

Sara van der Heide

solo-exhibition

WE THE FIRST
DUTCH PARTY

at Fons Welters Galerie

15th of Octobre until

19th of Novembre 2005

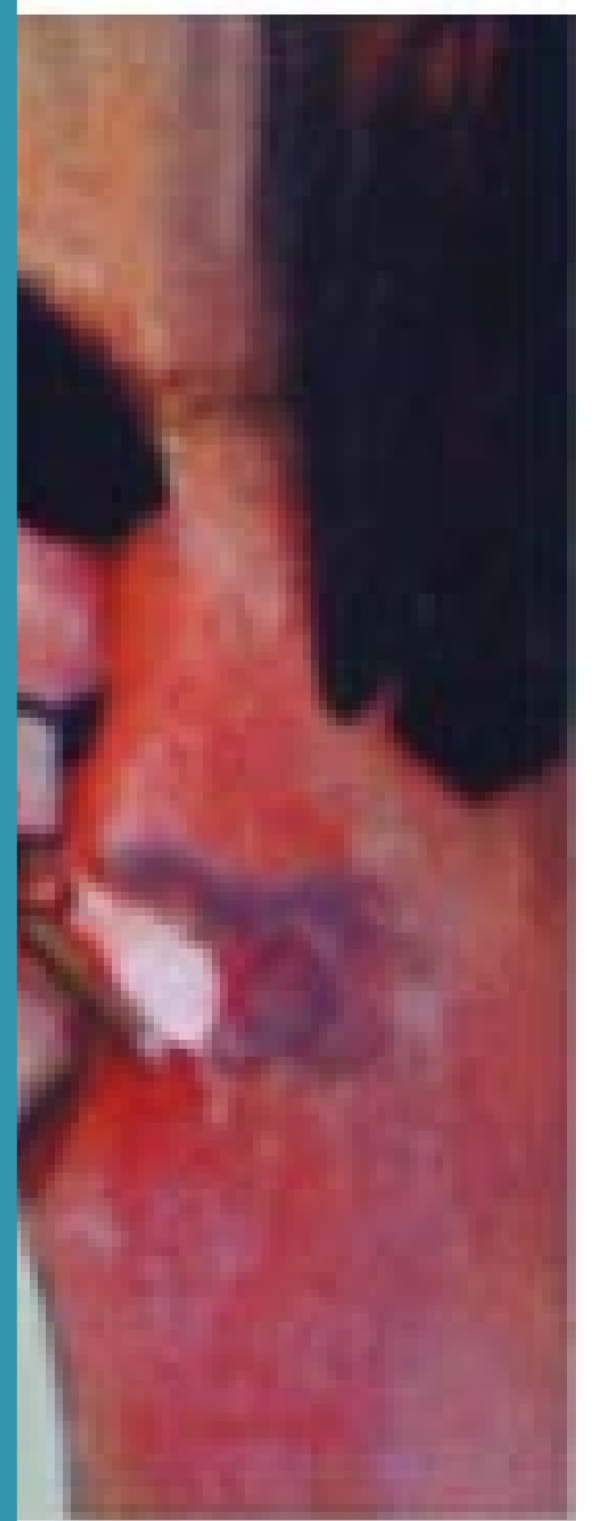
