

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT: The Ultimate Kiss - Jacqueline de Jong in Conversation with Exhibition Curator Juliette Desorgues

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**Juliette Desorgues:** So here are some of your earliest paintings that you did in the early to mid 60s.

**Jacqueline de Jong:** Yes, well that way you can see it is 61.

**JD:** Yes.

**JDJ:** Okay because that one is 62. I mean the difference is, my getting form, structure into the paintings wasn't there yet really.

But I always consider this one, "Mr. Homme Attaque", that is the first one where I really have a formal story also, where I'm telling something. I think there something is really sort of happening, which is very different from this almost non-figurative.

**JD:** This is also when these sort of hybrid figures start appearing in a way, and whereas here in sort of very earlier works that you've done it was more abstract, and here there's a kind of emergence of these sort of hybrid monstrous figures that we find throughout your art in a way.

**JDJ:** Well it is actually, the funny thing is, it is at the time when I was working in Paris, and it was my real start, and when I look at the etchings, which I was doing that year, they're all, well they're more upset, but I always put eyes into them to have sort of, well what should we say, a figuration in the abstract... I don't call it really abstract because it can't be figuration. 'Non-figurative' I think it's a better term for it. These have a lot of, really many eyes.

**JD:** There are many eyes.

**JDJ:** There are many eyes, and while in this one it's two figures that are in conflict with each other, so that is a more clear story.

**JD:** Interestingly, talking about conflict, something in a way that we find in these other paintings, this idea of violence, that often underlines...

**JDJ:** Absolutely.

**JD:** And death of course as well, violence but also the erotic which comes out a lot in this series, so we have the Accidental Series and Suicide Series.

**JDJ:** The funny thing is, it's only now that I realise, these four paintings are from the Suicidal Series. Well, these are the Accidental Series, there are cards and things, sort of accident... But it is a combination of the violence and the humour.

**JD:** And humour is a very important part of your work, and that's something that you find also in the titles that you use, that are often very playful, very humorous. It's interesting how these figures, they are sort of set in this landscape, but it's not quite defined which... However, in the later period of your work you did explore the tradition of landscape painting a bit more, but there is this emergence of an interest somehow in the history of landscape painting, that we find with these animals. But are they human? Are they animals? Are they monsters? And there's this idea of conflict somehow that comes out a lot.

And maybe this would be a good point to move to the next room, because you've also done sculptures. With this 'Le Salo et les Salopards', which is this sense of three-dimensionality of painting.

Which we find both in the paintings themselves, but then which you've explored, I suppose at this point, through form, both by creating these three and these sculptures which you painted on.

**JDJ:** But they aren't a paravent (screens), they don't have a story, they're not telling stories. Well these are very narrative, they're telling really stories.

**JD:** Talking about stories, also these paintings, maybe you could talk about these because this is very interesting because these are, these TV Drawings that you made.

**JDJ:** They're not paintings, they're drawings and most of them are black and white because television at that moment was hardly ever, I mean I don't even know if it already existed colour television. So, I really don't remember, I mean you what people could look up, but then my colour television started being very strange colours. They're lacking sort of...They faded away also. Which is, I mean I leave it like that. I made a little bit corrections very recently, a year ago, because I thought it needed something. The blue faded away, the yellow does, but the yellow I don't mind. But in the black and white it doesn't fade away at all, and I wonder if television faded away.

**JD:** Well, this is also a point where colour starts emerging far more.

**JDJ:** But I always liked, and still do, drawing is like a white graphic. Depends little, of course it's colour to me, lithography, silk screen, just depends. But etching is absolutely, I consider just black and white, I mean it's a completely different way of working. And drawing is well sort of always black and white, while at the moment I made very big drawings which are completely colour. So, my theory is: don't work out.

**JD:** And again there's a shift here, in the Billiard Series, in aesthetics, motifs that you're using. This is a later period isn't it? And what interested you in the billiards? Maybe you could talk about that, why this motif that you repeated quite a lot?

**JDJ:** Because I saw it quite a lot, because my then partner was playing a lot of billiards.

**JD:** This figure on the right is quite interesting, it sort of reminds, you know you see kind of Francis Bacon. I know Francis Bacon is a big influence on your work. I love this painting so much

because again it sort of deconstructs the regularity, and the sort of linear approach of you know, aesthetic approach that you have, which is something... There is never a sense of linearity, and here we see this in a way that you've used certain artistic styles, and then explored them, and experimented with them, and then moved on to another aesthetic style. And that's something that you've used you know... Well it was why we were interested in a way the construction of the exhibition was this idea of you know non-linearity in a way. And why we were interested in the Upstairs Downstairs Series as a kind of metaphor in a sense to your painting.

