

Rezi van Lankveld *Drifting Constants*

Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam 25 May – 27 July

Not one of the odd forms depicted in Rezi van Lankveld's seven recent paintings can be clearly identified; yet somehow, looking at them, one often can't help thinking of summertime. Most nudgingly, the vibrant red and white stripes of *Luifel* (all works 2019) evoke a sunshade (as, indeed, the Dutch title suggests), and if *Half High* represents anything at all, it might well be a doughnut on a sandy beach on a bright morning. However, these interpretative descriptions only take us halfway down the switchback road established by van Lankveld's works here: her paintings display their capricious forms and seductive colours elegantly, but make sure their true identity remains veiled. The implicit sunniness may even be partly a function of the season in which they were shown.

Quite possibly the artist herself does not really know what has originated on these small canvases. In her structured openness to the unforeseen, signposted by the show's title, van Lankveld has applied paints and mediums in manifold ways. Pools of colour poured onto the linen, partly washed off and covered with paint again create picture planes of great complexity; background and foreground seem to swap places at random; indications of various

scales mingle while avoiding any coherence. In the relatively downbeat *Thrillseeker*, hairy textures and nebulous hazes in rainy greys add up to some sort of cloudy spectre studded with bodily orifices. One might recognise a pig's snout in its features, marked with pink and blue. Possibly the thrillseeker is a reflexive emblem for the painter, who seeks nothing but self-surprise.

When words fall short, Surrealism and the unconscious are usually not far away – in this case, more specifically, the legacies of the movement apparent in René Daniëls's work from the early 1980s. The Dutch painter, still highly influential on younger practitioners of the medium, experimented with a pictorial equivalent of the so-called *écriture automatique*. Like Daniëls, van Lankveld tries to bypass control, making way for unpredicted images that, in turn, spark unprecedented sensations: the technique, evidently, still has life in it. *Birthday*, one of the strongest works in the show, delineates the fluffy contours of a decorated and perforated body. Patches of eggplant purple have been painted over with creamy whites, leaving thin dark lines visible at the edges. It's hard to describe the strange attraction

of the image, which seems festive as well as troubling. A crazed phrase Salvador Dalí once uttered (with regard to art nouveau) comes to mind: a terrifying and edible beauty.

These new paintings, previously shown at Reset, in Gotem, Belgium, are unquestionably more accomplished than van Lankveld's earlier work. Formerly laborious and somewhat mannerist mark-making has given way to fresh and seemingly effortless brushwork, more clarity, more detail. Gone are those stark black contours that gave the colours in her older works the luminosity of stained-glass windows. Light and shadow behave independently, former lovers now estranged from one another. A powerful generative force seems to be at work, a dynamics of fluidity and coagulation, suggesting the collision of disparate worlds and the metamorphosis of one thing into another, with a nagging feeling of absence as a recurring presence. Walk away and come back, and the paintings seem to self-replenish, sprouting previously unseen aspects. Works best characterised in paradoxical terms – intending to avoid intentions, anticipating the unexpected, controlling coincidence – they present van Lankveld in full bloom.

Dominic van den Boogerd



*Birthday*, 2019, oil on canvas, 50 × 40 cm.

Photo: Gert-Jan van Rooij. Courtesy Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam