

Where I end, and You Begin

Siobhán Hapaska, Andy Holden, Suchan Kinoshita, Klaas Kloosterboer and Pere Llobera

TEFAF Online 9-14 September

On view in our gallery until 9 October 2021

Curator and writer Mark Kremer spoke with Hidde van Seggelen about his TEFAF Online Presentation and the gallery exhibition.

Mark Kremer (MK) In this selection you will show art by Pere Llobera, Siobhán Hapaska and Suchan Kinoshita and also Klaas Kloosterboer and Andy Holden. Their works are diverse but also have similarities, for example the merging of a plastic and conceptual dimension, and they are surrounded by remarkable stories. Can you introduce the works, and how did the selection come about?

Hidde van Seggelen (HvS) The idea or starting point was the desire to show a specific work by the Spanish artist Pere Llobera. That work was ready in my stock at TEFAF 2020, but I didn't get the chance to show it, because the fair had to close premature. In my fantasy I have always called this work 'Chess Game', but the correct title is Half a Memory.

MK You say 'always', what do you mean?

HvS The work is from 2020 but I have also observed it during the process of its making in the painter's studio, a period of up to five years. The work has two parts, a painting on the right and a large drawing on the left. Pere made the painting on the basis of a family photo, a Polaroid from 1980. It shows his mother's living room, in a house that has featured also in other works of his. The colors of a Polaroid fade, just like your experience of childhood; the memory of your childhood fades. He has depicted his brother and himself in half, as well as the chess pieces. He has literally cut himself in half, you look into his body, you see the flesh, the bones, tendons, everything is exposed. But all

the other things in the painting are also only half there. The two brothers play chess, all their attention is focused on it, the viewer lands right in the middle of their game. The painting has something very raw, something unfinished; Pere sometimes apologizes to me, because he can paint very well. He could have easily made this painting a lot more realistic. But that's not what quality is about. And that is where the importance of the drawing comes to the fore, at the left side of the painting. The painting also refers to a fable by Italo Calvino about an Italian nobleman coming back home from a war with severe injury, he was cut in half. The drawing adds an enormous tension. It is loosely based on a statement by filmmaker Jacinto Esteva Grewe in a documentary by his friend/colleague Joaquim Jordà Català; both men are important for the Barcelona School of Film. In 'The Hunter's Commission' (1990), key figures from the generation to which the Spanish democratic transition is owed, have their say. In this film, Jacinto Esteva recalls the death of a person dear to him, someone was killed by violence, and who suddenly, from one day to the next, was no longer there. Those bullets in the drawing are symbols, they indicate things that disappear as if in a flash.

MK The drawing represents fate.

HvS Yes, it makes a connection with the painted scene, those boys who enjoy playing chess together. The entire work is a memento mori. Transience of things is a theme. What I find exciting about this work is the space between the one and the other, the two parts explicitly differ and yet they have a lot in common.

MK It's an intense, harrowing work, it gets under the skin, the artist grabs you by the throat. We who did not grow up with violence are immune to violence e.g. as shown on television. This work perhaps undoes that impasse.

MK Can you tell me more about the artist's motivations for making such a work?

HvS Family stories play a big role in Pere's life and some of those stories are quite dark. For example, Pere's conception was unintentional, it took place in Milan, his parents used a contraceptive that turned out to be ineffective. Thus Pere is a product of unexpectedness. Another example is his father's fame in Spain because of a book with illustrations that he did not make himself, but copied from an American illustrator. That fact only surfaced after the death of his father, Pere found out himself. There is also a lot of deception in history, deceit is part of it. Deception and illusionism are motives with Pere.

MK Can you tell us something about motives such as presence and absence in the choice of the artists' works?

