



ROOM

OF ONE'S

OWN



ENGLISH



BONNEFANT



**With guest presentations by:**

Lydia Schouten  
Carol Rhodes  
Marijke Stultiens

**With artworks from the collection by:**

Monika Baer  
Marlene Dumas  
Shilpa Gupta  
Bettie van Haaster  
Nancy Haynes  
Mary Heilmann  
Nan Hoover  
Suchan Kinoshita  
Jutta Koether  
Laura Lima  
Rebecca Morris  
Otobong Nkanga  
Mai-Thu Perret  
Alison Saar  
Ine Schröder  
Lily van der Stokker  
Roos Theuws  
Joëlle Tuerlinckx  
Paloma Varga Weisz

## ***A Room of One's Own***

**Paula van den Bosch**

What is the minimum requirement for creating an artwork? This is a question that Virginia Woolf (1882-1941) asks herself in her vintage feminist essay entitled *A Room of One's Own* (1929). The answer: security, confidence, independence, some money and... a room of your own. All these things may sound quite ordinary, but they were unattainable for women all over the world in Woolf's day, as well as before and afterwards.

Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* is about the battle for equal rights and intellectual and financial freedom. The renowned English author also describes the big cultural challenges for young women: seeing freedom as a matter of course, not adapting, and having the courage to write precisely what they think.

### **Feminist waves**

Nobody bats an eyelid nowadays if attention is drawn to the position of female artists in museums. The situation is very different to 25 years ago, when I was appointed curator.

The collection contained hardly any work by female artists, and they were completely absent from what was known then as the 'basic collection': an assortment of post-war artist celebrities, which demonstrated the Bonnefanten's international ambition. And despite two feminist waves and a third in the making, the situation was not much better in most other museums at the end of last century. The hierarchical museum world, with mostly male directors and boards, was one aspect that got in the way of a quick turnaround.

Nowadays, the battle for women's equal rights and treatment is subsumed in a much broader social discourse about gender, diversity and inclusion. Nevertheless, many under-exposed achievements by female artists have yet to find their way to the wider public. Their work has been played down, ignored or flatly denied by art history, sometimes for many centuries, and these women must now, at last, be given the place in the canon they deserve.

### ***A Room of One's Own***

In this wing, ten rooms have now been devoted to the work and ideas of female artists in



the collection who made their name in a world where male artists were the norm. They include exemplary pioneers who experienced the second feminist wave in the late 1960's, such as the video artist Nan Hoover (1931-2008) and the abstract painter and ceramicist Mary Heilmann (1940). They inspired subsequent generations not to be discouraged and to go their own way in a world that systematically undervalued them.

It is probably inevitable that work by these and other female artists was coloured by their experience of unequal treatment and discrimination. But artistry does not reach full maturity if it only presents this injustice, to illustrate grievances or as a pamphlet for protest. Women create new scope for themselves in art by experimenting with new media and materials, giving a new perspective on a classical painting genre, or inventing their own category of expression, somewhere between painting, sculpture and installation art.

So in the guest presentations by Lydia Schouten (1948), Carol Rhodes (1959-2018) and Marijke Stultiens (1927), artistic experiment and activism go hand in hand,

as it is always necessary to fight for new scope for self-expression in a world (or art world) that prefers to leaves things as they were.



Next page: Lydia Schouten, *I feel like boiled milk*, 1980, performance (30'), flour, black earth. Collection of the artist.





## Lydia Schouten – *Shattered Ghost Stories*

The multimedia installation *Shattered Ghost Stories* by Lydia Schouten (1948, Leiden - Amsterdam) immediately sets the tone at the start of *A Room of One's Own*. This important work, from the collection of Museum Arnhem, is once again colouring a museum gallery blue, for the first time in 30 years.

As a pioneer in the fields of performance, video and installation art, and as a feminist figurehead, Schouten has a long track record in the international art world. Spanning 45 years, her oeuvre addresses important themes like mass media, identity, loneliness, violence and abuse, which are now more relevant than ever before.



Lydia Schouten, *Cage*, 1978, performance (30'), cage of 2 x 2 x 2m with built-in aquarel pencils. Collection of the artist.



