

Natasja Kensmil in dialogue with seventeenth-century group portraits

November 20 2020 till August 29 2021 in Amsterdam Museum Wing in Hermitage Amsterdam

From 20 November 2020 work by visual artist Natasja Kensmil can be seen in the Amsterdam Museum wing of the Hermitage. Her impressive paintings are a temporary addition to the exhibition "Group Portraits of the 17th Century". The intervention is entitled *Monument of Regents* and, amid more than twenty historical group portraits, it shows other views on this period in history and on the paintings on which generally prosperous citizens were portrayed.

This is the second time that the Amsterdam Museum has invited a contemporary artist to make an intervention in the presentation "Group Portraits of the 17th Century" and to provide this Amsterdam heritage with new perspectives.

On Show

Scattered among the historical group portraits are five new paintings by Natasja Kensmil. Curator Imara Limon (Amsterdam Museum): "Kensmil's artworks are a powerful addition to the collection of portraits of Amsterdam administrators in the exhibition "Group Portraits of the 17th Century ". With her impressive-sized canvases robustly painted in thick layers of dark paint and yet full of details, Kensmil questions the history of this period from the present day, breaks through the often still one-sided view of this heritage and brings up disturbing elements. In Kensmil's work, the lines between here and overseas, between good and evil, blur and show that the ghosts of the past still have an effect on the present. "

The centrally exhibited nine-panel "Monument of Regents" (2019) reflects on the position of women in the seventeenth century. Prosperous citizens ran institutions for the poor, orphans, the sick and the elderly. In these charities, women could do board work as regentesses. That is special, because otherwise women were legally incapacitated and dependent on their father, partner or male guardian to be able to do business. Kensmil puts women at the center of her work.

The colonial past, which is inextricably linked to the accumulated wealth of the portrayed historical figures, is also visible in Kensmil's work. With the painting *White Elephant* (2019), a seventeenth-century ship at sea, she focuses on Dutch colonial shipping and trade. In the well-known paintings of ships defying storms adventure and heroism are central, but in Kensmil's work the white contours of the ship loom surrounded by symbols of power and status.

With her recently completed painting *Selva Amazone* (2020), a landscape, Kensmil suggests a parallel between the prosperity of the seventeenth century at the expense of overseas territories and the current prosperity at the expense of the rainforest.

Purchase

The work "Monument of Regents" (2019), a nine-part work, was recently purchased by the Amsterdam Museum with support from the Mondriaan Fund, the public stimulation fund for visual art and cultural heritage.

Natasja Kensmil

Natasja Kensmil (1973) shows a fascination for history in her paintings. For her, painting is an investigation to bring up what is not told from a consciousness that history is more complex than is reflected in our heritage and that this realization is relevant to this day.

Group Portraits of the 17th Century

Since November 2014, the Amsterdam Museum, together with the Rijksmuseum, has been showing the largest collection of group portraits in the world in the exhibition "Group Portraits of the 17th Century" in the Hermitage. The group portraits of Amsterdam militiamen and regents hang in an impressive large room that forms the center of an exhibition about life in Dutch cities in the seventeenth century. Contemporary makers regularly provide this Amsterdam heritage with new perspectives. After the successful intervention Hollandse Meesters Rev-Zien with thirteen photo portraits of people of color in the seventeenth century, Kensmil's artworks now enter into a dialogue with the historical group portraits at this location.

Natasja Kensmil: Monument of the Regents can be seen from November 20, 2020 until August 29, 2021.

Note for editors / not for publication: For more information or an interview request for Imara Limon or Natasja Kensmil, please contact Kim Koopman (Amsterdam Museum), k.koopman@amsterdammuseum.nl or 06 - 22 92 77 29.

Due to the measures regarding covid, the Amsterdam Museum is not organizing a grand festive opening. Journalists are welcome to come and see the exhibition before or after the official opening. If you would like a guided tour, please let Kim Koopman know.



Monument of Regents, Natasja Kensmil, 2019
200x230cm. Collection Amsterdam Museum
<https://we.tl/t-FwHjelAwzi>



White Elephant, Natasja Kensmil, 2019. Collection
Amsterdam Museum. <https://we.tl/t-1eaTkY5iSD>



Natasja Kensmil. Phot by: Cuny Janssen
<https://we.tl/t-Of2nXABY18>



Exhibition "Group Portrait of the 17th Century" in the Amsterdam Museum-wing in The Hermitage. Photo: Joel Frijhoff <https://we.tl/t-ALCzG12GJg>