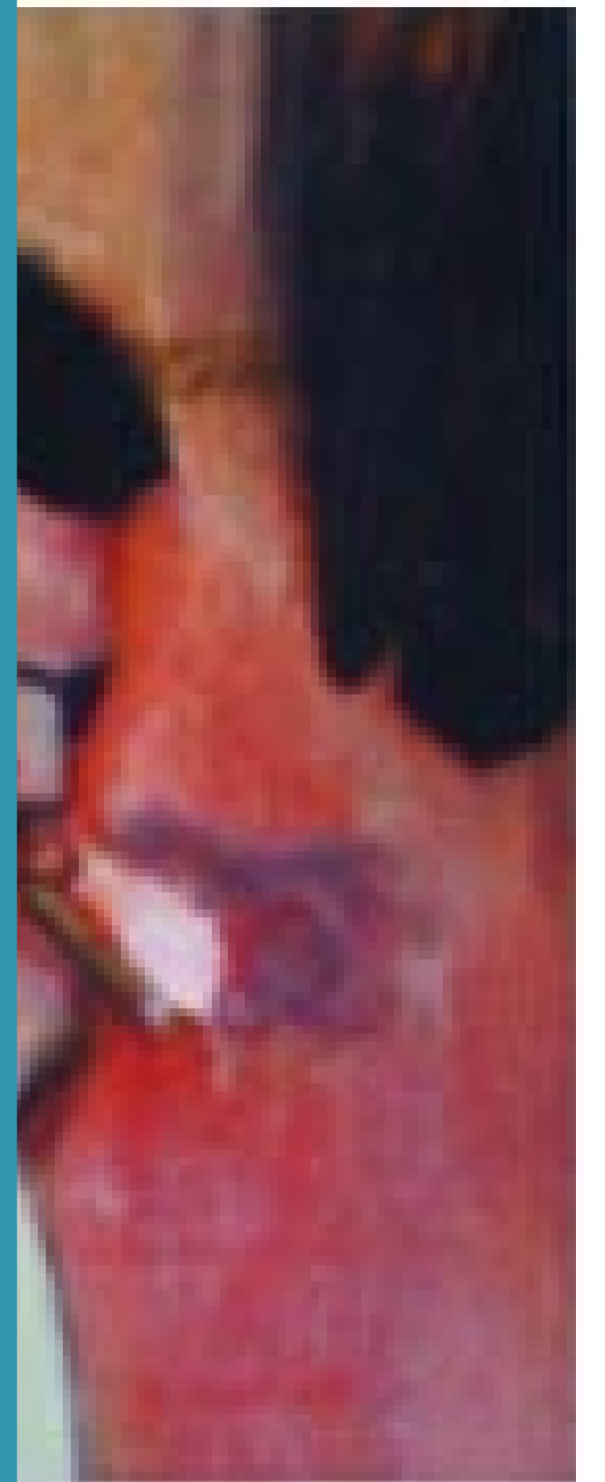
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THE FUTURE IS COMING AT US WITH 60 MINUTES PER HOUR

