

# ELEGY

Marie Julia Bollansée

Video-installatie, 2014

3 video-projections in loop / 9 movements, 9 performances-poses / soundscape /  
8 cobblestones, graffiti spray / hearing-protectors

Thanks to Trappists Westmalle

Pushing down, pulling and dragging the limbs, manipulation of living beings with throbbing cutting machines, crying all around: these are the actions you see in the videos and that is the sound you hear.

But the image and sound are not about humiliation, attack or violence. The videos were recorded at the Westmalle Trappist Abbey's sheepsstable, on the day of the annual "big shave". The animals are manipulated by strong efficient shavers, who know precisely where their weak points are. Their wool is cut by a sharp electric noisy tondeuse, that razes over their skin (and by accident sometimes wounds it). The bleating of the sheep sounds random, but it sounds as if it was a non stop elegy.

The video-installation is build upon these images and sounds. The artist made nine performances, static poses with stones. Stones and sheep are meaning-carriers. I'm thinking about the ceremonies in different religions in which sheep are ritually slaughtered and sacrificed. Priests received messages from the Gods and viewed into the future by reading the intestines of the animals. Sins can be wiped away and graces can be enforced with sheep-blood. The Egyptians gilded the horns and hoofs of rams that are slaughtered in the tempel. Abraham did not kill his son, but slaughtered a lam instead of, as an atoning sacrifice to Jahweh. The people of Israël were named the flock of sheep, Christ is their herd, and at the same time the slaughter lamb. Stones are primeval, dead and silent, and they carry meanings. Time concentrated and petrified matter by stagnation for centuries. Big stones were erected to be menhirs, signs, monuments in time. Small stones are thrown, built, destroyed... They refer to stonings, to roadways, to the Western Wall in Jerusalem, to the biblical " He who is without sin cast the first stone" (Johannes 8.7).

Although, these sheep are very well nursed by their devoted shepherd. The stones are glowing silently (it could be gemstones or even meteorites). The artist, completely naked, performs peacefully and her bodysculpture doesn't suggest any violence or power. There are ear-protectors available which can be used to dim the penetrant crying. But the installation weeps and protests. ELEGY.

The deeper meaning of this artwork is formed in the perception of the audience, which is influenced by the cultural and symbolic overlap by the world religions and mythologies. However, it's subject matter is inextricably connected to what actually happens all around in the world, human history and our collective memories and conflicts.

*worktext, Marie Julia Bollansée, 26 aug 2014*