Lydia Schouten, *Romeo Is Bleeding* (stills), 1982, video tape. Music: Sander Wissing. Editor: Meatball, The Hague. Collection Bonnefanten.

### Feminist figurehead

Schouten's performances from the 1970's and 80's, in which she uses her own body, denounce the traditional role of women in society. She is branded a 'champion of women', but her feminist performances arise initially from a personal need: Schouten feels confined in a society that does not let women have a career. She goes in search of a new sculptural and painterly way of expressing herself. 'In performance, and later in video, you could experiment to the full, as there were no real male examples. That felt very free', said the artist.

### *Romeo is Bleeding*

Her first videos from the 1970's are recordings of performances. Since the 1980's Schouten has worked from video, around which she develops theatrical stagings. In 1983, the Bonnefanten acquired the video *Romeo is Bleeding* (shown in the back room), in which Schouten plays the role of femme fatale in a cardboard fantasy world opposite characters made of polystyrene. In other work from the eighties, too, she experiments with staged videos, in which she plays the main role in a variety of disguises, as a reflection on cliché images in cartoons, B-films and thrillers.

In this video, which hovers between parody and seriousness, Schouten makes it clear – with a great sense of humour – that adventure and power are not male privileges. From now on, she is the director of her own adventures and gets to decide who else is allowed to join in.


Schouten takes inspiration from the photo and video works of artists like Dara Birnbaum, Barbara Kruger, Cindy Sherman and Louise Lawler. In their work, these ‘appropriation’ artists appropriate images from the mass media, thus commenting on the cliché images presented. Unlike her American colleagues, Schouten found it difficult to gain ground in her own country. Disappointed, in 1990 she stopped making videos for a long time, focusing instead on multimedia installations, drawings and commissions.

### ***Shattered Ghost Stories***

Blue filters on the windows bathe the big room and the view out onto the river Meuse in a science-fiction atmosphere. Visitors are invited to cross the space carefully and thus become part of a theatrical performance that is on hold, as it were.

The main role is claimed by four floating female figures, lit by theatre spotlights and shrouded in gauzy blue dresses, the long hair of their wigs hanging down. Hanging from steel cables are round, transparent black-and-white portraits, rag dolls, lifelike heads made of rubber, and small speakers. The room is filled with murmuring.

As you get closer, what you hear is sound recordings of American talk shows with excerpts of conversations about abuse and violence. You also hear texts from American magazines and newspapers. Questions present themselves: are the figures floating between sleeping and waking, or between life and death? And are the portraits on the cables witnesses or victims? Schouten sits on the fence. *Shattered Ghost Stories* connects two themes that run

like a thread throughout her oeuvre: the unbridgeable communication gap between people in today’s society, dominated by technology and media, and the violent character of mass media and the glamorisation of violence. 

Lydia Schouten, *Shattered Ghost Stories*, 1993, multimedia installation with spotlights, dolls, speakers, rubber heads and smoke. Collection Museum Arnhem. Photo: Annet Delfgaauw.



## Advocates

Lydia Schouten created *Shattered Ghost Stories* at the beginning of the nineties, on commission from Museum Arnhem for the gallery known then as the Rijnzaal, as part of her ambitious exhibition project and book *Vrij Spel, Nederlandse kunst 1970-1990*. In those years, Museum Arnhem deliberately exhibited nearly only female artists; a courageous stance that led to criticism for director Liesbeth Brandt Corstius (1940-2022) and curator Mirjam Westen (1956). Female artists also had their reservations, if only for the fear you would only receive an invitation on the grounds of your gender.

The installation travelled on to Germany and Belgium, after which it disappeared into the storeroom of Wanda Reiff (1939), who takes care of Schouten's work. From the early 1970's, this Maastricht gallery owner ran the most important contemporary art gallery in South Limburg. In 2009, Reiff donated several of Schouten's works, including *Shattered Ghost Stories*, to the Museum Arnhem for which the installation was originally developed.

