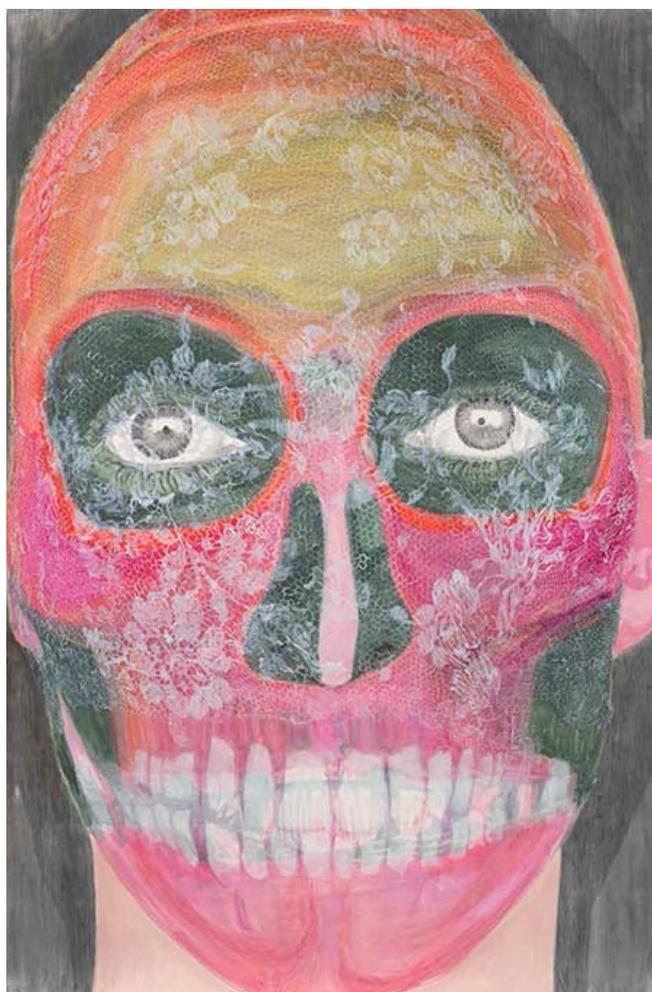


Elly Strik. Ghosts, Brides and other Companions



ELLY STRIK
Beaucoup de fleurs (Muchas flores), 2003
Óleo, laca, grafito y lápiz sobre papel
240 x 160 cm
Colección FRAC Auvergne

- DATES:** 21st January – 26th May 2014
- PLACE:** Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (Madrid)
Sabatini Building. 3rd Floor.
- ORGANIZATION:** Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía
- CURATORS:** Manuel Borja-Villel and Teresa Velázquez
- COORDINATOR:** Patricia Molins

Ghosts, Brides and other Companions is the first exhibition in Spain by the artist Elly Strik (The Hague, Netherlands, 1961). The show, which combines new work and earlier productions, is designed specifically for display at the Museo Reina Sofía.

In her artistic career, Elly Strik has been particularly interested in those visionary artists who probe beyond the thresholds of human nature, such as **James Ensor** and **Francisco de Goya**. It is to Goya, whose work Strik has analyzed in depth, that one room of this exhibition is dedicated. The other sections have metaphorical subjects: *Witches and Mystics*, *Birth and Bride*, *Wedding*, *Freud and Darwin*, *Rituals and Rebirth*, and *Dream*. Taken together, they give rise to a reflection on the human condition in the present day.

In an intense and poetic quest, Strik explores the processes of physical metamorphosis in parallel with the process of artistic creation itself, transformative by nature. This takes the concrete form of figures and portraits full of energy, in oil and graphite on paper, which unfold states of being. What is suggested in this way is that the construction of identity, necessarily plural, is an unfinished project, while the creative process becomes an act of single-parented reproduction through which the artist-individual is capable of subverting natural laws. In the words of the art historian Jean-Christophe Ammann: “In Elly Strik, there is a potential for metamorphosis. She appropriates for herself Duchamp’s words to the effect that every male artist is his own bride, and every woman artist her own groom. She contemplates the transformative force of her being, the multiplicity of faces and identities within her, and translates this capacity into drawings, into painting, whose pencil strokes are bearers of this potential for transformation. In this dimension of multiple identity, Elly does not fabricate a fictional self. Instead, she exuberantly diffuses her being.”

Strik disrupts the everyday image which unveils the elements that cipher the hybrid nature of each individual: the male and the female, the human and the animal. This dissection of identity is visually threatening, yet there comes a certain point when her works lose this terrifying character and become an invitation to contemplation. This is how the artist summarizes that *pregnant* moment of her creative activity: “I go on with a work until it reaches the moment it tells me, “Yes, I am a totem.” A totem mostly faces you. The presence of facing can become transparent. When it is becoming a part of you the element of confrontation dissolves. From that moment it might function as something sublime. Not sublime in the classical, aesthetic sense, but in the sense of facing the unknown. It can replace aversion with a more contemplative state. I wish to go beyond the fear of instinct and intuition. I want my approach to be ‘horrible’ directness with a contemplative feeling. Then the image can unfold itself to the viewer.”

The artist

Elly Strik was born in 1961 in The Hague, Netherlands. She studied at the Minerva Art Academy in Groningen and post-graduate institute Jan van Eyck Academie in Maastricht. In 1987 she was invited for *A Choice by Jean-Christophe Ammann*, a central exhibition in the KunstRAI in Amsterdam. In 1988 she started exhibiting at Galerie Van Krimpen in Amsterdam. Her work has been shown internationally in numerous museums and institutions and has been acquired by public and private collections, among others: Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Anthea – Contemporary Art Investment, Luxembourg; Collection Claudine and Jean-Marc Salomon, France; Collection ING, Brussels; Museum Boymans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; MuHKA, Antwerp; Hessisches Landesmuseum, Darmstadt; FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand; UBS Art Collection, Zurich; Collection Antoine de Galbert, Paris. She lives and works in Brussels and teaches at the Royal Academy for Visual Arts in The Hague.

CATALOGUE

A fully-illustrated bilingual (Spanish and English) catalogue has been published for *Elly Strik. Ghosts, Brides and other Companions*. It includes writings on Elly Strik's work by Carlos Gamarro, Victoria Noorthoorn, Beatriz Preciado and Bart Verschaffel. It also reproduces a dialogue between the artist and Jean-Christophe Ammann, as well as Ben Okri's poems.

This exhibition is included in the program of Festival Miradas de Mujeres 2014



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