

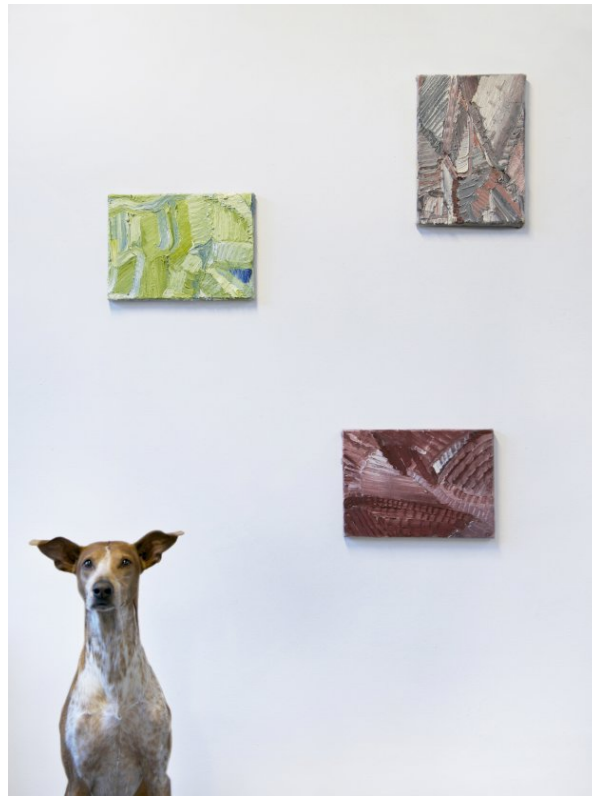
We Like Art

Interview with Bettie van Haaster

Sunday, January 25, 2015

A new Wall with paintings by Bettie van Haaster

A painter we have admired for a while is Bettie van Haaster (Vogelenzang, 1957). At first glance, her work is modest and painted in a limited color palette.



The sizes are modest, the paint is thick and appears from A to B in one painting session, and they are placed next to each other. You really have to look carefully, take your time, then you will be rewarded. The paintings have a specific heavy weight to them. As a viewer, with your nose on the work, you are challenged to study how the work is structured.

It is noticeable in her exhibitions that the small canvases can often handle an entire room with ease. When you walk from work to work, you are drawn into paintings that are always very different in its play with color, brushstrokes and solutions, on the square centimeter. It is not surprising that in Museum de Pont, they are fond of a painter like Bettie van Haaster. She is a real painter. The kind of artist that is admired by her colleagues, and that kind of artist - that's what they trade in there in Tilburg.

Van Haaster grew up in the Bollenstreek close to the dunes on the southern border of North Holland. It seems as if early impressions of the dunes, the bulb fields and the bright North Sea light keep returning in her work. Not literally, but as self-evident, with her abstract panels that are worked and shifted through parts of paint.

Robbert Roos wrote it very nicely:

Van Haaster plows, lubricates and traces the paint layers. Due to the diligent painter's work, the yellow, black and white mix into an almost monochrome surface, in which the patterns of roads and constructions are incorporated as echoes of reality. The landscapes have the earthy character of turned up polder land, but can just as well be the scene of mythical sagas and legends.



Zaaloverzicht Museum De Pont, Tilburg

It was very cool to be able to make a new Wall with Bettie van Haaster. Together we chose a limited number of paintings for a wall installation. That just turned out to work the best. At the bottom of this post you see the link to the new Wall, but first a few questions.

Hi Bettie, can you tell us what your studio looks like?

My studio is in Amsterdam, on the ground floor of a large studio building with its own door. You enter a kind of loft with cupboards and then you are immediately in the part where I work. It's not very big, I think about 5 by 5 meters. With two extra rooms of 3 by 3, with a storage and a kitchen unit. I have a tile floor, it's the old hospital bathroom I believe.

In my studio, there is a table for drawing and a palette on a kind of cart with a table next to it, with buckets and tubes and underneath old jerry cans. It's as bare as possible. On the wall are paintings in different stages - behind me the works that are finished - the unfinished are on the left wall and on the working wall either nothing or one work.

Does your working day have fixed rituals?

My working day actually mainly consists of the afternoon. I walk the dog in the morning, do some paperwork and / or go to the market and then I'm on the way to the studio. Especially no appointments.

Do you make your paintings on an easel or on the floor?

I do the small paintings on the table, the bigger ones on the wall.

How do you start on a new canvas? What is your starting point?

When I start on a new canvas, I usually start with how I ended the previous one. And with a certain color. That is one or two colors per series. Currently yellow, blue and white. So I actually start by laying out the colors of paint and the bucket of brushes. I choose two brushes and start mixing. Then immediately thicken the paint on it.



Your paintings often have the same format and dimensions, how did that come about?

The fact that my paintings are the same size is a way of continuing the variation on a theme and the rhythm in a series. I almost think of it as a film where an image develops from. Other sizes often mean a different problem definition. I like to limit myself to small or medium sizes. A rectangle, a square or almost square...

Is a painting created in one painting session?

A painting is almost never created in one go. It is actually always different. Sometimes I work on a painting until it is finished, in a number of sessions. Usually I paint until I can't go on and wait. Then I start another one with the same theme and work alternately on both canvases. You have to be careful with that, that you do not thin out the load, as it were.

Do you actually see work as figurative or abstract?

I consider my work to be both figurative and abstract. I see abstraction and figuration in one image - then it gets really interesting.



You chose a stunning but relatively austere Wall with 3 paintings, can you tell us something about that?

The Sober Wall was created because the paintings have a lot of energy in them and will collide if you hang more of them together. In this case, I chose three works from different series and therefore also in a different color scheme. Each work comes from a different world.

At first we also wanted to add drawings, but I also left that out because it requires a different point of view.

You have a lot of fans among fellow painters, are you also a fan of certain painters?

Yes, I certainly have painters that I admire such as Giorgio Morandi and Giotto. Russian painters from the beginning of the 20th century such as Lyubov Popova. But also Georges Braque and Gino Severini - an Italian. Still mainly people from the early 20th century. Also Kurt Schwitters. I think because at that moment they invented a new visual language and that sense of discovery is in their works. They also all have a paint layer that appeals to me. These are of course not works that I see every day, but I also get ideas or ways of looking from literature, fashion, architecture - everything around me.



You can now see a beautiful series of works from the collection in De Pont. And soon you will be showing a few works at our We Like Art exhibition. Are you looking forward to a fair like Art Rotterdam? In terms of meeting colleagues or seeing their works?

It is exciting to see your work at a fair. Will it survive the masses and the multitude? To be honest, I am usually quite overwhelmed by the exchange. I think it would be nice to meet fellow artists at We Like Art who also participate; I saw a number of works that make me curious on the website.



Photography Wall and Portraits: Riksta Dorhou