## Restoration

Schouten stands out from her contemporaries for her revolutionary use of media, materials and technology, such as video, sound recordings, all sorts of light sources, rubber and colour filters. The dialectics of progress, however, are now affecting the work. Parts of her installations consist of outdated technology or are fragile, which raises many questions about management, conservation, restoration and installation methods. It is necessary to carry out research into these questions. This long-term research and the process that facilitated re-installing *Shattered Ghost Stories* in the Bonnefanten are the subject of a documentary film that is part of the exhibition (cinema).



Lydia Schouten, *Split Seconds of Magnificence*, 1982, videotape. Sound: Charley van Rest. Editor: Ramon Coelho. Voice-over: Raymond Campfens.

The film and the preliminary research were made possible through the support and efforts of the Mondriaan Fund, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, Collectiecentrum Nederland, the University of Amsterdam and Museum Arnhem.

Initiator and research leader: Miriam Windhausen, as part of the pilot 'Artists' legacies in the Netherlands'.



## Carol Rhodes – Overview

The career of Carol Rhodes (1959, Edinburgh – 2018, Glasgow) spanned more than 35 years. Involved initially with social activism, she began from the early 1990's concentrating on painting, her characteristic depiction of the landscape reflecting a markedly changing world. In *A Room of One's Own*, two rooms are dedicated to her paintings and works on paper, from the period 1996-2016. This concise posthumous retrospective is her first solo museum presentation on the European mainland.



Carol Rhodes, *Greenham Common Peace Camp*, 1982 or 1983. Photo: Mhairi Corr.

## Activism

After graduating from the famous Glasgow School of Art in 1982, Rhodes fought for years for women's and LGBTI rights, and for environmental and peace movements. She was a co-founder of the Glasgow Free University and involved with Transmission, an influential artists' initiative for experimental art. In those years, Glasgow changed from a run-down, grey industrial and commercial city to a cultural hotspot with international allure.

In 1990, Rhodes took up painting again, and two years later her son Hamish was born. From then on, she divided her time between her studio and the shared care of her child. She also started teaching at her old academy, where she was an influential presence for 20 years, encouraging experiment across a variety of media.

## Tribute

Rhodes soon made her name with small-scale landscapes in aerial view. She exhibited widely and her work was acquired by major collections in Scotland, England and beyond. A major monograph was published shortly before she died in Glasgow at the age of 59, and her work has been increasingly recognised since her death. Many of her former students have become notable artists, and one, Lucy Skaer, paid tribute by including paintings and drawings by Rhodes alongside her own work in an exhibition in Amsterdam in 2019.



