

The surreal world of Margaretha Louwers

For Margaretha Louwers drawing is a way to keep a grip on her life. After a search or many years for a personal style, drawing seems closest to her at the moment. She gives an uncensored account of her life by means of charcoal, crayon and Indian ink.

Margaretha Louwers grew up in the Noord-Brabant village of Mierlo and when she was thirteen years of age she discovered a whole new world at the Eindhoven Van Abbe museum. It was a world she did not know originally, but one that attracted her. The paintings, especially the ones by Chagall, intrigued and fascinated her. 'When I looked at a painting for the first time I realized there had to be another world. A world in which paintings were created. And I wanted to belong to that world. Sometimes I will say: I have been educated by the Van Abbe museum and television.'

She loved characters and design. A girl friend pointed out the existence of the graphic department at the Rietveld Art Academy to her. Louwers sat for an entrance exam and was accepted. However, she was unable to appreciate the way she was taught at the 'applied graphics' department. "While we had to design a shopping list, I saw people with shining eyes, who were telling that they were painting with as many as two models. And there was I with my shopping list. I wanted to paint as well and changed over to the 'free graphics and painting' department.

After she completed her studies it took years before she was able to cast off the yoke of the teachers. 'At the academy they defined the artistic norm. They proclaimed what was good and what not. In the beginning I complied. In those days art could not be anecdotal, that was a sin.'

Louwers experimented with graphics and thought up geometrical forms, which she printed on separate pages and fitted together like a puzzle. 'I was looking for a way in which to express the three-dimensional representation of flat.' She used other materials like iron, felt, wood, and copper and she made ingenious geometrical figures. The installations became ever bigger and so demanding from a technical point of view, that she no longer was able to do it on her own and needed an assistant.

In the end it did not give her any satisfaction any more. It turned out to be too indirect a way to work. 'I wanted to go back to human proportions. To do something that I could do by myself and which could surprise me. I'd had it with the flats.'

She broke rigorously with her monumental working method and entered 'the forbidden path' of the anecdotal drawing style. 'Clearly the time was right for me.'

She draws on her inner self for her drawings. 'Traumas, dreams, all feelings that cannot be seen immediately, that are forgotten or sublimated, I try to convey in my drawings.' The images created thus show a surreal world in which people can figure as in a dream. Some drawings literally represent the subconscious. Like the drawing in which a woman lies sleeping and there is a whole world revealing itself underneath her. The search to become part of the world in which people make paintings is over. Simultaneously to the drawing the conviction and insight arrived. 'Now I understand that the world I wished to belong to so much, is the world I make myself.'

Sandrine van Noort

Translation: Franca Louwers