

MARIE JULIA BOLLANSÉE 'WHITE MATTERS'

"But because truly being here is so much; because everything here apparently needs us, this fleeting world, which in some strange way keeps calling to us. Us, the most fleeting of all. Once for each thing. Just once; no more. And us too, just once. And never again. But to have been this once, completely, even if only once: to have been one with the earth, seems beyond undoing." *

The choice for video- and performance-artist Marie Julia Bollansée (1960) to be the first at the new artspace *.Deviation(s)* was a lucid one, it arose on the edge of reality and awareness of a future appearing. Immersed in her oeuvre on a Sunday afternoon at her home in Westmalle, I was caught by her being abundant as a woman and an artist.

On my way back I had to think of the sensitive language and figure/character in Rainer Maria Rilke's 'The Duino Elegies'. The earthyness, the transitiveness, the singularity, the visible, the braid of the ancient and the present, the intensity of life and the creation inextricably connected with death... 'the work of endlessly converting the visible, tangible world we love into the invisible vibrations and tremors of our own nature...'**

On a sunny Sunday, in the garden of this house full of memories, Marie Julia Bollansée told me about a performance with salt and bread. Later that year in hibernial Paris, we were thinking about the whiteness of the salt of the earth, the colour of transformation and re-beginning, the colour of challenge: 'White Matters'

*Rainer Maria Rilke, The Ninth Elegy, The Duino Elegies, translated by Stephen Mitchell

** Rainer Maria Rilke, The Ninth Elegy, The Duino Elegies, Lettre to Hulewicz, A.S. Kline 2009

'Man is the measure of all things. Of the things being what they are, and of things that are not what they are not.' (Protagoras)

The spatial installation 'White Matters' is a scoop : Marie Julia Bollansée puts a selection of her videoperformances from the series 'to the Absent Audience' together in one big installation. Accompanied by their soundscapes, they compose a fragile harmony, in which presence and absence meet each other in an ongoing interaction.

Five breads are laying in a pentagon, around a pile of white salt, they are the remnants of the performance SALT+BREAD, with the Audience present, that opened this show and this new space.

Marie Julia Bollansée refers with this installation to Vitruvius' system of human body proportions. The measure of man is to be the cardinal point in the contemporary technological era.

'The internet helps me to communicate with The Absent Audience. My backpack contains the old essentials. I show them on today's screens. I am a child of my time, rooted in history!'

Video-performances by Marie Julie Bollansée show a poetic simplicity. They grow out of a constant observing and perceive. The engine of her work is the always present, and never ceasing sensitivity with which she stands in life. The artist tries to re-awaken this experience of being-in-the-world as a wakeful presence. Trying to make visible what is hiding subcutaneous. The bearer of her work is her skin. The body as mediator.

Each videoperformance is created around one specific object or event. In one pure movement, in connexion with the object, Marie julia Bollansée performs a sculptural language.

The ten videoperformances in 'White Matters', appear in their architectural formation and their synchronicity together in motion and form, and each performance keeps its singularity.

Colours play an important part in the oeuvre of Marie Julia Bollansée. Colour for her is not an incidental quality of things, but a timeless being, with an own soul, own language and impact. It is in that ageless space that uncertainty lays, before mankind can name them. Colours are older than humankind, they are nature, the invisible, only shown when verifiable. Colours are hard to master. Their viewing sometimes forms an inexpressible otherness in the human order. They are ancient archetypes at which the silence of their uncertainty gives room to the unknowable game of imagination.

Marie Julia Bollansée underlines the sensitivity of the porous border between inner- and outer world by using a colour surface of pure pigment on her body. The visible world, to regard, and the body are in Marie Julia Bollansée's performances inseparable. She makes the sensitive character of observation tangible. There is no viewing without a body. She places that body as an inner seeing of what is outside, also inside. Viewer and object, the correlation between man and earth, between transfer and viewer, relate to each other on double manners.

The inner presence of the absent other.

The absent audience completes in its presence the artist's work. In the performances 'to the Absent Audience' presence and absence are inseparable. Marie Julia Bollansée is constantly playing with the borders of the representation in seeing, because it is in the experience of seeing that there is a hidden and a manifest presence. The tangible shows and hides at the same time. Nature, what was before word, shown to us as heterogeneous, unordered. In ordering the form and homogeneity of the moving and structuring view, there is always something that slips through the mesh of comprehension.

The slow, ritual movements in the performances of Marie Julia Bollansée ask for a contemplative view, in which the unpronounceable reappears without containing itself. Not only in her performances, but also in all of her 'being' Marie Julia Bollansée presents a feeling with what vibrates hypodermic in the common world we experience, go through. In a subtle movement of revealing and concealing inner- and outer world touch each other. She creates a middle course, a common perception of invisible threads.

This showing and hiding have their importance in the colour white as underlying theme for this exhibition. The colour choice, in Marie Julia Bollansée's work, happens intuitive during the making process. Colour, form and movement occur simultaneously. Next to lapis lazuli blue and bloodred, white is often used. Not only in the earthly matter with which she works, white clay or salt, as well as an amplifier of the invisible.

Marie Julia Bollansée shows things as they are, re-calls what we pass by too fast. In her body of work white is more than only the lightest shade. White appears as moving, closing, proceeding. A silence which contains the possible light: a void. As the visual spectrum, in which white carries the other colours, that are not visible at first, within itself. Similarly gives the artist expression to the inner presence of the absent other. Presence and absence, life and death, light and darkness. Theme's sizzling throughout the surface of her oeuvre. A constant genesis where robust and fragile meet.

Eva Steynen, juni 2013, Antwerpen.

Translation in English by Anaïs Bollansée