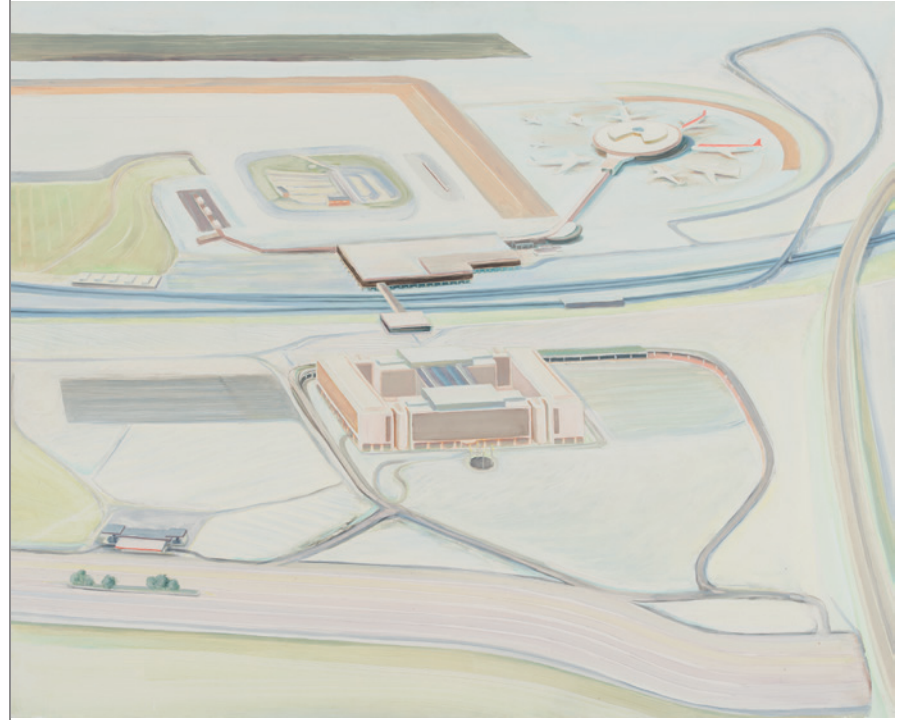
### Distance and detail

Rhodes' landscapes make demands on the viewer. The small-scale aerial view lends the works a rather objective and distant character. Muted colours dominate the sometimes almost abstract compositions of broad strips, delineated fields and meandering lines. It is only on closer inspection that all sorts of details come to light: a ring of red-striped planes around an airport terminal, rows of colourful shipping containers like Mikado sticks in a box, and canary-yellow barriers at the entrance to an asphalted car park.

### Landscape and imagery

The suggestive abstraction with painstakingly precise details, makes for an unusual combination. But we are all familiar with the landscapes Rhodes presents to us. We see them every day, but would rather not see them, and so they play no role in our imagery.

The Netherlands has a patent, as it were, on this type of urbanised countryside; something that Rhodes was aware of, according to her notes for lectures. These are landscapes where everything has a reason, function and logic: distribution boxes, terminal sites and motorway junctions. Rhodes' aerial surveys give an anthropological view of what humans create and leave behind in the environment, and of how we make new landscapes and rearrange the surface of the Earth.



Carol Rhodes, *Airport Hotel and Airport*, 1996, oil on canvas, 45 x 55 cm.  
Collection Merlin James, Glasgow. Photo: Ian Marshall.

### Photography

Rhodes' landscapes are fictional constructs, but she paints them in such detail and with such convincing precision that they convey the sense of an actual place in the world. They are composite views, based on her own photographs from aeroplanes, plus documentary aerial photography from books about geography, industrial archaeology and urban development. For each successive painting, a selection of these sources would be laid out on long tables in Rhodes's studio, which is still intact.

Using photography as source material for painting fits into a trend from the early nineties - see contemporaries of Rhodes in the Bonnefanten collection, such as Marlene Dumas, Luc Tuymans and Peter Doig. In their work, these painters appropriate typical photo features, like framing, cropping, blowing up and flash effects, reacting to the dominant imagery in the mass media.



Carol Rhodes, *Development Center, Roads*, 2010, oil on canvas.  
Collection Charlotte & Alan Artus. Photo: Ruth Clark.



### Technological perspective

The landscape as Rhodes paints it, from a great distance and in clear-cut detail, would probably not be discernible in this way with the naked eye. Moreover, topographical overview photos require a plane, satellite or drone. These are technological instruments of economic progress, but also tools and symbols of power, surveillance and control. Rhodes anticipated, and later drew upon, surveillance, satellite and 'Google Earth' type imagery.

This critical perspective is certainly woven into the work of this former activist, and it has a slightly disturbing effect. However, her characteristic depiction of the landscape, with abstract and hyperrealistic passages that sometimes border on surrealism, is firmly anchored in a traditional painting process and touches on her personal life.

### Discomfort

"The higher you go", Rhodes observed, "the more you see the infrastructure and understand how it's connected, and how a road runs to the sea, crossed by a railway line. That gives a sense of security and control. If you go too high, it turns into agoraphobic panic. That's the line I want to work from: the border between security and discomfort."

Rhodes' fascination with this border between security and unease can be traced back to her early childhood, according to the artist. Born in Edinburgh, Scotland, her early years were spent in Bengal, India, where her parents carried out missionary work. Her relocation to the UK as a teenager was a traumatic experience, and for a long time she felt as though she was living between worlds and did not feel at home anywhere.

