

Lily van der Stokker

Help help a little old lady here

November 30, 2019 – February 23, 2020

Lily van der Stokker (b. Den Bosch, Netherlands, 1954) has been renowned since the early 1990s for her playful wall paintings in bright colors. Floral motifs and ornamental clouds are dominant elements in works whose aesthetic and fluorescent palette bring Pop art to mind. Meticulously executed in a time-consuming and labor-intensive process, the murals are based on small-format drawings the artist prepares with scrupulous precision. Simplicity and humor are hallmarks of van der Stokker's oeuvre. Integrated text fragments or affirmative messages such as "Friendly Good," or "Hoi" often directly address the viewer. Recurrent concerns in her art revolve around the stereotype of "femininity," ostensible banalities, but also the economics of art and everyday life or the artist's existence. Her playful use of color can also be read as a challenge to a conventional bourgeois conception of art for which exuberant colorfulness is incompatible with reflective gravitas. The solo exhibition at the Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst provides the most comprehensive insight into van der Stokker's oeuvre to date, encompassing more than 10 wall paintings as well as several drawings dating from the late 1980s to the present.

Curator:
Dr. Raphael Gyga

Assistant Curator:
Elsa Himmer

The notion that a painting leads a life of its own and is perhaps even capable of "thinking" or "speaking", is still characteristic of (contemporary) approaches to the medium. We like to think of the work as a counterpart with which we can engage in some sort of conversation. A helpful starting point when talking about Lily van der Stokker's oeuvre, is the idea that the paintings possess vitalistic qualities. Her colorful pleasing works seem to inhabit and invigorate the spaces in which they are executed. The text fragments, or rather isolated words, van der Stokker frequently integrates in her works, form a rudimentary vocabulary. Frequently doubling as the works' titles, the affirmative phrases such as "Really Fantastic," "Yes," "Hoi," or "Wonderful," simultaneously directly address the viewer, further developing the engagement between the works and the viewer.

One can read these messages and wonder: Who is speaking here? The artwork or the artist? What do they want to tell us? The questions the artist is concerned with and which inspire her works arise from an interest in the mechanisms of art and the art world, as well as the intersection between art and life. What is, or what is not good art? Can an artwork address the everyday life? Can an artwork be funny, sweet, and positive? What makes a topic relevant to an artistic context? What role does subjectivity play? What makes artworks 'fail'? And does a work that has completely failed have a right to exist?

Whilst using a simple language, van der Stokker references topics such as the banalities of everyday life. Through her use of cheerful colors and familiar ornaments, the works establish a connection to the viewer through recognition and identification. She presents her works as being easily accessible and inviting, as being close to the audience itself. The establishment of a connection, is also notable in the three-dimensional sofas and chairs, supplementing

MIGROS MUSEUM FÜR
GEGENWARTSKUNST
LIMMATSTRASSE 270
CH-8005 ZÜRICH

T +41 44 277 20 50
F +41 44 277 62 86
INFO@MIGROSMUSEUM.CH

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selected wall paintings since the mid-1990s. Reinforcing the spatial effect of the artwork and enforcing an encounter those objects further strengthen the relation to the visitor. Those intended encounters between work and viewer, point to another defining element of van der Stokker's oeuvre: questions about the passage of time and permanence. Murals, traditionally conceived as lasting memorials to glorify histories or religious narratives. By contrast an exhibition context—where the temporary show is the prevailing paradigm—has a very limited “lifespan”: most contemporary murals are buried under a fresh coat of wall paint only weeks after their public debut. Van der Stokker's wall paintings are characterized by a contradiction: they present themselves to audiences as “permanent,” but their imminent disappearance is part of the work. Thus, her preferred medium, the mural, is one which investigates the logic of exhibition making, the ‘sustainability’ of exhibitions and exemplifies to a process-based understanding of art. Influenced by the ideas of the Fluxus art movement of the 1960s, which emphasized the artistic process rather than the work itself, the labour-intensive execution of her works remains a central theme in her artistic praxis. Van der Stokker's wall paintings are based on detailed drawings which are digitalized and then projected on the wall of the respective exhibition space. The projections are adjusted by the artists to establish a relation between the work and the space it will inhabit. The projected image serves as template for drawing the curved outlines of the wall paintings. In a second step the works obtain their colorful appearance and in a last step all outlines are executed with one continuous brushstroke; a technique requiring a lot of skill and practice.

