

An example:

Living children (her own children) are pressed into clay with those hands of hers.

A simple gesture as well as a sacred act.

The impression is a work of art, a very direct photograph.

The work seems older than it is, speeded up fossils in the colours of ancient times.

Marie Julia Bollansée does risky things.

Dangerous.

Intimate.

Soft turns into hard. The wetter the clay the softer; the wetter the plaster the more flexible, but the water evaporates and clay becomes dry and hard and crumbly.

The sun's or the fire's heat hardens things. And so does time. Initially, a soft hand performed the hard work. But flexibility has solidified. Marie Julia Bollansée has soft hands but she has power too. In this work we can see the graceful movements of her hands as well as the power she exerts. She pushed her children and her husband into clay. Handled them by persuasion.

"The Land of the Living ones" : It consists of clay tablets in which she has made impressions of her children, in blue and pink. Her own children. This way she preserves their shape. She doesn't just sculpt with her hands but also with the bodies of the people close to her. A dignified and solemn event is the result; but at the same time it's a risky business; the fragile emotions figure on the borderline of the ludicrous and true emotion. But no one in his right mind would call this way of behaving noncommittal.. Marie Julia Bollansée uses heavy materials, both literally and figuratively speaking. The children confide in her, it's their mother using them and she for her part approaches them with great respect. We can feel the children making counter impressions with their own hands. There is tension.

the fossil. She told me: 'Fossils don't stop to fascinate me.' It's true: fossils are nature's prints. In the end only beauty will last, harmony. Fossiles are at a remote distance from life, far away from our daily sorrows, from the silly side effects, from life's irregularities. We like the things of the past because we don't really know much about them, seeing only their shapes and these are not the shapes of people but of plants and animals, nerves, bones, turnings. Marie Julia Bollansée's fossils are not real fossils, they only look like them; they're still close to life, but she's only preserved their beautiful design. And what's more, in her case, it's about human beings. Human beings over and over again.

Marie Julia Bollansée is a wife and mother. It's a biological fact that she receives and gives, and in this order. She nests. The nest is a temporary dwelling, everything is temporary; the children will become adults, they'll leave the nest, start leading their own lives. This exhibition is something similar. The nest is given away, is left. This exhibition is a fragile event; things give themselves away, they have left the nest and have entered the public domain. The images seem to tremble slightly when we look at them. To tell you the truth, for me this work contains primitive elements: the circle, the human figure, the archetypes representing togetherness, pregnancy, curves, security, but at the same time there's also the foreboding of pain, the pain of being cut off, being left, memories, being abandoned. The more personal the work, the less noncommittal, the more moving, the more painful. The big things in life hurt.

There's a connection with photography. Life is recorded, immobilized; the moment immortalized. First the negative image, then the positive, as we can see here.

And finally, it has to do with time. That to me seems to be the key to this exhibition. This exhibition, as I said before, is rather a mystery, but yet there is something which dominates everything and that has to do with time. Marie Julia Bollansée plays a dangerous game with time, she presses things down, organizes an accelerated ageing process. Recent things are given an effect of eternity. She perpetualizes her surroundings. It's a dangerous game because she uses perish-able materials. Her work is at once new and old. Let's wait and see how this ends.

JOHAN DE VOS, photographer, AICA critic, introduction for "A THIN SKIN", one man show from 4-6-1999 until 10-7-1999 at ELZENVELD, Antwerp, with catalogue