

De Pont's inaugural exhibition in 1992 comprised work by twenty artists. Selected along with well-known figures were various artists who had never exhibited previously in the Netherlands, such as Rosemarie Trockel, Wolfgang Laib and Roni Horn. While the monumental *Pair Field* then mainly situated Roni Horn (New York, 1955) within the American tradition of Minimal Art, subsequent presentations at De Pont, including the first solo exhibition of her work in 1994, revealed a more versatile, expressive and strikingly personal aspect of her work.

*Pair Field* (1991) consists of eighteen different pairs of identical objects made of solid copper and stainless steel, all of which have the same volume. The two series are exhibited in adjoining spaces, and their arrangement is the same but adapted to the dimensions of each space. Gradually we become aware that the perfectly executed forms might be identical, yet our own perception offers no absolute certainty here. It is precisely that doubt which leads the viewer to make successive trips back and forth between the rooms in order to have one more good look.

Roni Horn grew up in New York, where her father ran a pawnshop in Harlem, and studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and Yale University. In 1975 Horn visited Iceland for the first time. Since then the unique, rugged landscape of this country and its extremely changeable weather have been an endless source of inspiration to her. Opting for a range of media, she produces many drawings, photographs and books of photographs in addition to sculptures and installations. A recurrent element in her work consists of texts that she writes herself or borrows from poets and writers, such as the American poet Emily Dickinson or the Brazilian Clarice Lispector. With *Kafka's Palindrome* (1994), also in De Pont's collection, the following words appear in black letters along the four sides of the irregular quadrangle: 'It would be enough to consider the spot where I am as some other spot.' Contemplating the sculpture that lies on the floor almost automatically gives rise to a doubling in one's imagination: here but also there, close and yet far away. The experience of the audience, of every single viewer, is crucial to Roni Horn. That always plays a part in her thoughts as she works. 'The experience of the work is its meaning,' she recently said in an interview with *The Financial Times*.

Looking and reading: also in the recent series of drawings *Remembered Words*, from 2013, and *Hack Wit*, from 2014, it's all about the experience of the viewer/reader. With *Fool's Rainbow*, from the latter series, it seems as though a sheet of glass containing the intriguing poetic words 'A fool's rainbow chasing paradise' has been shattered and then reconstructed as well as possible.

Nevertheless, subconsciously we keep on looking, beyond the new fragmented image, for an unbroken whole which may have never existed. *Fool's Rainbow* is reminiscent of a kaleidoscope, in which such colored 'fragments' can continually give shape to ever-changing new images. The viewer is the constant factor that brings everything together in this process. At the same time,

however, Horn warns us that an eye-witness account is certainly not infallible: 'It's rarely what it appears to be.'

In recent years the Whitney Museum in New York, Tate Modern in London and Paris's Centre Pompidou have held solo exhibitions of Roni Horn's work. With this exhibition at De Pont, the accent lies with work from the past ten years: her monumental sculptures of glass, photographic works and recent series drawings. Through the addition of drawings and photographs from the 1980s and 90s, the visitor nonetheless has a fairly broad view of her oeuvre.

For those who visit De Pont frequently, another recent work titled *Water Teller* (2014) will probably be a reminder of Horn's iconic photo series *You are the Weather*, first shown here in 1995 and part of the collection since then. In that series of a hundred portraits, the bathing young blond woman looks at the viewer as her facial expression shows only minimal changes with each image. For this series Horn travelled around Iceland with Margrét Haraldsdóttir Blöndal for six weeks in 1994, visiting the hot springs that stand out so strangely in their desolate surroundings. The changes of expression in Blöndal's face are brought about by weather conditions, by sun shining in her eyes or an ice-cold wind. The title of the work suggests that the viewer can act as the weather here. Each work in the series *Water Teller*, now being shown for the first time, consists of two components in which fashion photographer Jürgen Teller is depicted twice each time. None of the photographs are straightforward portraits: having minimal distinctions, these are all depictions of Teller's face reflected in water. We automatically think of the tale about the beautiful Narcissus from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the son of a nymph who falls in love with his own reflection in water. Ultimately, this love would be his demise. Narcissus could not tell the difference between his own body and its reflection in water. The text that appears on a gouache by Horn from 2010, *When You See Your Reflection in Water Do You Recognize the Water in You*, opens up a new perspective on the classical Narcissus myth. Man and nature are inextricably bound to each other. Not only weather, but also nature and landscape influence man's changing identity.

The matter of her own identity continues to be a leitmotif throughout Horn's body of work. *a.k.a.* (2008-2009), the series of photographs hung on the diagonally placed wall across from the wool-storage rooms, shows fifteen pairs of portraits from every phase of Horn's life. Sometimes the two photographs are nearly identical, and differences are difficult to detect. With other works the difference in age is quite obvious. A beautiful and revealing combination shows the portrait of an endearing toddler next to an Icelandic lava-rock landscape covered with grey-green moss, where Horn's face appears with a huge mane of reddish hair. Man and nature become an almost fluid entity. This series of photographs candidly shows how the artist (*also known as Roni Horn*)

developed into the androgynous personality that she is today and actually, in retrospect, always has been. With her short grey hair, clean-cut glasses, white shirt and t-shirt, she has no distinctly masculine or feminine appearance. The attire is practical and elegant for both men and women. She recently described it herself as follows: 'Adrogyny isn't two things, it's everything. It's synthesis; not this and that. It's a state of integration.'

Two other series of portrait photographs also keep us absorbed in observation. Both are distributed throughout two different spaces and thereby initially cause us to think, once again, that we're looking at the same photographs. *Portrait of an Image (with Isabelle Huppert)* (2005) comprises a hundred photographs of this French actress as she re- portrays her roles played in film. The differences in the expression of her scarcely made- up, 'naked' face are subtle, yet the variations seem to be endless. Horn produced another series titled *This is Me, This is You* (2000) with her niece, who bears a striking resemblance to herself as a child. Like every young girl she plays out various roles in search of her identity. While acting as the provocative temptress at one moment, she later crawls into her shell and becomes a shy teenager. 'Becomes herself' one might be inclined to say, though no evidence of this can be found. The very notion of identity, one could in fact conclude, is as fluid as water.

The last room of the exhibition is devoted solely to Horn's recent glass sculptures. After the narrowing space and the intimate wool-storage rooms, the visitor arrives in an open and light space where an ensemble of ten cylindrical sculptures in blue, green, light- brown and white glass provides a captivating final chord. The geometric form and sophisticated placement are vaguely reminiscent of Horn's early work, *Pair Field*, and of Minimal Art. But what do we actually see? In the cylinders of glass, the surface is reflective like water at a spring; and the content seems fluid but consists of solid glass. Although the sculptures have no titles, Horn has linked them to very diverse fragments of text. Such as this one: 'I deeply perceive that infinity of matter is no dream.' As incongruous as they may seem, these fragments do play along, mentally, with what one sees. They give way to unexpected perspectives or give rise to questions, and because of this a richly varied stream of thoughts and images is set in motion. It's an almost endless one, and to each of us it will always be different.

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