

My Research on Joke Robaard

The subject of this research is given by Henk Groenendijk, our design teacher. I am luckily surprised to do a research on Joke Robaard, because a few weeks ago another teacher told me to take a look at her work. Apparently her work and mine have some sort of connection.

My research starts with going to the library (with always the same fear nothing to find). This time no disappointment: - **FOLDERS, SUITS, POCKETS, FILES, STOCKS** - the book Joke Robaard released in 2004, can probably give me enough information to start with, since it is an archive of Robaard's inspiration sources, working methods and projects she did in the past (for example: **STAND-IN** and **LONG SUIT**).

My first impression of her work (mostly photographs) is that it appears to be quiet sterile, clean and static. It seems to refer to something unknown. Without researching any process, idea or background, it even looks a bit dull to me.

In the meanwhile I have started to contact her.... Finally she picks up the phone: -answering-machine was on for weeks- '...Yes, I heard about your project.. unfortunately I can't take place in it, at the moment I'm very busy. Uhm.. I had a very strange day today... Call me back in a week, than I know more about my time schedule'. In the second phone-call she confirmed her lack of time. I am slightly disappointed in her reaction. It could be so interesting not only for me, but also for her to talk with a student about her own work...

Mail is the only option left. I sent her questions that occurred to me while observing her book:

-Which artists do you want to mention?

-What are your inspiration sources?

-Your work often appears to make a sterile, static, simple and clean impression. This interests me, because I also meet it in my own work.

I sometimes try to avoid this, because I think it has a dull outcome more easily. You firmly seem to embrace it.

What is the reason for that?

Does it have to do with the social aspect of your work;

Citizens are often involved: are your pictures a reflection of society? (pointing on the individualization).

Does the commoner need a simple image-language? (pointing on the folders you made).

Or does it have to do more with a sort of protest against the excess in society? (When I take a look at today's merchandizing / advertising and I compare it with your work, there is a huge contrast noticeable.)

Her reaction:

-**Felix Gonzales Torres, Stan Douglas, Jeff Wall**

-Everything around me, philosophy, music, trees etc.

-Citizens have more and more knowledge and tangent plane, I need more time for this. look at project **STOCK, CASCO** and all the other texts. **Long Suit, Hortus** etc.

that's it for today, unfortunately/.

Come by sometime; May.....! Good luck.

greet joke

Unfortunately Joke only answered the general questions. I secretly had the silly expectation she would send me a big letter with all personal information and philosophical sentences. But back to reality.. I will not give up hope. The less information she gave me, is a starting-point for another direction in my research. I am really wondering what kind of person Joke is, while she reacts quiet strange, short and vague.

Her reaction corresponds with the outcome of a talk I had with a student at the Rietveld academy. (Joke gave lessons at the textile department):

'In the lessons she hands out little, strange things in order to stir us loose in our thinking. For example: what sort of dress did your mother where? Such a strange question opens new doors. About her personality?.. Ja,...she is always busy!'

I also had a talk with Hansje van Ooijen (my mixed-media teacher, and model in Joke's photo-seri **CORRIDOR**):

'Joke takes from the models, but she also gives.... I had also an input as a model, and there was an atmosphere of equality. In **WHITE SUIT** the models were not only posing for the photo/ for Joke, but were also sponsoring the production of the photo. By paying one or two meters of the photo-print they were responsible for the shape of the picture: Her work is an outcome of an interaction between different parties.'

These conversations have a lot of influence in my way of looking to Joke's work. Knowing more about her takes away the 'dullness' in her work. My final attempt to approach Joke personally was my presence at her lecture in Museum De Paviljoens Almere (Ongoing Series). Afterwards I had the chance to ask her all, but I didn't dare....

SOPHIA HOLST