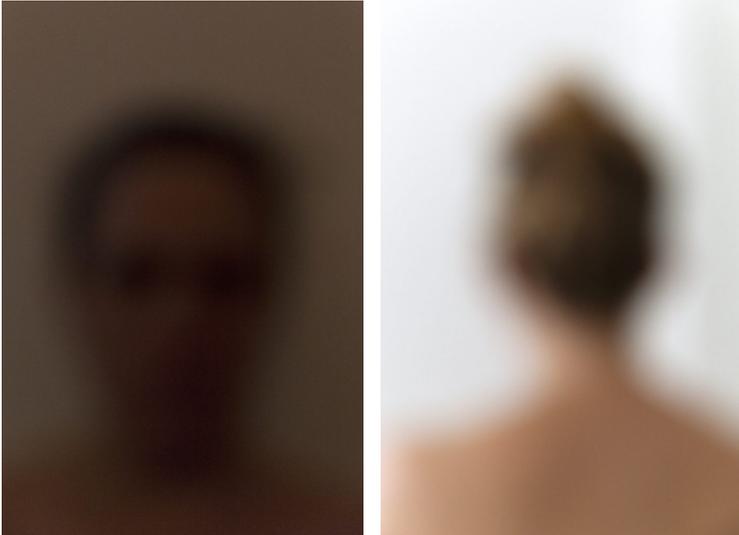


De Kunstmeisjes Hanna de Vos July 14<sup>th</sup> 2020-07-17

Go or not: you decide that yourself. We give you - with a critical eye - tips for exhibitions. This time we went to Uitvaartmuseum Tot Zover in Amsterdam for the exhibition "Eat Love Die" by Roos van Geffen. It may not sound like the most relaxing Saturday afternoon activity ever: a visit to a real Funeral Museum for an exhibition centered around themes such as mortality and transience. Memento mori, anyone? Nevertheless, we have been looking at art about the transience of life since time immemorial. In the past, you were pleasantly pressed with your nose at the facts when an artist hid a skull, an extinguished candle or a wilted flower in a painting - as for example with seventeenth-century vanitas still lifes. In the exhibition Eat Love Die in Uitvaartmuseum Tot Zover, contemporary artist Roos van Geffen shows that it can be even more subtle and personal. No skulls or coffins, but cherries, pillows and duckweed.



Unfocused Days 2018

Roos van Geffen likes to deal with the philosophical and existential sides of life in her art. For example, in Drifting in Time, which stands outside the museum among the plants and shrubs, we see five photos of a young girl with her eyes closed. Nature creeps over the images; the photos have been affected to varying degrees by algae, silt, brood and aquatic animals. This is Hamlets Ophelia, Shakespeare's tragic character who drowns herself out of sheer love despair. This is a human life itself, taken over by nature. Or is it we who take over nature? It is these kinds of questions that Van Geffen makes us think about not only life and death, but everything in between. In the halls and corridors of the museum we are given a lot of philosophizing through photos, videos and installations.



The Final Month 2020 (overview)

From the moment you step inside, Eat Love Die feels like a very intimate exhibition. In the first room we find Media Vita; a collection of photo books that would summarize the history of photography and tell a personal story about transience. No small task! This is one of the works that Van Geffen made after the death of her father. He was an avid photo book collector and after his death, the artist made his choice from his collection of over a thousand books. The result is on long tables in the middle of the first room. Around it are whispering voices that seem to rise from the pages. Walking past you will come across work by names such as Cindy Sherman, Johan van der Keuken and Alfred Stieglitz. But looking purely at the images, you also see something different than this list of famous people. Pregnant women, retro holiday homes, rippling water, fluttering birds, tables, chairs, cockles, breasts, flowers, self-portraits, family portraits, death portraits; Media Vita summarizes whole lives in a few unfolded pages. If there is one medium that can fight against impermanence, it is photography. In the photo series Sporen, Van Geffen wonders: what remains if someone disappears? The answer lies in the small details; photos of a sleepy pillow, hair in a comb, an armrest that until recently always had a hand on it. It is little things between Van Geffen and her father that really shouldn't tell us as a spectator. But looking at such a crumpled, crumpled, abandoned pillow, you can't help but get hit by it.



A sweet Death (2020)



Eat Love Die, videistill (2020)

At the end of the exhibition, in a room shrouded in twilight, a golden cherry is lying on a shelf. The sign next to it reads almost like a thriller; this golden cherry is full of cherry stones. Not so fun fact: swallowed cherry pits can be converted into the deadly substance cyanide in your stomach. One pit can be too much, so eight - the amount Van Geffen hid here in A sweet death - is a deadly combination. All that glitters is not gold, because even the gold casing is not resistant to it; gold dissolves in cyanide. The pendant of this work hangs on another wall in the small room: the triptych Eat Love Die, from which the exhibition takes its name. On the left we see a black and white photo of eight cherries; in addition, a video recording of a red-faced mouth that eats cherries and spits out the seeds again. On the right only the sticks of the cherries are left, one by one knotted in the shape of an infinity sign and framed. Where the cherry in A sweet death has been elevated to a real murder weapon, in this work she symbolizes sensuality, life and infinity. This is the dichotomy that runs through the entire exhibition; on the one hand, we are constantly confronted with the inevitable, uncomfortable death, and on the other hand with life and all its experiences and emotions. As we read in the exhibition, the artist has reached the center of her life. Death is no longer an abstract concept for her. Yet the conclusion seems to be that we should not be afraid of it: what is the reason? Now is the time to live, eat, love.

The exhibition "Eat Love Die" can be seen until 30 August 2020 in Uitvaartmuseum Tot Zover.