by Nina Thibo

We are sitting in Sara van der Heide's atelier in the district of Bos en Lommer. While Sara is schlepping her gigantic paintings around, Phil Collins comes softly out of the speakers, singing *'I've been waiting for this moment, all of my life. Oh, Lord.'*

The painting Sara shows at that moment is of a livingroom in which the Twin Towers are part of the wallpaper. One of the towers stands smoking away while the other one is about to be hit by a children's version of a painted airplane. The colours are old and washed through. The work has a feel of being painted a long time ago, before anything was consciously hit by any airplane. It carries a sense of a vision, not seen by people, but felt by a simple space, a livingroom, spectacular only in its modest old fashionedness.

'Oh God, dear Lord,' the livingroom itself must have been thinking, when first the complete sun emerged slowly on its wall. *'And what the f***, are those ugly towers doing in here?'*, when the towers dawned inside this sun.

While the livingroom was at first really trying to ignore the upcoming vision on its wall, and tried hard to focus its complete self on the much more comforting image of two well fed birds on the television, one of the towers relinquished its smoke. While the livingroom gave in, and reluctantly waited for the miniature plane to hit the second tower, the sound of the birds babbling away to each other, still filled the air.

Sara, only 28 years old, whose beautiful appearance could launch a new perfume into the stratosphere at any given moment, frowns and says, 'It's not that I let what's happening in the world get me down or anything, my personal happiness always comes first. But I do find it strange when artists don't read the papers. When they make things that relate only to themselves.' 'Do you think that political engagement should be inherent to an artist's profession?', I ask her. But she doesn't want to go that far in making an absolute statement about it. 'I only mean that's it's just strange and rather short-sighted, when artists don't look around in the world today. There's so much going on. Even Holland is changing big time. People are being classified, are you good, or are you bad. *Allochtonen* are being

watched, how well do you integrate. I mean is there only one good route to integration? How can anyone be the judge of that?' Earlier on, we looked upon her painting of *The Madonna of Bos en Lommer*. Two muslim women seem to carry an enlarged, swaying head of a third woman. It's almost as if the head is like a gas filled balloon that they try to keep from flying off into some place forgotten. Looking at this painting could have been a great moment to set off for a gigantic dive into a swamp-like depression, if the *hoofddoek* around the woman's head wasn't painted in a luscious, soft, cool, pink, activating memories of tasting the perfect strawberry milkshake in the midst of a heatblasting summer. And they must sense it too, the women inside that painting, that even with their eyes almost mournfully closed, something somehow linked to a summer, is captured with them, in there too.

The radio that illuminated us before with Phil Collins talking to God, is now providing nothing other than white noise. Sara doesn't seem to notice, she's trying to give some structure to thoughts about her work.

I'd like to imagine her throwing paint at the canvas like a wildman, all these burdened subjects and then her attacking them like Jackson Pollock, throwing paint through the air, hoping that it all falls into the right place. But none of that action painting. 'I sit around a lot in here', she says. 'That's what my paintings ask for. I look at them, and have to look again and again and give it time. I don't always want to put layer over layer, but at the same time I want different levels to interact. I don't want only one layer to speak to people.'

I ask her if she doesn't get tired of all the interpretations that everybody probably makes of her paintings. People seeing things that she never meant to communicate, everybody keeping their interpretations small between the reference points that they themselves set out, only to keep the life-buoy from drifting. 'I actually like what everybody sees,' she says. 'I discovered that I really like people to respond to my work, no matter what comes out of that.'

The upcoming solo-exhibition at Fons Welters will open at the 15th of October. The show will be accompanied by a book, called 'Penumbra', that will show an overall impression of her work so far. The paintings that can be seen in the gallery is a series under the title 'We The Dutch First Party',

a title that directly refers to the changing political climate in Holland. 'I like it to be associated with 'We, the people,...', Sara says. 'Of course it doesn't mean anything literally, but it gives a feel of a party that could be formed any day now, in this country. When Theo van Gogh was killed I lay awake for a couple of nights, I had trouble accepting that this was Holland, that an action like that, which would never have bloodstained a day ever before, was now something that could actually happen here on every other day, from then on.' She says she often gets a feeling of having to choose between two evils, that you can never choose something that's just the best way, but that now it's only about choosing the least worse of options. 'The whole world seems to be bouncing on *losse schroeven*', she says.

We look at another one out of the 'We The First Dutch Party' series. It's a painting of one of her friends who records sounds, and who stands completely unaffected and unaware in front of a burning background. As if the whole world is actually being barbecued, but he coincidentally wasn't noticed. 'He was recording the sound of *krekels*, on holiday in Turkey', Sara says. Such an utterly innocent thing to do. But look what happens when this woman paints you, she just puts the future in your background. It makes you wonder if there where any other options that she could choose from to paint, and that this was the least worse one.

After spending some time in her atelier, it's not the past but the future that suddenly feels old. Is everything that awaits us already there? Sometimes we catch glimpses of what is heading towards the day that we call 'today'. The future is coming at us with 60 minutes per hour, is there any real escape? It's a fine world that we are presented with. *Herstel*: it's a fine future that we are creating right now.

Sorry, dear Lord.

Sara van der Heide's solo-exhibition WE THE FIRST DUTCH PARTY at Fons Welters Galerie opens 15th of Octobre until 19th of Novembre. Opening hours: Tuesday till Saturday 13-18pm.

Book PENUMBRA, monograph; Sara van der Heide, 128 full colour pages. Published by Valiz, Amsterdam. Designed by Roosje Klap.