

The Fruitmarket Gallery

Exhibition Archive

Marijke van Warmerdam First drop

Edinburgh Art Festival Exhibition 27 July – 17 September 2006

Marijke van Warmerdam is internationally renowned for her films, photographs and sculpture which together form an extraordinarily consistent body of work. Born in Holland in 1959, she has lived and worked in New York and Berlin, and is now based in Amsterdam. Her work has featured in numerous important international exhibitions, including the Sydney, Berlin and Venice Biennials, and Documenta, the prestigious survey of contemporary art that takes place every five years in Kassel in Germany. Scottish audiences may be familiar with her work from *Trust*, in Tramway, Glasgow in 1995, and *Moment*, at DCA in Dundee in 2000. This is her first major solo exhibition in the UK.

The exhibition opens with *Take a Long Break*, two large, slowly revolving images of a teacup. Identically ordinary on one side (although the angle from which the photograph is taken gives the teacup a solemn grandeur it might not otherwise possess), the other side surprises with two moments of unexpected magic.

Take a Long Break introduces several of the themes at work in van Warmerdam's practice and on show in this exhibition. The two images are poised in a dynamic equilibrium in relation to one another. As they spin, they move together and apart, somehow trapping the viewer in their flash of revelation, recreating the spontaneity of something fleetingly glimpsed or half imagined. Though

the images make magic, there is also a practicality to them – the artist wants to show us two sides to a situation, so she literally revolves it, using the minimum means necessary to create the visual effect she requires. The practical apparatus of the work is unhidden, and its magic, rather than being undermined by this, is somehow intensified.

This practicality and economy of means is on show again in *Roeren in de verte* (Stirring in the distance), where it is joined by a characteristic facility with language. The title of the film connects near and far, inside and outside – stirring our tea, we dream and drift. The 16mm film is shown on a projector that sits simply on a table in the same space as the film and the viewer, projecting onto a screen placed with a deft sleight of hand that makes it look as though the rectangle of projected light is hanging by itself across the corner of the room.

Dream machine is a new film, made especially for this exhibition. Again simple, it has an extraordinary impact. As milk is dropped into a glass of water, patterns form, entrancing the camera so that it seems to dance with the moving liquids, pulled into the tension between the two. The work is shot on 35mm film, and shown on a full-scale cinema projector, the palpable beauty of film shown to great effect. The film loops, as do all of van Warmerdam's films in this exhibition, both the subject and the matter of the film turning back on themselves,

making a space for contemplation as we see again and remember something we have already seen. Recognition is important in van Warmerdam's work, whether within a single work or from work to another – so the same coffee cup appears in both *Stirring in the distance* and *take a long break*, and the mesmerising shapes formed in *Dream machine* appear and reappear.

This new film is shown in the context of *Passage*, the earliest work in the exhibition. A simple square of light and dark advancing towards the viewer, *Passage* lays bare the alchemy of film. The increasing and decreasing squares can be seen as clearly on the film passing through the projector as on the screen attached to it, yet the illusion holds, undiminished by the apparatus of the machinery around it.

The dynamic tension of the installation in the lower gallery, the way in which each work balances two elements one against the other, is compounded upstairs, where the subjects of van Warmerdam's particular way of seeing move from inside to out, and from darkness to light. Downstairs, there are unseen or barely-glimpsed hands at work, and upstairs they are encountered again, as objects are thrown and caught, actions started and suspended, stories begun but left unfinished.

Sculpture was the earliest medium in which Marijke van Warmerdam's ideas took form, and her thinking remains particularly spatial. The slow spinning of *Underwater*, the pole casually propping up *Throw*, claim as much space for these images as that inhabited by the more recognisably sculptural *The weight of colour* and *First drop*. *The weight of colour* pits ephemeral colour against the solidity of black and white – a gentle battle which colour wins.

First drop is the object that lends the exhibition its title – in the artist's words *'the start of what is and what will be; a sense of something about to happen, the rain drop that is just about to fall'*.

Ideas and images reverberate around the upper gallery, thrown and caught between one image and another. A pancake briefly masquerades as the moon, which reappears again rhymed with a child's ball. The ball looms large out of a misty forest, our sense of scale disorientated by the size of the child's hands reaching out to catch it. The moons and ball have an odd weightlessness which somehow chimes with the spheres balanced off balance on the seesaw of *The weight of colour*.

The final room of the exhibition contains *Wake up!*, the second of the two new films. Again shot on 35mm film, the piece invites us into a sunlit meadow, an irresistible vision of nature untamed and untroubled by human intervention. As so often in van Warmerdam's work, however, there is a human presence there, which makes itself suddenly, shockingly, felt.

Taken together, the exhibition as a whole has much of the character of Marijke van Warmerdam's individual works. Throughout the works on display, in the appeal they make to the viewer and to one another, there is a deftness of touch, a sense of the wonder in the natural world, and a trust in the miraculous power of looking and seeing.

Catalogue

Marijke van Warmerdam: First drop 80pp, Exhibition price £10.95

Including recent work as well as the new commissions for the exhibition. New text provided by Caoimhín Mac Giolla Leith.

Limited Edition Multiple

Take a break 2006, £150

Colour photo, di-bond and wooden shelf
Edition of 100

This multiple has been made on the occasion of Marijke van Warmerdam's exhibition at The Fruitmarket Gallery.

This exhibition will also be shown at **Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, 27 September–19 November 2006**

Alan Spence Poetry Reading: and this too will pass...

Wednesday 2 August, 6.30–7.30pm. Free.

Young People's Podcasting Workshop

Monday 7 – Friday 11 August, 11am–4pm. Free.
Suitable for 14–17 year olds.

An opportunity to learn everything you need to know about podcasting and create an offbeat guide to the city.

Talk: Contemporary Artists working with Film and Video

Thursday 24 August, 6.30–7.30pm.

Tickets £4/£3 conc.

Angela Dimitrakaki, Lecturer in Art History at the University of Southampton, discusses contemporary artists working with the moving image.

Making Art: Children's Photography Workshop

Saturday 2 September, 2–5pm.

Tickets £5 per child.

Suitable for 7–11 year olds.

A digital photography workshop enabling children to shoot, print and construct large mobile digital photographs.

Talk: Silence and Contemporary Art

Wednesday 6 September, 6.30–7.30pm.

Tickets £4/£3 concession.

Louise Stern talks about the importance of silence in art.

Ways of Seeing Gallery Tour

Thursday 14 September, 11.30am–1.30pm.

A free guided tour of the exhibition for people aged 60 and over.

Sunday Tours

Every Sunday, 3pm. Free.

Enjoy an informal guided tour.

No need to book, just turn up on the day.

The exhibition DVD is available from the bookshop priced £15.

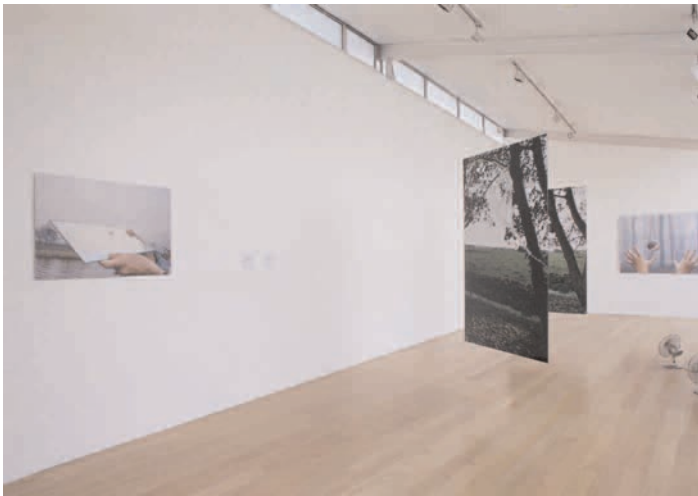
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Marijke van Warmerdam installation view
Photos: Alan Dimmick