

Galerie Rompone

Wouter van Riessen „In my minds eye“

05. November 2022 - 21. Januar 2023

***When you look at your oeuvre, do you have subjects and themes that are constantly to be found in your work?**

My work as a whole revolves around the self-portrait. My particular interest is in the self as a collection of inner voices and moods; in who you are beyond the data that defines your identity. In recent paintings and photography, I explore the role that the imagination plays in this through art that touches me. From the poems of Baudelaire and the sunflower paintings by Van Gogh, new images arise. They reflect my inner world and are, in this respect, self-portraits.

***You navigate easily on different artistically expressions. Photography, performance, painting, printmaking and also music. Is there a compository or conceptual bond that is present in all of these fields?**

I would say there is a similar vibe throughout all of my work, a certain stillness; a sense of intimacy.

***On your puppet- paintings we see human beings (the puppeteers) interacting with puppets. Why are you interested in the opposition between the animated and non-animated world?**

I use the opposition between the animated and non-animated world only to efface it. Mind and body, spirit and dust are always inextricably entangled. Please note that the puppeteers are no humans either, they are made out of pigment - just like the puppets. Apart from that, looking at a puppet is not a one-way affair. The puppet looks back, it has a character of its own, with its own stories to tell.

***Are there any main subjects to the new puppet paintings you show here in Cologne?**

These puppeteers use their puppets as ways to look at themselves, to put themselves into question, to ponder upon moral and existential themes like: is it possible to really step outside of myself and meet others? am I really merely a collection of data? what does my identity tell me about myself and what am I to do with it?

***Is the unanimated world, like the puppets, able to express more than a human being could express?**

When I started out as an artist, I did a lot of self-portrait photography. But I found it harder and harder to strike the right pose. I became too aware of myself in front of the camera, could not act natural anymore. My work is not autobiographical, it is not about me as a person. In order to escape the personal, I started making self-portrait masks and later puppets. Because of this stylization the ego of the artist was taken out of the game, creating new space for the imagination of the viewer.

***Your new Photography series deals with Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal* and his poems in prose *Le Spleen de Paris* for which you use puppets as the main motives' characters. Why Baudelaire?**

His verses speak to me strongly. They have the power to evoke intimate memories and atmospheres; uncommon feelings of love and transience, connection and abandonment. To give form to such moods, I use props from childhood. Just like Baudelaire's poems, marionettes are charged with symbolic meaning and are able to convey deep emotions.

***What kind of atmosphere did you want to create by making the Baudelaire- Photography series?**

I aim for a sense of intimacy. My images often diverge considerably from what Baudelaire expresses in his poems; my emphasis differ from his. I simply have another point of view.

In one of the prose poems (*Les Veuves – The Widows*) he describes a widow's son as *impetuous, selfish, devoid of gentleness and patience*. I saw this child quite differently: stricken by fate, conjoined to his mother. Taking that image as my starting point, I then worked towards a photographic work. I step into the world of Baudelaire and look around freely.

***Your long-term project on *Fifteen Sunflowers in a Vase* is not just only an approximation towards Van Gogh but also an ongoing experiment of balancing harmonies in a painting. Please explain a bit.**

There are fifteen flowers, each with its own expression, seize, weight, sense of direction et cetera. When I enlarge a flower on the right side, I has its effects on the bouquet as a whole – it starts to lean to the right. When I darken its color, flowers on the other side of the bouquet seem lighter. Painting these still-lives is a balancing act.

***Why do you prefer painting in acrylic?**

I did a lot of oil painting too, but for the moment I prefer acrylic indeed. It is way more relaxed than painting in oil. Acrylic paint follows you on the way you want to go. If you take a wrong exit, no problem. Mistakes can be fixed. That idea gives me self-confidence and a sense of great freedom.

Biographie Kurzinformation, Aswahl/ selected biography

- 1991-1992 Rijksacademie van beeldende kunsten, Amsterdam
- 1990-1991 Ateliers Arnhem
- 1986-1990 ABK- Arnhem

Prizes and Grants selected

- 2018 Working grant for proven talent, Mondriaan Fund
- 1999-2000 Bethanienhaus Berlijn with a grant of BKVB
- 1999 Charlotte Köhlerprijs, Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds
- 1994 Koninklijke Prijs voor de Vrije Schilderkunst

Solo Shows (Auswahl/selection)

- 2022 In My Mind's Eye, Galerie Rompone, Cologne
- Les Merveilleux Nuages, Galerie Baudelaire, Antwerpen
- 2017 Die Erweckung, Galerie Rompone, Cologne
- 2016 Sanquin, Amsterdam
- 2015 Nieuw werk, Heden, The Hague
- Stilleven II, Galerie Witteveen, Amsterdam
- 2014 Stilleven, Galerie Witteveen, Amsterdam
- Variations on a Painting, LTD Gallery, Los Angeles
- 2012 De leeuwentemmer, Galerie Metis_NL, Amsterdam

Group Shows (selection)

- 2022 Vouch II, Loods 6, Amsterdam
- 2021 Icons, Identiteit in portretten, Fries Museum, Leeuwarden
- Phoenix, Galerie Rompone, Cologne
- 2020 Line Up, Lauriergracht 80, Amsterdam
- Nie Wieder/ Nooit meer, Kult Westmünsterland, Vreden
- Taboe of niet? LUMC, Leiden
- 2019 Small, but Oh là là, SBK Amsterdam
- Play / Spiel, Galerie Rompone, Cologne
- Face Off, Villa Mondriaan, Winterswijk
- 2018 The Uncanny String, Jan van Eyck Institute, Maastricht
- Angry Boys, Det Ny Kastet, Thisted
- Overschilderschilderij, De Aanschouw, Rotterdam
- 2017 Kunst op de koffie, Spijkerkwartier, Arnhem
- Objectives, Galerie with Tsjalling, Groningen
- Angry Boys, Galerie Rompone, Cologne
- 2016 Alles Kids, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen Rotterdam
- Autoselbstfahrer, Galerie Rompone, Cologne
- Anaconda, Kulturkirche Ost, Cologne
- Parelgoud, Museum Arnhem
- Vernieuwd verleden, Museum Coda, Apeldoorn
- Let it Blossom, Dudok de Groot, Gallery Amsterdam
- In gedachten- maskers, Phoebus Gallery, Rotterdam
- Je ne suis pas Vincent, Reuten Gallery, Amsterdam