

## Lily van der Stokker interviewed by B. Wurtz

February 22, 1992, New York City

**LvdS:** Now that's a good question because I've been writing down things about that all week. I was wondering maybe you will not ask at all about the female part. Sometimes I think that it is very subjective and I am the only one who is so excited about it.

**BW:** Well, no. Here's a viewer who definitely sees that. Your work is more universally political than specifically feminist, yet your work seems strongly and unapologetically feminine.

**LvdS:** One question I was asking myself which is very important to me is what is so female about the work anyway? What is so female about flowers and love stuff and are males not envying flowers and are they not involved with love? The second thing I say is sure it's female. I know it's female but I would rather like to describe it as traditionally female imagery. We don't



portrait of  
Lily van der Stokker  
by B. Wurtz

know what female nature is or will be or even if we have to go for natural at all. The feminism of the '60s did not

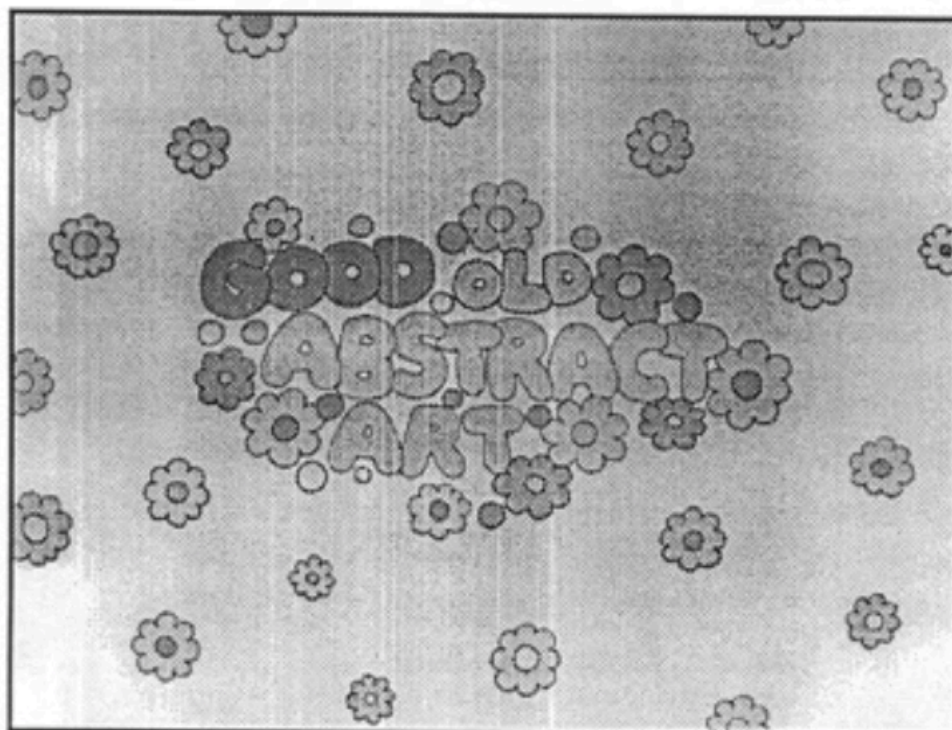
give us a clue as to where to go next with females. Can women strive for equality in the men's world? I don't even know if I want to be equal in all aspects. I don't know.

**BW:** Decoration is a very real part of what humans want in the world and yet decoration has sort of become a negative attribute in art. It seems so smart to deal with the decorative as an issue.

**LvdS:** I don't understand this "being smart with decorative".

**BW:** You are tackling the decorative as an issue. Not only are you unafraid of it, you want it to be an important part of your work.

**LvdS:** There's a big taboo on this decorativeness in the arts. I don't know particularly why it is. I just want to go to the source. I just want to go after it and let it all come out. I am definitely not afraid that there is such a taboo on decorativeness that it is not art. I like it because I am very free in that field. I can just go on doing my research.



**BW:** You either make very small paintings or very large murals. It is interesting that they are so extreme and there is nothing in the middle.

**LvdS:** I like the small format. It is a very practical choice. It is easy to do and I need little space, just a table, chair, paper and magic markers. It's very fast, direct and connected to all the ideas. It has little material barrier. Sometimes when I put them on the wall it doesn't look so good; they are more like a book. And with the murals I get my satisfaction because I still want to make large, expansive things. On one hand, there is some excitement with the small things as they are very personal. On the other hand to enlarge it to an architectural size where people can almost walk into your brain and get very close to your personal experience is also exciting.

**BW:** What are your thoughts about the way the public sees your art?

**LvdS:** Sometimes I wonder what is more important in my life, is it my art or is it my social life and sometimes I think that I only do this to have a social life. And so I think that communication is the first thing I want to do. I am so grateful for the female artists of the '80s who started to use words. Before that I was mainly working in an abstract aesthetic and when the words came in it was suddenly so much more exciting. It made your communication so much faster. I could just put the word "sex" in the painting and everybody knows it is about sex. I didn't have to do a complicated thing with photographs and narration.

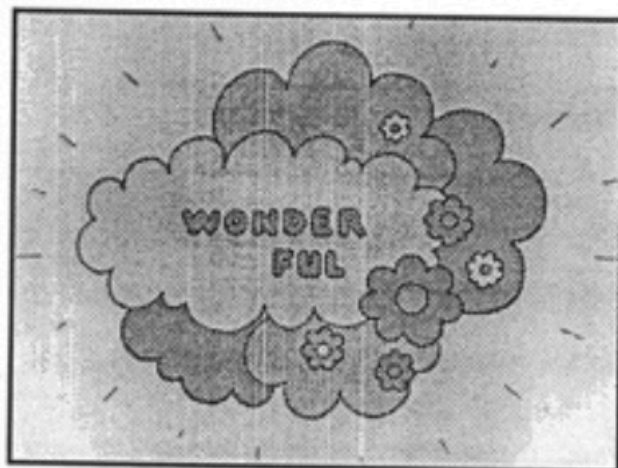
**BW:** But some people think that it's just being cute and cynical.

**LvdS:** Yes. There is some cynicism involved and I am trying to find out where. First of all I don't like cynicism. I avoid it. So if I make work which I find later expresses cynicism, usually I take them out. If there is

cynicism in the work then I think that it is the spectator who is having the cynicism and they are confronted with their own irony on the subject matter much more than they see my cynicism.

**BW:** But If you talk about love and friendliness and that there should be more of that in the world, someone might be a little suspicious that you are trying to trick them.

**LvdS:** People also connect it to my character and they say, well, is it because you are so happy? And how can you do this because there are so many problems in the world? My answer is well,



can you see it as a subject matter? Other people explore landscape painting and I explore love and friendly images. But that still is not enough. I think it is related to the lack of gentleness and tenderness in intelligence, technology and science and that positive things are usually related to not intelligent people and I think to female aspects.

*photo first page: Lily van der Stokker, "Good Old Abstract Art" 1992, marker on paper, 8.25 x 11.75" (detail)*

*photo this page: Lily van der Stokker, "Wonderful" (sketch for mural), 1991, marker on paper, 11.5 x 16.5" (detail)*