**JDJ:** That's very interesting, I mean I listen to what you're saying, because it's something I don't see. I have different sort of... Well perhaps I did not have then, I don't remember, but for example this one, when I made this electrical little part, they also look like little mice looking. But I wanted to do something more conceptual in it, and I ended up with the Billiard paintings, which will be on show in Paris after the exhibition. And black, instead of being green, because underneath there is slate, which is very interesting since we went through all these slate mines yesterday. It is slate, and it is black, and I mean underneath the cloth, there is a cloth on the billiard table, which is on top of slate, so I ended up... This is one of the first one of the last ones. Then I made it black, I don't know why I made it white. I mean that's imagination, but it is the slate which is the essential of the billiard table. I mean the essential is of course the green billiard table, but on the other hand - the slate makes that..

**JD:** It makes it the ball roll easier, okay i didn't know that. That's interesting.

**JDJ:** It's a combination.

**JD:** And then, opposite is the Serie Noir, which is slightly later, which again, I suppose again this idea of narration and this kind of cinematographic approach to painting and or theatre in a way. Well theatre is very much the case, because these are actually based on books on crime.

**JDJ:** We have no illustrations.

**JD:** That have no illustration.

**JDJ:** That's the most essential.

**JD:** Exactly it was very much text.

**JDJ:** And I looked, took the titles of the books. Only this one is the "Attack on Reagan" which is not Serie Noir, but I mean that's just there are one or two in the series which are actuality, and I just gave it as title, I just gave the date.

**JD:** But this sense of, again we find violence and eroticism also in a way, but there's certainly perhaps less humour. These two series, they're slightly starker, they have a sense of... compared to some of your earlier ones.

**JDJ:** I think they're very humorous, I mean to me they are very weird, let's put it that way. On the contrary, I think they're ironical perhaps, more than... And it's also because I really wanted to make sort of illustration of the books, which doesn't exist.

**JD:** But certainly, the sense of narration is something that comes up quite a lot, in a way telling a story that you've...

**JDJ:** But they are literally the story.

**JD:** Exactly, which is interesting. And obviously here, we didn't talk about this, but the kind of erotic playfulness of these paintings.

**JDJ:** Yeah! But that's also because of the erotic terms in billiard playing. I mean that triggers me.

**JD:** So maybe we move to the next room, which are your later paintings, and here we see the resurgence of some of your, perhaps from your earlier works. And these kinds of figurative, monstrous figures that reappear, and I suppose one of the common themes in these paintings is also your interest in landscapes and landscape paintings in a way, the landscape that comes back.

**JDJ:** Landscape in my paintings? You happen to know that I made some landscape paintings with strange entities, but this is based on the painting by a famous series of works by Francis Bacon, who took an image, one image, from Van Gogh which is the road to Arles and that is very obviously the same colours and the same direction of the road, while this is part of a series which I made on an island... Well no, I did, I made the first one on the island of Schiermonnikoog, which is not Welsh, it's Dutch word. And that is not here, that one is somewhere in the collection. And there I made, well all of them have to do with the hunting, and of course the sea, as it's an island. But there was very much hunting, and I was quite amazed about this hunting, as the animals walk around... The animals they hunt, they try to kill, they could just take them from the ground because they're walking around very near the people.

Of course, there is landscape, that's true. And there of course you have the goats and the cows...

**JD:** I know that we saw...

**JDJ:** And the sheep we saw yesterday.

**JD:** And the Mountains of Snowdonia.

**JDJ:** But that's the same, I made it in France where I live, partly. And that are the same animals that live there.

And I have one animal which is by far my favourite, and that's the one in the right corner.

**JD:** I hadn't spotted him.

**JDJ:** People don't see it, it's very hidden.

**JD:** Which reminds me, in the sense of these little figures in the right hand corner of this painting.

**JDJ:** But those two paintings, the initial paintings which are completely different from those two paintings, because I did paint it over, the only parts actually the animal part stayed like it was, and they were made same period.

**JD:** They are from 2012. So maybe we should move to the next, the final room, so in a way, the way we were considering this exhibition was to create visitors when they arrive into MOSTYN, see this series as the first series, and it's also the last series that you see. And when thinking about the exhibition, we wanted to make this in a way, the sort of crux of the show. These are paintings that you made for the town hall in Amsterdam, as a commission for the town hall. And the staircase is this recurring motif that you have, which is the staircase of the town hall.

And here again we find these hybrid sort of figures that re-emerge in a way throughout. And what I find, this one is also very different in a way to all of the others and I always, when I see this, think of Oskar Schlemmer's painting from the Bauhaus.

**JDJ:** Absolutely, absolutely, it's inspired by the Schlemmer's painting and I was very happy when you discovered that it was. Well the big, the essential difference, is that I've been drawing on the raw canvas with this painting, and most of them in the series, because there are 25 in the series.

You know them, but the public doesn't know them, because they have been, you could say almost hidden in a town hall, and they're now in a museum. But these are really drawn first on the canvas. Well this one is painted directly, I mean there's a difference, there's a difference in gesture. When you draw or when you paint the transparency is, because I wanted this transparency so that it's not as clear. Well there's no transparency really there in the same way as it is here, because it's just painted. I mean I tried to make with the movement to some transparency. Well this one, which actually was one that my husband Tom owned, because he thought it was the best one. It has the combination of...

