

## **EXPLANATION WORK**

Since 2015 I have been concentrating on making collages, chronologically divided into three groups:

- 1 - implosion (nude)
- 2 - world exhibition 1883
- 3 - islamophobia

In recent months I also made a huge doll, a topsy-turvy doll.

### **1 - Implosion (nude)**

Anno 2017 there is an ideal image of the woman.

We live in a show society. Pronte breasts, full-bodied buttocks and lips pass us every day, everything and everyone is manageable. The media, the cosmetics industry and porn sites increasingly determine the ideal image of women. Whether you turn on the TV, open a magazine or dig on the internet, the same ideal woman is everywhere, shameless and limitless.

On October 30, 2015 the exhibition 'Shame' opened in Museum Dr. Guislain in Ghent where I showed 15 photo collages. The original photos, which I have cut, show pin-up models from the 1950s to the 70s. Besides a sense of lust, the photos also give you a sense of shame. As a spectator you feel caught, you feel voyeur.

By using small interventions to hide the erogenous zones in the photos from view, I deprived the photos of their shame. I let the photos implode, as it were, in search of a new, quiet, intimacy. That which was public, I concealed, the excitement came to rest. Wonder and curiosity came in its place.

This is how I wanted to change the image, disrupt it. No sexualized and manipulated images, but simple, handmade images. Less spectacle, more imagination. More attention, less volatility. And yet also excitement and sexuality. Looking attentively, in the viewing and contemplation lies the pretension that knowledge is gained.

### **2 - World exhibition 1883**

In 2007, as a teacher at the Gerrit Rietveld Academy (GRA), I attended Suiname for the first time as part of an exchange program between the GRA and the Nola Hatterman Art Academy (NHAA) in Paramaribo. Once there, I realized that Suriname is a country completely constructed by the Dutch, based on slavery.

In 1883 the International Colonial and Export Trade Exhibition took place in Amsterdam from 1 May to 1 October. The more than one million visitors could not only get acquainted with all sorts of objects from the colonial areas, but also marvel at 28 'natives' from Surinam, housed in 'the roundabout', a circus tent on the Museumplein. Interested parties who paid a quarter could take a look at the Surinamese, divided into three groups, maroons, Indians and Creoles. A member of the family of Napoleon had photographed all Surinamese full face and in profile by the Hisgen brothers in the P.C Hoofstraat, so they could be carefully examined ethnographically for their external characteristics.

To conclude the 7-year collaboration between the GRA and the NHAA, the GRA asked Tanja Karreman (New Dakota Gallery) for a Surinamese / Dutch exhibition. This became the exhibition 'Puur' ('Pure'). As a starting point for my contribution to this exhibition, I chose the International Colonial and Export Trade Exhibition of 1883. Using the photos of Hisgen and the old city views of Pieter Oosterhuis and Andries Jager from the collection of the Rijksmuseum I let the Surinamese get acquainted with Amsterdam, the city that they probably never really saw more than 100 years ago. As it happens during the day they were in the unheated tent on the Museumplein, often with bare torso. And in the evening they retired to the house they lived together, quite close to the newly completed Concertgebouw.

### **3 - Islamophobia**

Since 2017 I connect North African landscapes and cities with their European equivalents. Out of dissatisfaction with the current political climate in the world where fear and suspicion flourish, I want to literally merge Islamic and Christian worlds, seamlessly integrate Western cities and North African plains. Together they form a new world, of which you will only see in the second instance that it is composed of different elements. Lampposts of Unter den Linden rise up in the Atlas Mountains, the Chapel of Brussels gets a Moorish roof and at Gare de Lyon men arrive with a turban. With the series 'Islamophobia' I want to approach the similarities between people and cultures and not, as often happens, underline the differences.

### **Topsy-turvy doll**

In recent months I made a big doll, inspired by the age-old 'topsy-turvy-doll'.

According to [www.thefreedictionary.com](http://www.thefreedictionary.com) topsy-turvy has two meanings

- 1 - With the top downward and the bottom up; upside-down

2 - In or into a state of utter disorder or confusion  
'Upside down', in a literal and figurative sense.

The topsy-turvy doll has been around for a long time, probably its origins lie in American plantation life. There are all kinds of theories about the meaning of the toy doll. The most common is that black slaves provided the children of their white master during the day and their own children in the evening. They gave their own child(ren) a topsy-turvy doll to be prepared for their future ambiguous care tasks.

In 2017 I showed a 2.73 m. large doll \* on the first weekend of November at a central location in the Engelmunduskerk in Oud Velsen. A doll with two faces, a black and a white face. Visitors could change the shape of the doll by turning the crank of the frame in which I placed the doll.

In the church I also showed enlarged collages that I made earlier of the 28 Surinamese. Who actually looked at who? Was there a change of perspective? Did the Surinamese view the churchgoers now? Did the churchgoers now stand in the middle of the track and were they now taken to measure?

The most beautiful moment during the exhibition was on Sunday morning: I arrived a little before 10 am and the church was already quite full, all white churchgoers focused their eyes on that prominent black primal mother. And then they started singing for Her.

I love this playing with perspective. Black and white can change roles, flow into each other, creating interesting gray values. With my work I want to raise questions rather than give answers. Besides the exploding outside world, I want to place a more imploding, private and silent world.

\* *The length of the doll I tuned to the longest man that ever lived, Robert Wadlow (USA, 1918-1940). The topsy-turvy doll is exactly one cm longer. A primal mother with two faces, longer than the tallest man ever.*