With their overt visual references to Pop art, as well as the hippie movement of the 1960s and 1970s, van der Stokker's works may seem bright, cute, jaunty or even banal at first glance, easily allowing the audience to forget the efforts undertaken for their realization. From the very beginning of her artistic career, her works can be described as pretty, or doodly. Under the guise of playfulness and naïve optimism, the artist sets to challenge notions of “female” art, the “acceptable” form to address urgent matters in art, and romantic ideals of what it means to be an artist, by using her own visual idiom to deliberately counteract dominant art movements since the 1960s. Not only were these movements such as abstract expressionism and minimalism dominated by white men, they were also associated with the idea of a serious and established form of art making. However, by (re-)introducing the notion of femininity and feminine qualities in the art works, van der Stokker does not aim to sustain such gender based distinctions. In fact, it is a technique to overthrow these categories and display how deeply the concepts of art and the notion of quality and sincerity are interwoven with attributes that are predominantly linked to art works with a masculine connotation. Van der Stokker's oeuvre aims to challenge prevailing hierarchies in the arts, while experimenting with what is and is not permissible. She challenges our perception. Despite their cheerful appearance her works are serious comments on stereotypes, not only of femininity, but also the (economic) mechanisms of the art world and the challenges of everyday life. Van der Stokker invites us to take a closer look as she addresses the current state of affairs by way of deft indirection. In this sense, her work articulates an acutely observed critique of the market and society, conveying her discomfort with contemporary culture and the institutionalized pressure to be innovative, perform, produce, and succeed.

In the event room the presentation “Lily van der Stokker – 36 years of wall paintings” is on display.

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Lily van der Stokker lives and works in Amsterdam and New York. Selected solo exhibitions: Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2018), Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2015), New Museum, New York (2013), Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2010), Tate St. Ives (2010).

The solo exhibition was curated by Dr. Raphael Gygax. An accompanying publication has been released in collaboration with the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, and Roma Publications.

Events / Art Education

Family afternoons

Sunday, 12.01.2020, 2–5 pm

Sunday, 02.02.2020, 2–5 pm

Schreiben im Museum – Die Leichtigkeit der Worte

Samstag, 08.02.2020, 10–17 Uhr

(Please register at kunstvermittlung@migrosmuseum.ch until 04.02.2020)

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List of Works

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1 <i>Yeah</i>, 1990–91/2019
Acrylic on wall
161 x 176 cm
Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto,
Milan/New York</p> | <p>4 <i>Hoi</i>, 1989
Acrylic on canvas
20 x 30 cm
Collection of Jean-Edouard van Praet
d'Amerloo</p> |
| <p>2 <i>Food Cluster</i>
2a <i>Shopping List</i>, 2019
Acrylic on wall and wood
145 x 189 x 5.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto,
Milan/New York</p> | <p>5 <i>Jack is 60, I am 44 (design for wall painting with couch)</i>, 1998
Colored pencil and ballpoint pen on paper
21 x 29.5 cm
Courtesy the artist</p> |
| <p>2b <i>Vegetable Broth</i>, 2019
Acrylic on wall and wood
85.5 x 69.5 x 4.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto,
Milan/New York</p> | <p>6 <i>I Am an Artwork</i>, 2003/19
Acrylic on wall and wood
208.5 x 400 x 61.5 cm
Sammlung Migros Museum für
Gegenwartskunst</p> |
| <p>2c <i>Lunch Breakfast Dinner (design for wall painting)</i>, 2019
Colored pencil on paper
21 x 29,7 cm
Courtesy the artist</p> | <p>7 <i>Hello Everybody (design for wall painting)</i>, 2008–19
Colored pencil on paper
29.7 x 42 cm
Courtesy the artist</p> |
| <p>2d <i>Apple Crumble</i>, 2019
Acrylic on wall
137.5 x 209.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto,
Milan/New York</p> | <p>8 <i>Nice Being Left Right</i>, 2014/19
Acrylic on wall
411 x 725.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Air de Paris, Paris</p> |
| <p>2e <i>Chicken Salad</i>, 2019
Acrylic on wall
80 x 75 cm
Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto,
Milan/New York</p> | <p>9 <i>Childcare</i>, 1991/2019
Acrylic on linen and panel
282.5 x 360.5 x 5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Air de Paris, Paris</p> |
| <p>2f <i>Hummus Dip</i>, 2019
Acrylic on wall and wood
187 x 189 x 5.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto,
Milan/New York</p> | <p>10 <i>Birthday</i>, 1998/2019
Acrylic on wall and wood
171 x 151 x 46 cm
Courtesy the artist and Air de Paris, Paris</p> |
| <p>3 <i>Evening TV</i>, 2019
Acrylic on wall
420 x 361 cm
Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto,
Milan/New York</p> | <p>11 <i>Loan (design for wall painting with box)</i>, 2003–19
Colored pencil on paper
21 x 29.7 cm
Courtesy the artist</p> |
| | <p>12 <i>Help, Help Old Lady</i>, 2018/19
Acrylic on wall
167.5 x 225 cm
Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto,
Milan/New York</p> |