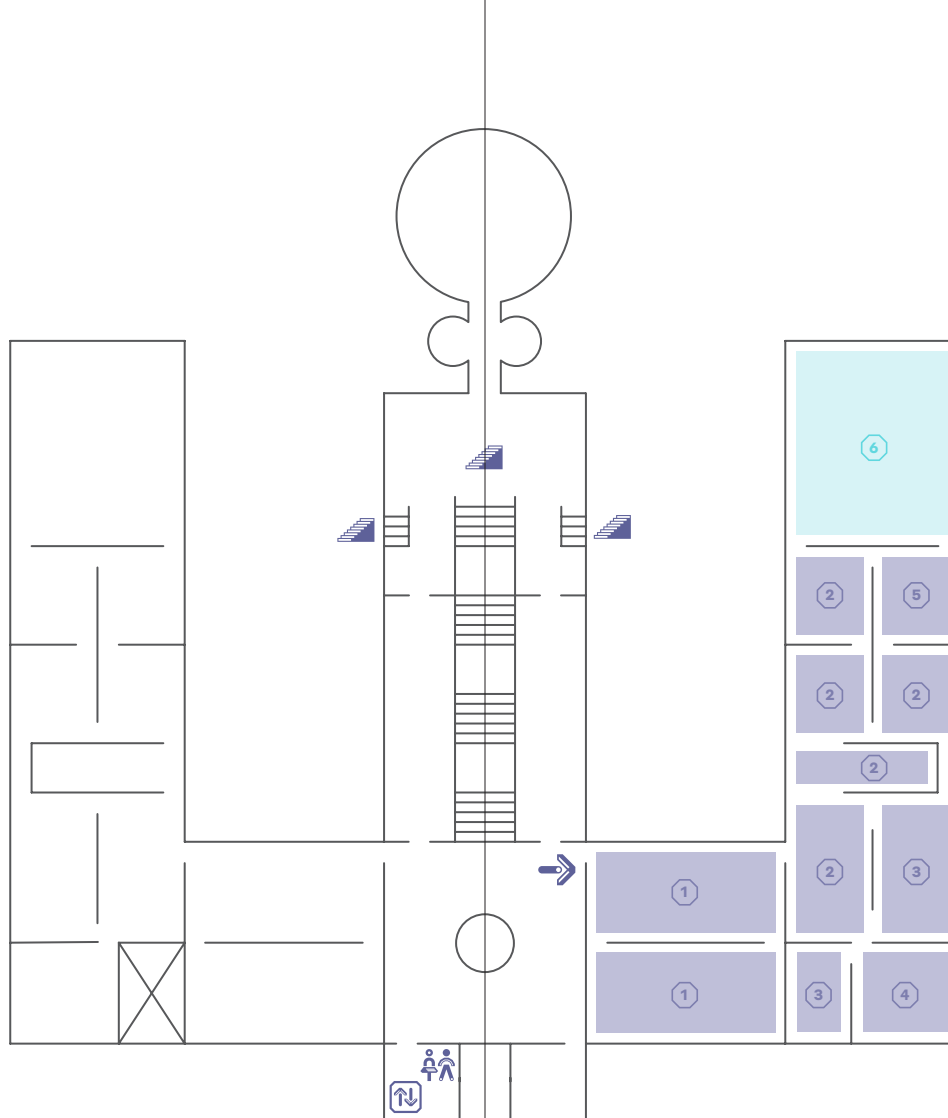




➔ Exhibition starts here

- ① Lydia Schouten (room 2.05 and 2.06)
- ② Collection presentation (room 2.07, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13 and 2.15)
- ③ Carol Rhodes (room 2.08 and 2.10)
- ④ Documentary films (room 2.09)
- ⑤ Marijke Stultiens (room 2.14)
- ⑥ Piet Killaars (room 2.16)