**JD:** Well it is certainly one of my favourites.

**JDJ:** It's very strong, I mean it is of course a little bit, well a little bit, obviously Francis Bacon again, part of it, I mean in the structure of it.

**JD:** And always these little monstrous, little figures dragons...

**JDJ:** Actually I'm using them, I'm just thinking, this is very strange, I've been making three big, big drawings and they have exactly the same monster. I'm going to show them. I'll show you the photos I didn't send them to you.

Two of them are going to the exhibition in New York and one is bought by the club. And it is exactly this. This is very strange. It's only now that I realised I'm still using these monsters. I mean this is 40 years after work. Probably there's something wrong with me.

**JD:** And we're in the country of Wales and the dragon is the national..

**JDJ:** Exactly!

**JD:** On the national flag and there are the dragons.

**JDJ:** And they always in the corner.

**JD:** They're always in the corner.

**JDJ:** They are cornered!

**JD:** There's always Goya like, sort of monstrous figures that reappear somewhere almost like a little devilish...

**JDJ:** Like a Goya, ... important of course influences.

**JD:** Which we've seen drowning, you know there's these little figures, these little devilish figures in the top right.

**JDJ:** We didn't go to Tureluurs.

**JD:** Let's have a look.

**JDJ:** I wonder if there's monster there.

**JD:** Let's have a look.

**JDJ:** I don't think there's a monster there. I think that's all monsters

**JD:** So, we have them here, in a way.

**JDJ:** No, they are not monsters.

**JD:** They're not but they have...

**JDJ:** They're very sweet.

**JD:** They are sweet but also quite devilish, devil-like. They remind me of the Goya 'When reason sleeps the mind...' I forgot the full name. But there are monsters here too, well there's one in the middle, and this is one of a series that you made during confinement in 2020.

**JDJ:** Yes well actually just before confinement. But this part of the borderline..

**JD:** Yes, it's a borderline series.

**JDJ:** So I didn't use the green monster here. It's another...

**JD:** But, in a way, this is a more of a landscape painting which you made. It was a performance that you did as part of a fashion show in Amsterdam, wasn't it?

**JDJ:** I started it at the fashion show and then finished it later in the studio.

**JD:** And yet you're exploring the idea of landscapes. But again, there's a sort of emergence in a way like the very first paintings you made of these figurative...

**JDJ:** Yes that's true, yes.

**JD:** So we're kind of looping back to...

**JDJ:** It's much freer.

**JD:** It's much freer certainly than the Billiards. And these sort of animal-like, we're not sure, they could be mountains.

**JDJ:** That's what we saw yesterday.

**JD:** Exactly and funnily enough Snowdonia is just here.

**JDJ:** It looks like Snowdonia.

**JD:** It does.

**JDJ:** Yes, it does. You're right.

**JD:** Well this is my... Interesting, kind of, they're facing the mountains of Snowdonia but again there's this resurgence of these monster-like figures that reappear. And then on the right we have a very different painting that you've made, which is your self-portrait, which was made on sailcloth.

**JDJ:** Yes, I made a lot of works on sailcloths.

**JD:** And here more, I suppose, less abstract than all the others.

**JDJ:** They're almost 30... My god, that's 30 years ago this one. Almost now. 33.

**JD:** And sailcloth is something that you did a lot, you showed, you use sailcloth as a format for your work. And during this period...

**JDJ:** That's the material which is very interesting.

**JD:** And why sailcloth actually? Why were you interested in using sailcloth?

**JDJ:** On sailcloth? Because I got this command commissioned for the bank in Drachten. And Drachten is in the north of Holland, they're sailing there mostly, and it was for the National Bank, the Natural Dutch Bank, in the north of Holland which had the Friesland calling it 'brenter'. It was a fence I had to make, which is not here, I'm sure it will be Miami, Basel. It will be on show. And that's a very big fence of seven meters, which is painted two-sided. And when I got the commission to do that, I thought it has to be a sail, so I started with working on sail, then I thought I got all sorts of bits and pieces of sailcloth, and I thought it's wonderful material. It's also very different from canvas. I mean it is canvas, it's only prepared, and it is prepared against water so it's pretty difficult to work on it. You have to make, you have to find out what the preparation is, and then change it into something that absorbs the paint. So that is why I use sailcloth, just a practical sort of thing, but I liked it very much. And this has paper on it. I don't know why I put paper on it.

**JD:** It has paper on it?

**JDJ:** There's a lot of paper on it. That's why it had to be restored, because of the paper. You see it this part, it's all paper. Can you see the difference?

**JD:** I see, of course, on your face.

**JDJ:** I don't remember why I did it, but obviously I did.

**JD:** Well, thank you so much Jacqueline.

**JDJ:** Thank you.