HvS For TEFAF Online we are allowed to present three art works, and the featured works need to have a relation or connection with each other. But, if things are not complete, not perfect, there is room for you to look and ask yourself: What do I see? Immediately I think here of Suchan Kinoshita's work, Platz Halter, 2019. The third work in the presentation is a sculpture by Siobhán Hapaska. There is also 'division' in that work, it consists of two forms or shapes, one of them is made up of concrete cloth, a material from which shelter tents are made in war zones, fiberglass, and other stuff. Sturdy materials, yet that composite form or shape which also has a dome painted neon orange on the inside, leans on another shape, a plank of reclaimed wood. I got to know Siobhán in London, her studio was next to my gallery in west London, and I always saw her lugging heavy and stiff materials and working with tough technology. She always produces her own work. This work comes from a series, of pieces that are all quite low in height, because of the weight of used concrete cloth. The contrast of hard and soft, uniting opposites plays a big role in her oeuvre. She grew up in Belfast, a conflict zone, and that experience has deeply shaped her, it is reflected in her oeuvre.

MK What is Siobhán Hapaska's work called?

HvS It is from 2016 and is called Us and this was made one year after her exhibition at the Boymans Museum, 'Sensory Spaces', in which she suspended olive trees on the ground floor exhibition space in Rotterdam. The title fits very well with Pere's work with those two boys. Do you know what the title refers to?

MK Since 2015 several works, depictions of the couple, have been created and especially the theme of the pair is explored, for example in the series of sculptures 'Snake and Apple'. In Us I see a couple, one figure is complex and powerful, and leans on the other, which is straight and honest, soft and strong. I remember a conversation with Siobhán, she was sitting in the backseat of a fancy car, with Huub her new life companion, and we talked about the power of love.

HvS The third work in this presentation is by Suchan Kinoshita. Place Holder, 2020, is initially somewhat less easy to interpret. A 'Katzenbaum' (Cat Tree) perhaps, a post for a cat to put her claws in, a place where she can stay. But we don't see the cat. This work was originally, important to know, a set piece of 'Sur Place', a performance that she realized for the festival in Leuven. In this theatrical reflection on the place, as concept and experience, her background can be felt. She was born in Japan and came to Germany when she was 19, where she studied and worked at Theater am Marienplatz in Krefeld. Place Holder's sculpture is accompanied by a soundtrack/poem titled I Love You/Taking Place. When you play this poem, the whole thing comes to life. The work then turns out to be about longing, about love here and now, long-suffering. Noh-play and other Japanese concepts and forms influence Suchan's art, works like 'Tokonoma' and 'Haiku' point to Japanese living traditions. Her art has also always been intertwined with theater, her recent installation in Wiels in Brussels, 'Artist Gym', features self-made props as well. Emptiness is crucial in her sculpture Platz Halter. It is a structure, an architectural erection.

MK I see a variable place that makes me experience absence. In German the term Platz Halter means: 'Jemand, der für einen anderen einen Platz besetzt, frei hält.' Interesting, such a place floats in the universe for a moment. Space is a special concept in Japanese art forms anyway. There is a Japanese term, 'ma', that you can relate to this work. 'Ma' can be translated as 'interval' or 'negative space'. Written in old Japanese kanji, 'ma' the image or language sign was nicely interpreted as 'A door through the crevice of which the moonshine peeps in'.

HvS A few years ago, Suchan made an exhibition in my gallery in London. I told you the story. In my office I heard scratching on the wall, moments later I walked over to have a look, Suchan was gone, drinking coffee, and the gallery was completely empty. But on the wall was written 'Taking Place'. She took over, indicating: it happens, it takes place, I have taken the space, here and now. That contradictory dialogue with space is constantly in her, and I think I am very much in love with it. I'll play you the love poem that belongs to Place Holder.

MK Beautiful poem, about the generosity of love, you may think this is for her cat. But it's probably bigger than that too. Did the work in real life also function as a place for her cat?

HvS Suchan made a second and third version, at her home, there's a cat purring there. This is missing here, we do it with suggestion. The viewer is invited to spin. Suchan's second work in the room is Stick Empathy, this was shown in 2011 at MUDAM in Luxembourg. We see a collection of sticks, placed on the wall in such a way that a kind of score is created, made up of lines, they meander and vibrate. It's the collection of Suchan's dog, Gina was her name, she dragged the sticks from the woods and brought them home. Suchan has written a song for the dog, again an expression of love, which is also played as a soundtrack with this work.

