

the spectacle  
provides insight  
in the passion for collecting,  
theatricality,  
theorization,  
love of materials  
in particular  
and for creation  
in general  
just like any human  
alone  
can be a galaxy  
he is, at the same time,  
its smallest cog

(Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, diary entry April 5, 2016)

Zeno X Gallery is pleased to present a new solo exhibition by Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven (b. 1951, Antwerp). The exhibition articulates her various practices and brings together drawings, tapestry, and works on Plexiglass and synthetic leather.

The title of the exhibition, *The Strange Life of Things*, refers to an original French book from 1959, 'La Vie Etrange des Objets'. This book, written by the French academician Maurice Rheims, tells the story of collecting. At times it is an anthropological study of the origins of the passion for collecting and the relationship that exists between object and collector. Van Kerckhoven herself is a passionate collector. For decades, she has been collecting magazines with (soft) pornographic images, which she incorporates in her collages. The books she collects also often find a place in her work in one way or another. Quotes from books become titles of works or appear as statements on drawings and other works.

The famous book '*The Laws of Thought*' (1854) by the philosopher-mathematician George Boole in turn served as inspiration for *Over voorstellingen, waar of vals* (About representations, true or false). This series consists of four works that each depict one theory from logic.

The series Cosmic Update, composed of three drawings, also links iconic works from the Louvre to quotes from the eponymous book on cosmology and invisible energies. Here, Van Kerckhoven reflects on the obsessive quest of scientists for concrete evidence of things they are convinced exist. In this, Van Kerckhoven also sees a particular parallel with her own quest; through her work and the act of creation, she construes material ‘proof’ of things she senses emotionally or physically yet doesn’t really know herself.

Van Vlasselaer is a unique tapestry: Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven designed a digital collage that was woven in the traditional Jacquard technique. Julien Van Vlasselaer (1907-1982), who for years led a workshop in monumental arts at the Royal Academy of Antwerp, had an underlying influence on the practice of Van Kerckhoven, although she never took classes with him. The interior, in which the female figure is located, is also taken from the documentation book Van Vlasselaer used for his students.

The Plexiglas works with female images from the series 4 Stripteasers are based on scanned, processed pages from a French erotic magazine from 1953 entitled ‘The Stripteaser’. These works and their titles are linked to the hope and despair of the 70’s which Van Kerckhoven as a young adult saw expressed through films. She herself has always opted to resist the defeatism and nihilism that largely permeated the culture at the time.

Als een Swastika (Tibet) is part of the series Perspectiefwissels (Shifts of Perspective), which was made on imitation leather. Swastika refers to a statement from the film ‘The Women’ (1939) in which a character glorifies her life without a man: “Heaven knows it’s marvelous being able to spread out in bed like a swastika”. Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven shares Karl Valentin’s (1882-1948) belief that everything has a positive, a negative, but also a comical side. To her, the comical side is indispensable because it ‘alleviates’ and allows a shift of perspective.

In October of this year, Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven will have a solo exhibition at the Museum Abteiberg in Mönchengladbach, entitled ‘What Would I Do in Orbit?’. She will also participate in the Rennes Biennial and a group exhibition at the M HKA in Antwerp. Her bags that were uttering last year at the City Hall in Antwerp will be permanently installed in the Middelheim Museum, also in Antwerp.

Earlier, Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven had solo exhibitions in, among others, Kunstverein Munich (2015), Mu.ZEE in Ostend (2012), The Renaissance Society in Chicago (2011), FRAC Pays de la

Loire in Carquefou (2009), Kunsthalle Nürnberg (2009 ), Wiels in Brussels (2008), Kunstmuseum Luzern (2008), Kunsthalle Bern (2005), and M HKA in Antwerp (1999).

Her work was on view in exhibitions such as Manifesta 7, and was shown at MARTa Herford, ICA Philadelphia, The Artist's Institute in New York, Shanghai Art Museum, FRAC Nord-Pas-de-Calais in Dunkirk, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam, and many others.

The work of Anne-Mie van Kerckhoven is included in the public collections of, among others, Kunsthalle Bern, S.M.A.K. in Ghent, FRAC Pays de la Loire in Carquefou, M HKA in Antwerp, De Vleeshal in Middelburg, Mu.ZEE in Ostend, the University of Chicago, the Royal Museums in Brussels and Muzeum Sztuki in Lodz.

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