

# Galeria Estrany-de la Mota

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## Marijke van Warmerdam. En algún otro lugar

Opening: Saturday, March 24th 2005, 19.00 p.m.

Exhibition: 24.03.2007 – 12.05.2007. Tuesday to Saturdays from 10.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. and 4.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m.

The work of Marijke van Warmerdam (Netherlands, 1959) includes photographs, sculptures and films. All of them, collect simple moments but loaded with an inexplicable nuance that makes them strangely magical, as can be seen in the selection of works of *In some other place*, his first solo show in our country. The following interview, made on the occasion of one of his last projects last autumn at Fruitmarket Gallery, in Edinburgh, reveals some keys to his work.

Carmela Thiele: In what kind of climate did your early work originate? Which role models did you have?

Marijke van Warmerdam: A prominent artistic climate and a world of models and heroes played no role. You could do anything, there was no doctrine like in the period of 'wild painting' in the early 1980s. Sometimes I just approached people who had aroused my curiosity. For example, I visited New York for the first time directly after completing my studies and arranged meetings with well-known artists to try to find out what it's like to be an artist.

Carmela Thiele: Your works appear to be free of the conventions of the art world. You do not often make references; even when I asked you about role models, you did not name any names.

Marijke van Warmerdam: If I would say, that I have met Jeff Koons? No, I don't believe so much in the 'oeuvre' of an artist, but more in individual works that, over time, have stayed in my memory. Their influence can be so great that I do pay tribute or react to something from art history. One of my recent works does this, to my own astonishment. It is an answer to a famous painting by Sigmar Polke: *Higher beings commanded: paint the top right corner black*. It is an almost perfect cube from nature, of pyrite, which I mentioned before. It is about the size of a fist and attached to a rock, just as it was found. I put it on a triangular black panel. It looks like the triangle in the top right corner of Polke's canvas. In conjunction with the natural pyrite one could see this as a kind of 'appropriation art', but my intention was to provide an answer to Polke's idea that the artist is a medium of higher beings – or should be. Obviously, he means this ironically, but it is still an idea shared by many of us! With my small wall sculpture I wanted to go a step further together with him and actually say to him that in many cases human beings are not needed any longer because higher beings have already done the work.

Carmela Thiele: Your work is so varied that critics tend to limit their analysis to your film installations. In 1999, in a piece for *Frieze* magazine, Daniel Birnbaum speculated that if it weren't for the film loops nobody would be interested in the rest of your work. What drives you to continually try out new things?

Marijke van Warmerdam: It's always interesting what others see in my work, but I can't think about that when I am working. To change to a new medium like computer graphics, as I am doing now, may really surprise some people who know my work. However, I don't really consider this way of drawing to be trying something out, but rather a way in which I can keep my eye and hand fresh through a new beginning, without any personal history, as is the case when I make a film. It is exciting to see whether I can still be myself while operating in this field that I don't know. And whether it leads to new paths and meanings that I don't yet know. Or my work doesn't know.

Carmela Thiele: You emphasise openness, the unknown, which appear to be primary preoccupations of yours. Openness also makes an offer to the observer. For me, *Met losse handen* recalls the feeling of what it was like to ride a bike with no hands. Do you consciously include the position of the viewer in your conception?

Marijke van Warmerdam: I think that a lot comes from my way of working, in which I like to put all my cards on the table. The image, the title, the material: I like it the most to see all that without trimmings. This means that in principle nothing needs to stay hidden. A projector can rattle away while it is doing its work; it might bring the viewer back to reality, back from the image, but it should also function the other way round – I hope – that you become immersed in the image. I don't really see that the film image and projector noise are opposites; I see it as a whole, as a spatial work. And that is how I handle it, when I install a film loop. Incidentally, being thrown back into reality also happens in my recent photographic works, *Puddle* and *Passing*. The 'here and now', the 'there and after' are aspects that are frequently found in my work. They slip in of their own accord.

Carmela Thiele: The titles of your work appear to state what there is to see. The first water droplet that is about to fall, the magnolia blossoms that will drop, the aeroplane that will soon disappear from the sky.

Marijke van Warmerdam: In the early days, all the titles were very concrete; very much it-is-what-it-is: *Shower, Handstand, Jump, Good days, bad days, Football, Pancake*. I still like that and I still have to have it in the title. But nevertheless that it isn't what it is and yet it is still real, through which a kind of new, concrete image arises, that is what I am more concerned about. The title is a different dimension and at the same time it is in effect a description. This other dimension was not present in the old titles. A cube from nature (for example, pyrite) could be called, 'What a wonder!' Then the viewer would think, Yes, it is a wonder, and in that instant a step would be taken away from reality. If you say, 'There are higher beings here', what happens then? The funny thing is to bring something to light that – I believe – in a fraction of a second the viewer sees, too.

Carmela Thiele: Perhaps that is what makes your works so open. Through the overlap between title and image, space is freed up for highly different associations, because language and image always provoke varying reactions. How are your works created? Do you make sketches?

Marijke van Warmerdam: I want the titles always to contain something actual, because it is the image that is the main thing, both during the making and afterwards. How a work is created? Oh, it happens mainly through looking. I feel drawn to something and it runs around my mind until I find a preliminary form for it, like a photo, film or sculpture. Then, it is a question of taking very small steps. I decide, say, to make a photo of a *Puddle* in a field. Then there must be a hand in it. The hand has to do something, but the photo has to look completely self-evident and downright ordinary. And so it goes on, as though I was a sculptor, and in the end you get the photographic work 'Puddle', for example. A sketch? Things should not have too many preliminaries. A little photo, a simple sketch here and there; I do those things but they are not important. How the film or photograph is composed, the processes it is subjected to so that it looks just by-the-way, that is much more important. The spontaneity of looking must be preserved in the work.

Carmela Thiele: Finally, I would like to ask you what makes an artwork good for you and what makes a work bad?

Marijke van Warmerdam: A while ago I was thinking about a work and its title: *Voyage Out*. It is a board with a sailing ship in a bottle. Placed next to it I imagined all kinds of bottles filled with coloured drinks: Blue Curaçao, Pina Colada, Pisang Ambon, and so on. That's how you would like to travel, I thought. But I was not completely satisfied, and after a week had gone by, I realised that it was too complicated. Now I think that the ship in the bottle lying down and one bottle standing with a green drink inside is enough. I call this the 'paring down' of a sculpture. This is what often brings me to a 'good work'. However, I do distrust this method for it cannot be the ultima ratio and applied to all works. Fortunately. I still possess enough naïvety to approach a work with many strings to my bow. What really is a good work, I only know later, when I've done it, when I have surprised myself. Or when the work has surprised me .... That's what it's all about.

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