

Enrique Marty, Doede Hardeman

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Some people may initially reject Enrique Marty's work out of hand, feeling it is sensation-seeking or designed simply to shock. I well remember how shaken the technicians were when they opened one of the crates of his work in the lead-up to his show at the GEM museum of contemporary art in The Hague. I had failed to warn them about its contents and, on lifting the lid, they were confronted with one of Marty's "nephew" sculptures. The work concerned can perhaps best be described as a highly realistic three-dimensional representation of a child. Not a child in the bloom of life, but a child casualty, sprawled on the ground in torn clothing, wounded and bloody. The many shocking images brought to us daily on our TV news programmes have inured us to images of disaster and crime victims. But it's a different thing suddenly to find yourself face to face with a realistic three-dimensional representation of one. So, when I positioned that particular sculpture where every exhibition visitor was bound to see it, I was a bit worried about its effect on children visiting the museum. However, my fears proved groundless. There were actually very few complaints about the exhibition's possible effect on children. Because a closer look at Marty's work and consideration of the context in which he exhibits it reveal the humour and lightness of touch he manages to achieve through his lively palette and theatricality. This tension between style and content plays a major role in Marty's work. It enables him to win viewers over and engage them in a radical all-round experience in which reality and fiction interweave and the world of his personal imagination sometimes proves to be surprisingly universal. Marty's animation film *Duel* still seems to me to be a high point of his career. The film is constructed from over 1200 watercolours produced by the artist in a non-stop spate of creativity within the space of a single day and night. It shows a fight between the artist's parents, ending in an actual shoot-out. In a film with real actors this would be an appalling situation, but the use of watercolours to tell the story makes the film almost poetic and gives it a deeper significance that lingers in the mind.