

GALERIE NELSON – FREEMAN

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Breeze : Nan Hoover, Rini Hurkmans, Fiona Tan, performance de Teresa María Díaz Nerio
Curator : Marja Bloem

September 20 – October 31, 2008

The Nelson – Freeman Gallery, with the support of the Mondriaan Foundation and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Paris, is pleased to present the Breeze exhibition. Four artists with different backgrounds and experiences, all very active in Dutch cultural life, have been brought together in this exhibition proposed by Marja Bloem presenting videographic works as well as a performance. Nan Hoover (1931-2008), Rini Hurkmans and Fiona Tan explore the relationship between nature and the body through video as a medium. On the day of the opening, the performance of Teresa Maria Diaz Nerio will contribute another vision to this exhibition of the link between nature and the human body.

Nan Hoover was born in the United in 1931 and died in Berlin in 2008. In 1969 she settled in Amsterdam, and acquired Dutch citizenship in 1975. She studied at the Corcoran Gallery Art School, and first worked on painting and drawing before focusing on video, performance and photography in 1974. Nan Hoover is considered to be one of the pioneers in art video. Her videographic works has been presented internationally at festivals and in great institutions and museums such as Document 6 and 8 (Kassel), the Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam), the MOMA (New York), the Berlin film Festival, the Kunstmuseum in Bern, and the Folkwang Museum in Germany. Last August a commemorative day was held to present her videographic works at the Netherlands Media Art Institute in Amsterdam.

Nan Hoover works from a sensual point of view, but also from a conceptual one with light, colors, shapes, movements, and space. In several of her films from the 1980s she explores parts of her own body and shows interest in the subject of women in the visual arts. Her videos also often evoke associations with landscape. In « Movements in Light » (1975) – one of her first videographic works – we find this play of shapes, shadows and light. Slow movements generate abstract images that we barely identify with parts of the body. The motionless camera and the absence of editing create an atmosphere of tranquility. The images are internal, and distant as in a dream.

Although most of Nan Hoover's works were created in studios, some of them from the 1980s were filmed in the open air. Her objective was to summarize each one of the countries that she visited in one single frame. This is the case in « Blue Mountains/ Australia » (1980), in which the context is an entirely determined by sound (flowing water and birds) and the reflections of branches and foliage on the water. The natural shapes change with the rhythm of light and time going by.

Rini Hurkmans (1954) teaches at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy. Her work has been exhibited in several galleries in the Netherlands and other countries as well as at the Stedelijk Museum, and has recently been exhibited at Sonsbeek (Arnhem). Her works are now found in several Dutch and international public and private collections. We will soon be able to see one of her installations in the « Parque de la Memoria » in Buenos Aires.

Rini Hurkmans grew up in a part of the Netherlands where rituals play an important role. Through her installations, videos and sculptures, she seeks to express the need for protection and affection that people have in a world where isolation and separation are more the rule than the exception. She creates receptacles for human intuition, memories, fantasies, desires, feelings of marvel; places where the opposition between the inner world and the outer world is overcome.

In the projection presented at the entrance to the gallery, « The Flavor of Salt » (2008), we see a carefully set table outside the gallery. Nature gradually takes possession of the food on the table while the host awaits his guests, who never arrive. Here this work clearly refers to the still lifes and other « vanities » of the Flemish and Dutch schools of the 17th century as well as to a feeling of despair and insecurity. Inspired by the New Testament, the film shows the degree to which betrayal can change friendship, and happiness can turn into disillusionment and solitude.

On the other side of the wall, the black and white photography is part of the series of « Pieta » self-portraits. The first photo of this series dates from 1993. Inspired by the religious image of the Virgin Mary with the inert body of Christ on her knees, we see the artist seated on a pedestal in the middle of a space, holding a shape on her knees. In each new « Pieta » the space and the shape are different. It is shape that gives the work a mysterious element symbolizing the warped emotions of human beings.