- ↕ Lift to other floors
- 🏠 Stairs to other floors
- 🚻 Toilets



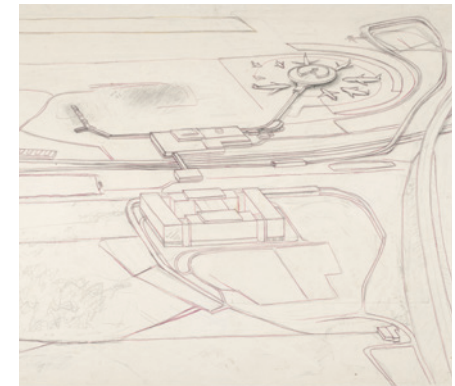
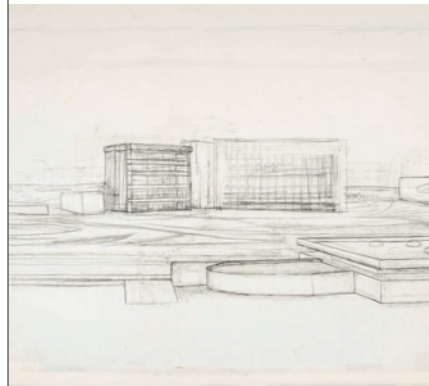
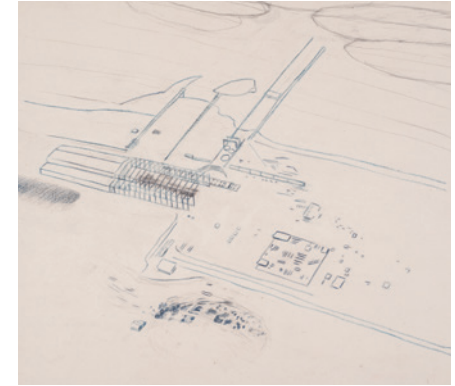
In 1988, Rhodes moved to a top floor rented flat, where she looked out over a former railway shunting yard with a new station, public park and car parks. Every day, she crossed this park with her young son, and it became associated, albeit problematically, with an idea of 'home'. Rhodes realised that everyday, unremarkable surroundings like this are a kind of common property all over the world, from Scotland to India, and that this new reality is meaningful and deserves a role in our imagery.

### Craft

For Rhodes, painting is a craft that requires dedication, technical skill and material care. Hers is a slow and difficult process of continually applying and re-applying oil paint, wet-into-wet. However, this struggle is not visible in her work. The final landscape consist of a single thin layer of paint, through which the white of the ground often shines, giving the appearance of being achieved quickly.

Rhodes largely determined the composition beforehand, so that during the painting process she could focus on colour, brushstroke, texture of paint, material treatment and rendition. She achieved this through preparatory studies on paper, after which the compositions were transferred to panels covered in a layer of acrylic primer. The drawings reveal an intensive working process with much trial and error.

The drawings also show that through the high vantage point, each scene is as it were unfolded, as it were, meaning that all the elements of the composition are visible. There is no foreground and background, and no feature overlaps or occludes another. Rhodes valued what she called 'egalitarian' compositions, where everything is equal. She took inspiration for this from Italian landscapes of the early Renaissance and from Indian court painting.



Carol Rhodes, *River, Roads*, 2013, pencil on paper.

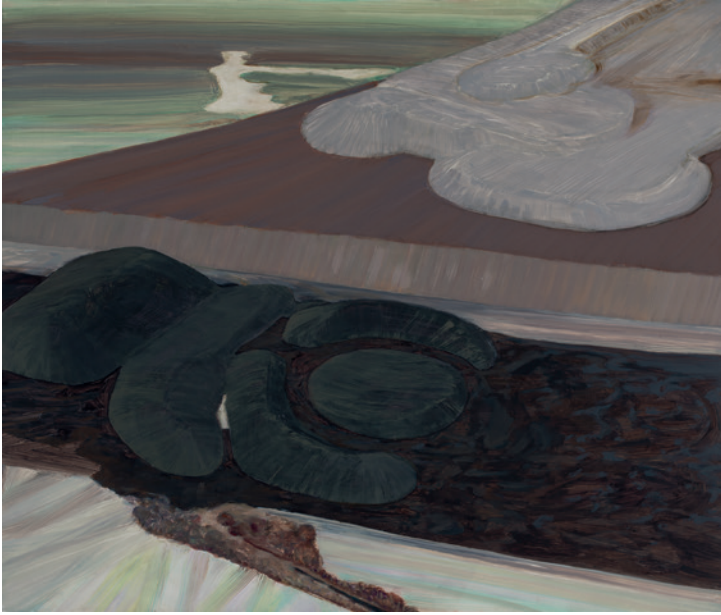
Carol Rhodes, *Sheds*, 2013, pencil on paper.

