

# Description of sculptures – Katrin Dekoninck

1)



Two asymmetrical, inexact mirror images sit opposite one another. One is sitting rather stoically although looking tired. The other gives himself over to tormenting emotions, holds his head into his hands. The scene reflects an inner struggle. Although both figures have an 'identical' character, they do not feel united. They are divided by a transparent, yet impermeable wall. Only this 'mirror' can bring both *personae* closer to one another and reveal who is sitting on the other side. At least, if the person looking into the mirror is willing to drop his mask. Dekoninck shows us 'this other side', which often remains invisible to the outside world. In this way, she also forces the observer to look into the mirror.

2)



Entwined with and in himself, a figure is lying on the ground, as a nut without its shell. It looks as if this frail figure born out of clay is trying to return to his initial state: to the lifeless matter he once was. As an elderly, dispirited person, he is seeking comfort in this foetal position, trying to show as little as possible of himself, trying to hide and to protect himself.

3)



Standing before the mirror, relentlessly staring at yourself, into your own eyes... Who would not recognise this image? Aren't we all in search of what is hidden in our deeper self, of what we might see behind our own face?

The young figure with androgynous features does not look at himself out of self-love as Narcissus did, on the contrary. He is in search of himself or of the person he thinks he should be: an exhausting quest for a phantom created by expectations.

The almost expressionless face of a person robbed of all emotions, discouraged and tired, reveals his disillusion. He fails to meet the expected mirror image, which leads to the rejection of the person that he is and of his real reflection.

The reflection shows but a tiny part of our "self". What isn't yet ready to reveal itself remains hidden.

4)



(sculpture from book)

The sculptures of Katrin Dekoninck definitely possess huge poetic qualities. They are an embodiment of poetic narration. This also applies to this work. It shows the mental fatigue of a growing child, a young adult. The girl, sleeping while standing upright,

secludes herself from the outside world in search of peace and a locus to contemplate. She represents the exhaustion that life entails: a bold general fatigue that on several occasions in our lives completely absorbs us.

5)



A young girl, her head bowed, in her underwear. She seems to be ashamed of herself. Not because of her scanty clothing as there is no contact with the observer. The child is in her own world, shielded from what surrounds her. This work also reflects age-related problems and concerns originating from the inner emotional world. Dekoninck's sculptures perfectly succeed in capturing these mental preoccupations, regardless of whether it is a child or an elderly person.

Even if no mutual communication between observer and sculpture is possible, with her visual language the artist opens a kind of portal through which the observer can tread into the sculpture itself, as it were.

6)



A girl lying on a pillow, belly downwards. She must have used her last energy for climbing on the high table. Everything seems to suggest that she will never be able – or be willing for that matter – to go back and make contact with the ground. The figure remains completely immobile. She seems to expect that all weight will ooze from her toes and fingertips. The pillow inevitably symbolises protection, a robe of love that the entity cannot find among her fellow human beings.

7)



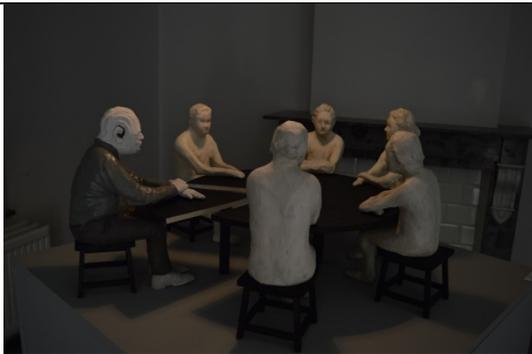
(sculpture from book)

Two figures, a man and a woman, sit with their backs turned to each other. They each sit on a different edge of the bed, sunken in thought, both in their own private world. Both figures are separated, literally and figuratively. A strict cut mercilessly divides the bed in two separate, yet incomplete parts.

This sculptural work was shown during Art Festival Watou 2017, which focused on "unbearable (a)loneliness". It is a beautiful example of how people who are not alone can be lonely as well.

Whereas Dekoninck often shows autonomous, isolated figures, we now see two of them. All the more clear and painful is the acute lack of communication.

8)



A meeting with an odd man out: that's what immediately comes to mind when looking at this installation. A figure, who seems older than the rest, more of an individual, marked by the time, stands out from the others. He's wearing coloured clothes and catches the eye. The piece of table assigned to him has been cut out as a pie wedge. In this way, the figure is isolated from the rest of the group. Communication stops where the table has been sawn. Does he feel excluded? Do we see a mutual lack of understanding? The man keeps his gaze in the direction of the group, but does he hear them? He doesn't really fit in. That's for sure. The unity and cohesion of the group is only an illusion.

This work clearly explores the "me-other" issue. Here as well, loneliness lies in wait.

9)



Pillows and beds on which Dekoninck's figures lay themselves to rest are two recurrent symbols in her work. This figure also seeks shelter in a lying position and in the intimacy of a soft surface. Yet, the figure is naked, unprotected and vulnerable. It almost seems as if she is decomposing, eaten up with emotions, sinking away in the swampy depths of her own feelings.

These feelings are expressed in many works of Dekoninck; in our daily life, they are still veiled by unspoken taboos and hardly 'documented', but they are more than recognisable for a great many people. These are emotions that we share only with ourselves because they are not accepted by society, rejected for being too negative or too pessimistic although they are omnipresent.

The observer again witnesses a special, intimate experience, which only rarely has been depicted with this level of purity, of rawness even.

10)



An elderly woman sits on the first row in a chapel, or in an abandoned railway station, waiting for her turn to depart. She has literally and figuratively left her contemporaries behind her. One by one, they have been plucked away... The other chairs are covered with folded clothes and pyjamas. Below the chairs, we see empty slippers in ceramics. Relics, left behind by their perished owners, petrified for eternity. The woman exudes a certain asceticism as is often seen among people who have gone through a lot in life. Yet, she has a soft expression on her face as if she is in peace with what remains. This work broaches social themes such as loneliness among elderly people and the transient nature of human life. By using a scene that at first sight is individualistic by nature, Dekoninck reflects a universal concern in a compelling and realistic way.