

ZONE

In Hart 11 September 2008

Gasthoven'08 in Aarschot

DEALING WITH GRIEF: SCULPTURALLY AND CINEMATICALLY

In the past there was "Speelhoven", a place in the Aarschot region of Hageland where fascinating things happened each summer. Now, for the second year, we have "Gasthoven". The 2008 edition centres round Ronald Rens, the local sculptor who died last year: fifteen artists were invited, artists who may be considered as kindred spirits; some of them were even taught by him at the Lier Academy. One of them is Marie Julia Bollansée, who presents "Zone", a dimensional video work that makes a lasting impression.

Marc RUYTERS

During its ten years' existence "Speelhoven" developed into a small summer monument in the contemporary visual arts scene thanks to the efforts of Vincent Halflants and Leen Lybeer. By the way, whatever happened with initiatives like this, for instance "Beelden Buiten" in Tielt and the artistic events in the Zoersel park? They seem to have slipped into obscurity. "Speelhoven" stopped in 2006 and was followed by the smaller and less talked-about "Gasthoven".

However, this second edition does have something special going for it. Lieve Rens-De Bruyn, widow of Roland Rens, invited 15 artists, each of whom in their own way have some sort of affinity with the sculptor. Sculptors Dany Tulkens and Dré Peeters and painter Lieve Ulburghs were friends. Painter Marc Vanderleenen knew Rens from his period in Mechelen. Artists like Wilfried Pas, Fred Bervoets, Camiel Van Breedam and Koenraad Tinel were very much admired by Rens, and Rens and sculptor Peter Rogiers regularly visited each other's studio. Etcetera.

Marie Julia Bollansée studied under Roland Rens at the Academy of Lier. Bollansée started as a sculptor, but soon moved to video and performance in which she uses her own body and, through installations, also introduces the aspect "dimensionality" in her video work. The monumental work she shows in Aarschot is called "Zone", a multimedia work that she created in Lokaal_01 in Antwerp, where she also showed it for the first time this summer.

SILVER

"I wanted to make a work about grief", says Marie Julia Bollansée. This resulted first of all in a reflection about her own experiences with grief: with the assistance of photographer Ronald Stoops she created images of her own body, covered with silver pigment, thus referring to Lot, the woman who turned into a pillar of salt because she looked back to her own fate..

But Bollansée wanted more without having to make a work about herself: and she was able to do that when she renewed her acquaintance with Lieve Rens who had just become a widow. Rens is a dancer and was able to express her grief in a choreography of slow dance and movement. Bollansée captured this on video and developed it into a dimensional installation. The pictures are projected on the larger-than-life photographs and on the walls in the room itself. That way an interaction is created, as contemplative as fascinating, of two- and three-dimensional images, images that keep adapting to the space in which they operate: the space of Lokaal_01 in Antwerp is totally different from the attic of the Cultural Centre Het Gasthuis in Aarschot, where "Zone" can be seen now. Significant is the way in which Bollansée seeks an entirely personal form of what could be called "sculptural video", nestling in a highly flexible and versatile format embracing both the installation and the performance. This was already apparent in the work that she showed a few years ago at Locus Lophem and in the monumental banquet in the "Tarquinia" video in "Lonely at the Top" at the M HKA early 2007. With "Zone" Bollansée has moved a step further once again, getting more and more into the three-dimensional and tactile sphere, where the (her) body claims an ever increasing role. At the end of September she will present a new work on "Oog", the art video site of the Dutch newspaper Volkskrant.

Translation Erika Peeters