Carol Rhodes, *Buildings II*, 1995, pencil on paper.

Carol Rhodes, *Airport Hotel and Airport*, 1996, pencil on paper.

All works courtesy of The Estate of Carol Rhodes. Photos: Ian Marshall.





Top: Carol Rhodes, *Coal*, 2008 - 2009 oil on panel, 54 x 64 cm.  
Courtesy of Alison Jacques, London. Photo: Ian Marshall.

Right: Carol Rhodes, *Construction Site*, oil on panel, 57 x 70 cm.  
Collection Charles Asprey. Photo: Antonia Reeve.



Rhodes referred to her landscapes as portraits or indeed self-portraits. Certainly each one arose from an intense and painful process. In which the terrain and the Earth's crust take on the features of an organism or a body. Distance and detachment reveal furrows, heaps of sand and winding paths as vulvas, veins, even gaping wounds and scars. The globe, she reminds us, is the only home we have in the galaxy. And our identity and fate are inextricably bound up with it.



## Marijke Stultiens – “Een beetje te veel is net genoeg voor mij”. (“A bit too much is just enough for me.”)

Ad Himmelreich

The artistic career of Marijke Stultiens (1927, Breda) spans more than 70 years. The exhibition *A Room of One's Own* shows recent works made by the artist since 1980. Together, they give an impression of the creative and exciting versatility of her extensive oeuvre.



Marijke Stultiens,  
*Hanging monumental  
textile object*, ca. 1970.  
Photo: Rob Stultiens.

Marijke Stultiens,  
*Lijnenspel*, ca. 1989,  
mixed media, paint,  
paper maché, ca. 150 x  
300 cm. Collection of  
Provincie Limburg.  
Photo: Marijke  
Stultiens.



### Choosing for art

This ‘grande dame’ of the artists in Limburg was born in Breda, in 1927, as Marijke Thunnissen. After high school, she moved to Maastricht in 1946 to study at the Middelbare Kunstnijverheidsschool (school for applied arts). Three years later, she exchanged this more traditionally oriented school for the painting course at the Jan van Eyck Academy, which had been founded the year before. Marijke Thunnissen was the only woman in her year who remained on the painting course. The other female students chose study paths in applied art, particularly in weaving techniques. On graduating, she married fellow student and sculptor Rob Stultiens, and together they shared the responsibility for bringing up their three children, whilst also working on their own careers.

### Social commitment

Marijke Stultiens’ pursuit of space for her artistry was remarkable at a time – in the 1950’s and 1960’s – when women were expected to relinquish their ambitions for the benefit of their husband and family. But she firmly rejected the idea of even a temporary break to look after the children, saying, “You can never bridge a gap in your career”. She saw many promising talents fall by the wayside. Like her



Marijke Stultiens,  
*Schalen in het  
voormalige  
Gemeentemuseum  
Roermond, 2007*, paint,  
papier maché.  
Collection of the artist.  
Photo: Marijke  
Stultiens.

husband, she fought for the recognition of artistry as a full-time profession. In particular, she stimulated greater empowerment among her colleagues; something that was not a matter of course in the orthodox art climate in Limburg at the time. Young female artists viewed her as a role model. At the beginning of the 1980's, she was one of the driving forces behind the protest against the provincial art event Trajecta, and she became one of the founders of the artists' initiative Het Bassin in Maastricht; a collective space for exhibitions and debates.

### **Creative impulses**

Marijke Stultiens' artistic inventiveness was inspired in part by the poverty that prevailed everywhere after World War II. At the same time, she paid little heed to the dominant barriers within visual art. She still sees painting as the ideal path to artistic freedom, as well as the basis for daring experiments with techniques and materials. An important aspect of her oeuvre is the use of textiles, the second skin of every individual. World literature, poetry and biblical stories like the Creation are still important creative elements in her work.

