

**Enrique Marty, Dries Verstraete**

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Enrique Marty works a lot, driven by a kind of maniacal phantasy and by an obsession to depict 'everything' in his environment, or to 'deal' with it in a certain way. His oeuvre, consisting of paintings, video's, watercolours and sculptures, reads as an exploration of the human soul through a recording of what people do and how they behave.

Marty's paintings are mostly based on snapshots of day-to-day situations, often moments where normal people are either acting on purpose or behaving like actors without knowing it, in which the artist detects a hidden layer of cruelty or ridiculousness. In other cases, Marty uses found footage, unusual stories, or invented scenes and mixes them with obscene, surreal or humouristic imagination.

The sculptures are three-dimensional portraits based on moulds taken from real persons. Both theatrical objects and sculptures at the same time, they serve as tools with which the artist can control the psychology of the viewer, and thus structure the show. In his video's, Marty makes a mix based on different sources, a procedure similar to the paintings. The result is a highly dramatic but also vital oeuvre in which the audience discovers the dark side and magic of our so-called normal life.

Marty constructs shows which can be read as mental spaces - a collection of thoughts and images, an archive of memories and mental snapshots by which life among friends and family is documented. Portraitdolls, walls filled with hundreds of paintings and video are often combined into total installations. Sometimes the structure of the exhibition even requires an architectural intervention.

Rather than a 'show' in the traditional sense of the word, each exhibition is a try-out or an improvisation, an experimental association of themes, arranged according to a personal logic and related to content the artist is dealing with. Marty often gives way to his fascination for the dark side of our psychology, the kind of darkness we find in circuses or wedding parties. Within this mental frame, the impact of the works varies from devilish or ambiguous amusement, to shock or terror.

For Marty however, shocking - or amusing, for that matter - is only one of the methods. It is not a goal, although his work can be very shocking to any viewer who is not familiar with it, and even to those who do know it. The feelings and experiences the viewer has when undergoing the work cause a state of extreme awareness of the unseen, in other words a fascination for life.

Furthermore, behind each presentation lies a conceptual play with the nature of self-made images and mass-communication, an obsessive urge for the reproduction of our personal life, the unlimited recording of experiences and an analysis of the techniques of story-telling. Through a complex process of reworking and mixing visual content, seemingly without adding any clear significance, the highly personal is turned into a moment or an image with a universal appeal. Each event or image recorded by the artist - who deliberately acts as a 'medium' at this point - is turned into a painting or another work in any kind of medium. Then it is combined with other elements from the artist's vast archive of impressions, or recombined with a previous work. It ultimately becomes a sign of life, a universal testimony of someone else living a life as difficult, horrifying or pleasant as yours.

Dries Verstraete.