reality that surrounds us. Her inspiration comes from what she observes around her, but also from poetry and literary or theoretical texts of others. The concentrated energy in Evi Vingerling's work always makes us happy. (13, 14)

Now that art also is trapped between four walls and reduced to a media experience we wanted to re-think the possibilities to present art as a physical experience, even if it is on a digital platform. Please enjoy Wild Walls #2.