

ELLEN DE BRUIJNE PROJECTS

Maria Pask | Lord Lift Me Up

6 November 2020 - 19 December 2020

Opening

6 November 11:00 - 18:00

7 November 11:00 - 18:00

Performance *We Not I* - Amsterdam Gallery Weekend

28 November 13:00 - 16:00



Maria Pask, *My vagina is not ugly*. Pencil, gouache on chinese paper, 100 x 80 cm

Picture a garden. One of small proportions, for what it has to blossom is not big in size, but rich in details. Somewhere in the garden lies the heart, the primordial seed, and what germinates from it conforms the body. What does not belong there simply does not grow, as the flowing water cleanses all impurities. In the garden, thought and feeling meet in a cathartic encounter you cannot bear the majesty of. And the heart flows with living water that nourishes one's true self.

Maria Pask's drawings are the reification of the garden. They interpret the images revealed by God, which are transformed into something useful and beautiful by means of brushstrokes. They are often dedicated to or reminiscent of somebody in her life; people around her are also a vital part of the garden, as they influence both its ongoing maintenance and deterioration. It is no coincidence that she takes care of elderly people's gardens, as well as helping them with cleaning tasks. Just like Mierle Laderman Ukeles advocated in her *Manifesto for Maintenance Art*, cleaning and caring for are creative processes that align with Pask's artistic work. Ukeles is not the only inspiration, though. Emma Kunz's life and work as a healer and artist resonate deeply with Pask's spirituality and connection with the divinity, which ultimately act as a healer for personal trauma and emotional disarray.

For Pask, healing also comes from establishing the communal and thriving together. She is notorious for her performance work, heavily based on collectivity and group formations. Two years ago, Pask began transitioning from performance to painting as a result of an urgent need to cope with personal struggles. Going back to drawing and painting meant going back to the earliest stage of her artistic practice; nevertheless, they provide her with a sense of immediacy that prevents unnecessary mediation. The images that are unleashed in her mind are directly transferred onto canvas, and so is the text, just like a medium intercedes between the spirits and the living.

Lord Lift Me Up is envisioned as a *hortus conclusus* in which the exhibited works explore the duality of words as both poisonous and reconciling. Words, either uttered or written, can have a tremendous effect on us. They can be weaponised for destructive aims, to manipulate or gaslight (i.e. "I did not castrate you", "I never found you attractive"); yet they can also mend and restore (i.e. "Lord lift me up", "Genuine Love"). Her drawings are also filled with natural symbols, a word that comes from the Greek and originally meant "casting things together". Image, words, and symbols are thus knitted together in the work, which is extremely private and uncomfortable for Pask. On the other hand, a sculpture of a vase topped with a flower arrangement is a reminder of the healing power of nature: "cover yourself with flowers", the artist suggests for whenever you are going through a hardship.

In an act of generosity, Maria Pask opens the fence gate of her private garden and ushers us in, in the hope that what vexes her inspires us, that what cleanses her nurtures us.