MK You have one particular work in the show by Klaas Kloosterboer. In this painting there is a surface and skin, which change from behind into a volume or body with a cavity, this side comes off the wall and tilts towards the viewer. Klaas made this work in 1995 at the time of a commission for a prison.

HvS Presence and absence as a theme returns in Klaas Kloosterboer. His works often evoke direct physical experience. This is due to his procedures, his actions are clearly legible. In the painting there is a surface that changes from behind into a volume with a cavity where there is room for a segment of the body, for example a part of the arm. This work is very basic and wonderful, it responds to Hapaska's work, but also to the physical aspect in the painting by Llobera. Klaas will soon have a solo show in my gallery.

MK Tell me about Andy Holden's work. It was previously part of the TEFAF presentation 2020. Natural Selection is an intriguing work.

HvS This work is on the border of archiving and reporting of/on historical facts found in the English countryside. For an earlier work Andy was inspired by the life of John Clare, a labor poet active in the first half of the 19th century, who was disappointed by modernization and the impact it had on the landscape, and by how people related to each other differently due to the industrialisation. In his work Andy took a poem by Clare and chalked stanzas in black script on old telegraph poles. He places the poles in a room adding small bottles of nitrous oxide, the fix of today's youth. A work like this makes you think... John Clare came back from London quite mad, he had to put that life behind him. The changes in the landscape and the alienation of the poet are in that work.

Andy's work with the eggs is the reconstruction of a crime scene. The artist picks up on a crook's pranks. His work has sharp edges. The man who stole the eggs was of a lower class, the bed under which he hid them is the most shabby bed you can

imagine. At the same time, there exists a market for the goods he stole, people pay big money for eggs that they cherish as precious art treasures.

MK General question Hidde. What does good art do?

HvS The art that I love brings us closer to the unknown. There is knowledge woven into art, I tell stories about the works of Llobera, Hapaska and Kinoshita. You surround yourself with such works because they spark your wonder. There are good ideas in these pieces. The work Place Holder also has something evocative, that word indicates it; you stay away from that place. Interesting element in Andy's work is a copy of a newspaper article, 'EGG PROBLEMS', in which Andy's father, Peter Holden, rages against collecting bird eggs, a mischief of boys of course, but not only that: This conversation exposes the difference between bird watchers and egg hunters with that professor who studies the birds but does not want to intervene in their habitat.

MK The artist brings all this onboard of course, he has no artistic scruples?

HvS Sure, but the eggs are replicas, that's important. Andy Holden is very aware that he is reconstructing a crime scene. Can you imagine going to a bird's nest and taking eggs away? What we see here is the great sin.

MK It is also an image of anchoring, it tells of a local history.

HvS Andy emphasizes the importance of class differences. In his re-enactment, this cheap bed has a crucial role. It is set up, as if that bird, i.e., that thief is exposing his own nest. At first I said to Andy: can't we replace this with another rustic, sturdier bed? Then Andy said: Hidde it's also a class thing. I thought that was a sensitive remark.

MK What strikes me about Andy's work with those eggs is the story. I have the impression that you are sensitive to that element. Narratives play a

role in many of 'your' works. They are surrounded by stories, even interwoven with them.

HvS I think that's right. But what about Klaas Kloosterboer?

MK In Klaas, both the eye and the body are important, but they often want different things. Direct experience is important, in that sense the work relates to Kinoshita's theatics. The void or emptiness is also important, as with Llobera and the others.

HvS Literature brings stories to life, artists do this through their work. If their stories are relevant, they will also be in a while, and in the future. Time will tell. Stories must be passed on or shared, that's where I see my task, with many other art professionals. If someone can properly explain a historical work, that is just as important as someone who explains the art through their direct contact with artists.

MK Your presentation is called 'Where I End and You Begin'. Can you clarify the title?

HvS That is reality, you have to give others space to look. Respect your audience, I always say. Anyone can imagine a house where two brothers are playing chess, remember that you are doing something that's forbidden, realise that there is deep love that connects people or a human with an animal.

MK Okay Hidde any last words?

HvS I now have to lay out all the eggs exactly as the artist intended, and make no mistake.

recorded via Skype, 6-9-2021