Fiona Tan was born in 1966 in Indonesia of an Indochinese father and an Australian mother. She emigrated to Australia as a child and then went to Amsterdam where she still lives and works. She studied at the Rietveld Academy and then at the Rijksacademy for Visual Arts. Over the past 10 years her films and photographs have earned international fame and have been exhibited all over the world. Her works have been presented at several Biennales (Venice, Berlin, Istanbul...),



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and are now part of great collections such as those of the Tate Modern, the Stedelijk Museum, or the Chicago MCA. Her next exhibition, « Rise and Fall », will be held in 2009 at the Vancouver Art Gallery and will then travel to Europe and Australia.

The work of Fiona Tan is essentially marked by the evocation of the postcolonial situation from which she comes. Through the use of images taken from ethnographic archives, she explores the notions of identity and memory and examines the perception of cultural differences.

In her new works she moves away from the representation of human beings and offers to nature a place for meditation.

The film « Island » (2008), presented for the first time, was made on the Swedish island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea, in the same natural reserve where the Russian producer Tarkovsky shot his last film, « Sacrifice ». « Island » was filmed in black and white with very precise camera work and editing. The voiceover – a text written by Fiona Tan – is a decisive part of « Island ». The strong vegetation and presence of water create the sensation of being far from the world, and aspire to a form of meditation, of symbolic retreat.

Teresa Maria Diaz Nerio was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, in 1982. She lives in Amsterdam and is studying at the Dutch Art Institute in Enschede. She has completed her studies at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy, where she also carried out her latest performances: « Hommage to Sara Bartman 2007 », « Throne of Gold 2007 », « Trujillo's Island 2007 ». In a very committed way, she deals with subjects like the role of the voyeur and the socio-cultural climate in the Western world.

The performance that Teresa Maria Diaz Nerio presents on the opening day of her exhibition is based on the story of Sara Bartman, and invokes the role of the woman as object in society and art. Dressed in a leather jumpsuit that makes her look like a primitive woman, the artist stands on a pedestal without moving while the audience looks at her. The tension rises as minutes pass, and the atmosphere becomes more and more disturbing and embarrassing.

Sara Bartman, better known under the name of Vénus Hottentot, was a Khoisan South African woman who was brought to England. Her genitals and buttocks were beyond the Europeans' comprehension of the human body at that time. She was considered to be an animal and was exhibited as an object. After her death a mold of her body and of several parts of her anatomy were exhibited at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris until the 1970s. This performance is the result of a study of bodies of black people on the stage. « The fact of wearing one's body as a skin was a way to disguise myself but also to become myself through someone else. » The reason why Sara Hartman became this icon for the African people but also for the European people is a reaction against the scientific and voyeuristic rape of one's body.

In appearance, the works presented in the Breeze exhibition all have different starting points, but they also reveal interesting similarities. The subjective camera used in Fiona Tan's film implies the presence of a person, but a person who is not represented in the work itself. In Nan Hoover's first videographic works, which reveal an approach to landscape as body and body as landscape, the character is imagined as an abstraction, a shadow. In Rini Hurkman's representation of the uneaten meal, the physiological functions of the body as well as the social relations are manifested. Decomposition is shown as an implicit quality of nature.

All these visions of nature materialize in Teresa Maria Diaz Nerio's performance, in which the social and physiological relations are explicitly caricatured. Moreover, we find parallels between Rini Hurkman's photo « Pieta », Nan Hoover's first videographic works, and Teresa Maria Diaz Nerio's performance, in which the body is presented as an object.

After a Ph.D. in art history at the Rijksuniversiteit of Leiden, Marja Bloem worked at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam from 1971 to 2005 as painting and sculpture exhibition organizer. Marja Bloem is known in the world of Dutch and international art as an exhibition organizer, lecturer and author. She has also participated in the « Royal Subsidy for Painting » as a member of the jury. Several years ago she organized the first international retrospective of the painter Colin McCahon in Australia and New Zealand.



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