

METAMORPHOSIS

Eefje Van den Brande exhibits at SLIB

29 April to 27 May 2018

There are Ovid's metamorphoses and the metamorphoses from biology, there are the antique stories but there is also the evolutionary emergence of a larva from the egg. The work that Eefje Van den Brande presents to us can be read alternately on both levels. Ovid's work is about the eternal life of classical gods and of us as mortal beings. Mythical figures undergo a dramatic transformation. We read how the nymph Daphne turns into a laurel tree, how the hunter Actaeon becomes a deer when he catches the goddess Diana naked, how the nymph Io turns into a cow, and so on. Eefje's iconography is just as much about transformations between animals or people on the one hand, and amorphous transformations on the other. We end up in a biotope inhabited by donkey heads, weasels, shrews, owls, baboons, cuttlefish, tadpoles, lions, moose, dogs, shrimps. Often intertwined with a female body. Animal bodies emerge from a slimy mass. Dark-eyed mouths collapse under snow-white fur. A platypus seems to be fleeing from a water monster. In this surreal universe, could a bird still find its young? Definitely. But the mother metaphor is particularly striking. How a mother during pregnancy is in a deep relationship with the growing foetus. What this symbiosis means for both of them, how it feels, how the flesh of both is intertwined. There is a pietà between the images. In the female womb rests an indefinable body. As movingly devoted as it is sad, she carries it in her hands, as if this emotional moment might just as well be over. Both the tenderness and the pain in this gesture form a common thread throughout Eefje's visual language. It is a subtle balancing act between abstraction and figuration. Borders are explored. There are colours that seem to breathe and lines that subtly seek a vanishing point. It is never colouring between the lines. It is skimming the edges, in the depositive sense of the word. Perhaps Eefje herself has undergone a metamorphosis in this work process? She has been willing to sacrifice her steady hand to abstraction and stains of colour. She has let go of something deep inside herself and has given it wings. An artist invents her own idiom. Hegel philosophised about man as an amphibian, simultaneously land- and water animal. Between metaphysics and animalism, we all reside.

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