

Edith Meijering (1962 - 2022) was born in Deventer. She studied at the Christian Academy of Visual Arts in Kampen. She exhibited at the Kunstmuseum Den Haag, Museum Flehite in Amersfoort and at galleries and fairs in Paris, London Berlin and Munich, among others. In the fall of 2021, she received a grant from the Mondriaan Fund for a series of works she planned to create, which she called *Alternative History*. Her latest international exhibitions took place at PAK in Gistel (B) and Plan-B Galerie in Düsseldorf. In the summer of 2023, as a posthumous tribute, she received her first solo exhibition at Museum Henriëtte Polak in Zutphen, under the title *I'm a bird now*.



Photo: Jeff van Dockum

Nothing is what it seems to be. A tranquil landscape turns out to be a crime scene or a woman's body. A red dinghy floats somewhere - but the water is black, and where are the paddles? Rabbits wear masks, clowns burst into tears, an opulent woman sits on a carpet that could fly into the air at any moment.

Edith Meijering was a visual dreamer. Her work is figurative, but not in the traditional sense. She added images together in an unreal way, or placed images next to each other, thus alienating them from each other. In this way, new meanings emerged, and enchanting worlds were evoked. Sometimes gruesome and frightening, but always fairytale-like, associative and layered. Edith sometimes spoke of her work as a dance: by moving herself and the image around each other, the actual meaning emerged. That dance resulted in an oeuvre that emanates an impressive vitality.

‘My work arises in response to impulses from the outside world. I have an antenna for what initiates my imagination and I associate quickly and easily. I have always responded to images that pop up spontaneously in my environment. Like everyone else in this society, I am constantly stimulated by impressions, through the Web, television, advertisements and other popular media. But it goes further: old books, words, phrases, poems, photographs and images from art history are also part of the image bank that sets me to work,’ Edith said in an interview in 2021.

Consistently, she explored cliché images in her work: the woman as object of lust, the animal as playmate and consumer item, the hoodie as mark of that which is tough. Under Edith Meijering's brush, these rigid images take on a different meaning, an alternative history. Familiar images change, merge with new images, disappear behind expressive lines or a tangle of plants. ‘Eventually, what first seemed over-familiar emerges in an unreal environment,’ Edith said. ‘Animals become people and vice versa, things merge into nature, reality becomes dream and an ideal image is unmasked as banal cliché. You could call this way of working a commentary, but there is nothing reasoned or contrived about it and I could not easily put it into words.’

Edith experienced with many techniques and formats: from her early monumental self-portraits painted in oil (1986) to tender drawings in pencil and ink, made in the summer of 2021 when she tried to capture the moving shadows of flowers and plants on paper. But she felt most at home while working with water. As a child, she swam fanatically at competition level and her choice to work with watercolor ‘and other watery techniques’ (Edith's words) is not accidental. ‘I also seek that bodily experience when I draw or paint,’ she said. But her experiences of swimming and diving also influenced her oeuvre on another level. ‘I have to allow myself to go all the way into the depths, to the bottom where it becomes dangerous. Then I sometimes find the action that is suddenly right, tangentially, quickly and aptly executed.’

Landscape plays an increasingly important role in her work over time. Almost transparently painted in bright, often festive colors, sometimes fusing with a human body or fantasy animals. In her latest landscapes, she incorporated the paradisiacal landscape paintings of the old masters into collages, to which she contrasted her own loosely painted drawings. In doing so, she alluded to the psychological friction between inner and outer worlds.

For Edith, a *genius loci*, the spirit of a place, has always been of great significance. Her studio on Kolenstraat in Zutphen was not only a studio where her multifaceted oeuvre was created, but also a magical place where she coached, taught, and could talk enthusiastically about her work. Several times she participated as an artist in residence in international programs, and each residency was a fundamental experience for her. Her residency in Ålvik near the Hardangerfjord, Norway (2017), marked a turning point. Here she was able to surrender to a

new world. Nature and silence disrupted her and brought her back to her origins. Aptly, she took care of the Norwegian landscapes that she transformed into proud female bodies. A second important residency took place in the summer of 2021 at the feminist arts center Centre Pompadour in Ercourt, France. Here, too, she created new work, taking the paradisiacal nature as her starting point. Full of optimism, she returned to the Netherlands where she began to elaborate her new ideas. Less than six months later, in January 2022, she died of COVID.

Gerdien Verschoor