### **National and international recognition**

As a young artist, for three consecutive years from 1953, she received the Royal Award for Modern Painting. Afterwards, her name was established and she exhibited at numerous venues in the Netherlands and Europe. For her, the creative process is a continual voyage of discovery through visual art. Over the years, her work has kept assuming different forms. From the end of the fifties, textiles became important, but her ambition stretched further than just making classical tapestries. From the early sixties, she made three-dimensional textile installations. They were exhibited at the international Biennales of contemporary textile art in Lausanne, Paris and Warsaw, which showed experiments in textiles by mainly female artists from Western and Eastern Europe. Over the course of the seventies, these important artistic expressions disappeared from view in an art world dominated by men. With characteristic pragmatism, Marijke Stultiens decided to burn most of the textile works from these years, as they could no longer be exhibited, and she wanted to go in a new direction.

### The role of paper

Around 1980, Marijke Stultiens started painting again. She also delved into the relatively new technique of screen printing. Paper began to play a major role in her work. A trip to Greece with her husband in the early nineties inspired her to create a series of life-sized 'gewaden' (robes): works on painted paper, with mixed techniques and materials. This series is represented in the exhibition by *Majesteit* and two *Gewaden*. From then on, collage-like, three-dimensional objects became an important part of her oeuvre, for which she made creative use of found objects and materials, like the zinc that once came away when the guttering of her house was replaced. The colourful assemblages of painted paper, textiles and papier-maché are other striking aspects of her work.

### The power of the game

"The transformation of ideas into something material is still a miracle every time", says Stultiens, who does not work systematically. The work is the result of whatever presents itself during the process. The path from the figuration of her early work to abstraction was inspired by a need for powerful, simple forms. Gradually, she left realism and the narrative behind her, and a game of colour, technique and material arose, like in the painted collage *Lijnenspel*, where the 'construction' that is the painting enters the space. A striking spatial installation consisting of dozens of individually painted papier-maché dishes, which fills part of the gallery, refers back in a new way to her earlier three-dimensional textile works.



Marijke Stultiens working on a textile object, ca. 1970. Collection the artist.

Next page: Marijke Stultiens, *Schouwburg Sittard* (detail), 1957, textile appliqué work, 900x 300 cm, Collection Commune of Sittard. Photo: Frans Lahaye.

The monumental, nine by three metre textile appliqué work from 1957, created for the theatre in Sittard, is still on display there. Her pleasure in compiling the work is obvious from the details in the picture of the packed auditorium. Besides her husband in the box, seated next to an unknown woman, the figures also include some prominent Sittard citizens, such as the doctor and artist Funs Winters, who played a central role in the South Limburg art world in the post-war years. At the request of the city council at the time, she also included the mayor in the scene.







# **A Room of One's Own**

11.02.2023 – 07.01.2024

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## **Printing**

Drukpartners Zuid B.V.

## **Carol Rhodes – Overview**

Special thanks to: Merlin James, Andrew Mummery, The Carol Rhodes Estate and Alison Jacques Gallery.

## **Lydia Schouten – Shattered Ghost Stories**

Special thanks to: Lydia Schouten, Miriam Windhausen, Wanda Reiff, Sylvia van Schaik, Marieke Kruithof, Paul Beuk, Ivo van Stiphout, Sanneke Stigter, Stefanie Janson en Tatja Scholte.

Made possible by: Museum Arnhem, Mondriaan Fonds, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, Collectie Centrum Nederland, Universiteit van Amsterdam

Also thanks to: the filmmakers Bobby Littlejohn and Hylko Smit.

## **Marijke Stultiens – “Een beetje te veel is net genoeg voor mij” (“A bit too much is just enough for me.”)**

Special thanks to: Marijke Stultiens, Julia Stultiens, Suzanne Bogman, Resi Vervoort/Museum Valkenburg, Carolina Kuijper/Provincie Limburg, Mikos Pieters/Toon Hermans Theater Sittard, Lucas Bemelmans/Vervoeren is een kunst and team Bonnefanten.

Bonnefanten is subsidised by the Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Province of Limburg and the VriendenLoterij. This exhibition was made possible by Mondriaan Fund.

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Cover image: Lydia Schouten, *Shattered Ghost Stories*, 1993. Collection Museum Arnhem. Photo: Annet Delfgaauw.

This exhibition is made possible by:



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