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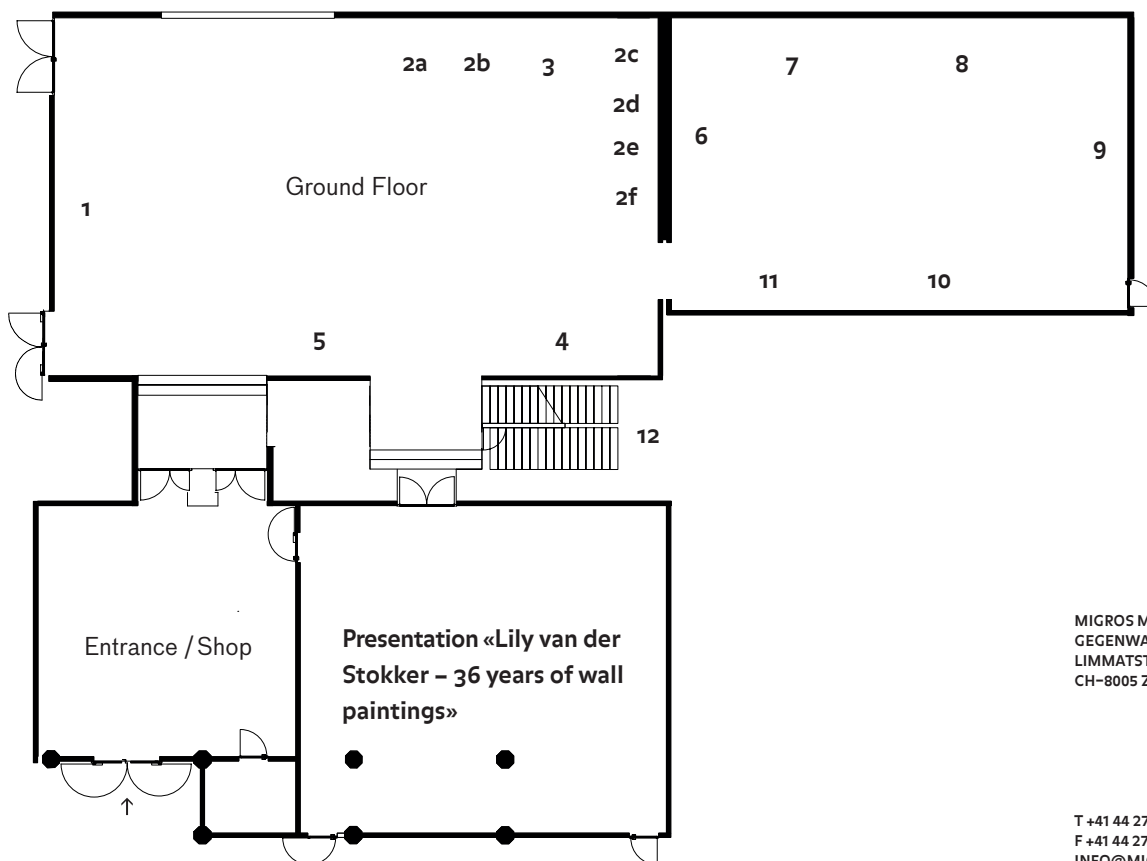
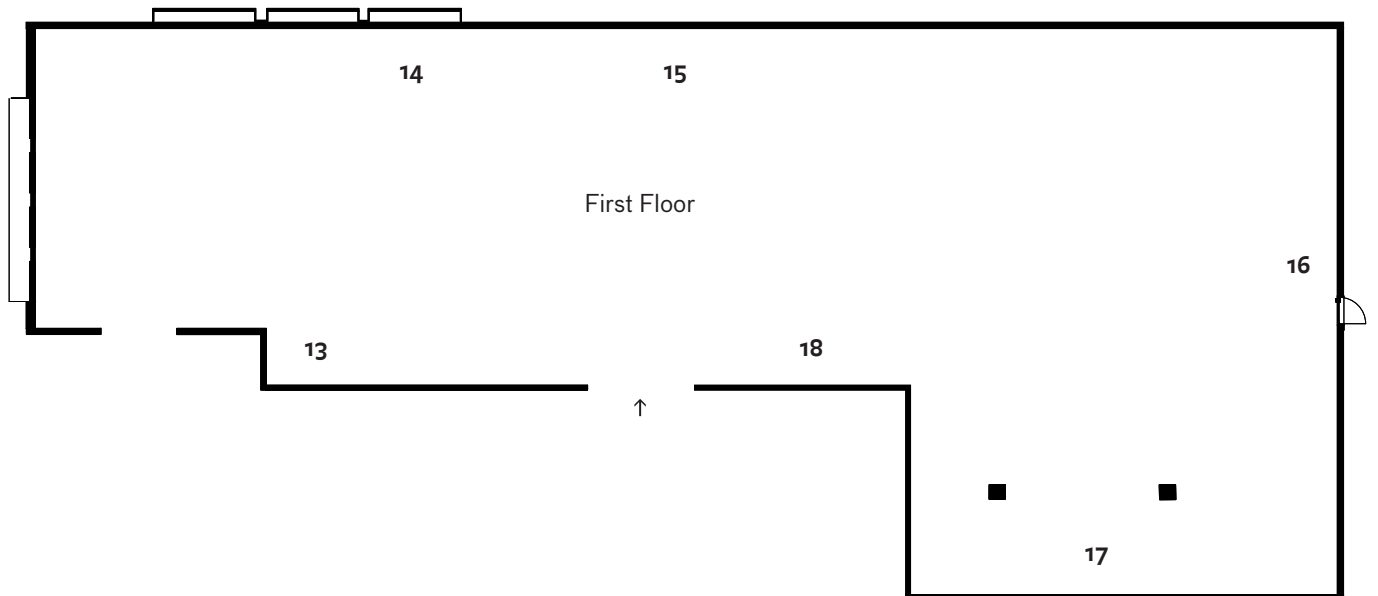
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- 13** *The Rent (design for wall painting)*,
2002–03
Colored pencil and marker on paper
21 x 29.7 cm
Courtesy the artist
- 14** *BiBaBabyboom (design for wall painting
with couch and carpet)*, 2003–19
Colored pencil and ballpoint pen on paper
29.7 x 42 cm
Courtesy the artist
- 15** *Sandwiches with Chocolate Sprinkles*,
2007/19
Acrylic on wall
416 x 819 cm
Courtesy the artist and kaufmann repetto,
Milan/New York
- 16** *Extremely Experimental Art by My
Grandma*, 1999/2019
Acrylic on wall and wood
419.5 x 1250 x 17.5 cm
Courtesy the artist and Air de Paris, Paris
- 17** € 25.000, 2019
Acrylic on wall
414 x 313 cm
Courtesy the artist and Air de Paris, Paris
- 18** *Inheritance (design for wall painting with
block)*, 2003–19
Colored pencil on paper
29.7 x 42 cm
Courtesy the artist

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