

Unfold/Recover

Text: Sabine Winters, in conversation with Eva Spierenburg and Jonas Wijtenburg

The subjects in the works of Eva and Jonas are as comprehensive as they are subtle: death, ideals, mortality, our *mensbeeld*¹. The weight of these words seeps into our existence and is at once present and absent – when you are not confronted by its significance, it seems not to exist.

Whereas Eva explores death and being human, Jonas questions the institutional and our idealism. Both artists examine what originality means, but without attaching a revolutionary or utopian ideal to it.

In this process the immaterial is transformed into the material. Ideals, data, cultural legacies, thoughts and dreams awaken in a new form and find a foothold in expressions of plaster, bronze, wood and plastic. This dispenses with the original aspect; the only way to know is through the replica formed in material. What was once meant is unfolded and recovered in a new, incomplete image of the original.

Copy and original are inextricably bound, just as mind and body are, figuration and abstraction. The quotidian preoccupation with vacuous concepts is leading to an atrophy of our humanity. What are these concepts referring to and how do they relate? In the works of Jonas and Eva, abstract representations, situations, connections and qualities are combined in a new image of reality, in which the immaterial unfolds and redefines itself in the material.

Jonas Wijtenburg

The paradigm about *origin* in our Western thinking literally takes on an abstract form in Jonas's work. The repetition of frames creates a new perspective. With his methods of deconstruction and reconstruction, Jonas questions the ideals of institutional value – upon which ideologies and convictions is the standard predicated? Once we see through the frame, a reproduction of a *mensbeeld* emerges, an echo of what once was. You cannot, however, see the image without its frames.

The sculpture we observe refers to what we perceive as a statue within the context of the totality of statues. Jonas's sculpture is a reflection of the original, a

¹ As a Dutch philosophical concept, a “mensbeeld” [literally: human image/depiction; ‘concept of man’] can be understood as an association of historical, cultural, religious and socio-political thought systems, together directing our sense of what it means to be ‘human’/(wo)man.

reflection of an earlier reality. At the same time, the new sculpture unfolds as an original piece.

This experience encapsulates the duality of the value of the museum: the conservation and exhibiting of the work in which the intention of the artist simultaneously becomes a vehicle for the ideology of the preservation of the original and the institution. While this retains the intention, according to Jonas it is somnolent, dormant, hidden. The institution embraces the work, absorbs it and becomes part of it. By converting open-source data into matter, Jonas brings the sculpture to life at a different moment in time. The image unfolds, is recovered and, as a result, rediscovered.

This process of converting data into a sculpture is not free of traces of conflict. The human images, reproductions of Greek statues, are idealized humanist figures made to represent the human ideal. Jonas searches for space within the ideal image, and in doing so interrogates the ideal. To him, no ideal is complete without its opposite. This is the cycle of Becoming, Unbecoming and Rebecoming – incorporating the opposite into a re-creation.

Eva Spierenburg

In our desire for unity and eternity and in our vain hope to protect life from mortality, we create a distance from what makes us human, the carnal. Eva investigates, in a playful way, events in her life in which impermanence and authenticity play a significant role. In her work, the hard and the heavy are in symbiosis with the soft and the light.

Over the past several years, the emphasis in Eva's work has lain on the impermanence of the body and with it the transition to the absence of the body in illness and death. In her current work, the focus is on the relationship between body and environment – on the body as a vehicle for the individual to establish contact with other people, with objects and with the space we inhabit. Eva sees the body as a material carrier for every intangible, immaterial aspect of the individual. The works show the body reduced to skin, hands and feet – the boundaries of the body, which come into direct contact with the environment and with the other.

At the same time, the hands and feet refer to the fusion of different storylines. Abstraction becomes a form of figuration; the comforting also becomes the suffering and, finally: the present also becomes the absent. For humans are present in what they leave behind when the body leaves a place, through touch or interaction with its environment. But everything that happens to us in our daily lives also leaves traces in our bodies.

Traces left behind are the materialization of absence. Physical and mental conditions are manifested in material. In the background, there is an awareness of mortality. The originality of being human lies in the intangible elements of living, invisible aspects that are manifested in material in Eva's work.

Sabine Winters is a philosopher and has been working freelance since 2015 in the domain of art and philosophy, fulfilling the role of programme maker, copywriter and adviser. In addition she teaches and leads tours dealing with philosophy and art. Her interest lies in engaging in conversation with artists, scientists and philosophers in order to find out more about the process of idea development and the 'how and why' behind a theory and method. She writes about this for the websites Denkkaders and FutureBased.org.

This text was produced in the run-up to the exhibition *Unfold/Recover* by Eva Spierenburg & Jonas Wijtenburg at Dapiran Art Project Space from 29 September to 27 October 2018.