

## The world pretends it exists

Once Picasso had seen the African masks in the Trocadero, he understood the deeper meaning of the art of painting. 'It isn't an aesthetic process, it's a form of magic interposed between the hostile universe and ourselves, a way of grasping power, by imposing a shape on both our terrors and our desires', he told Françoise Gilot.

For Lara de Moor too painting seems to be primarily a form of preventive self-defence; an attempt to ward off evil and take her fate into her own hands. Nothing is so deceptive as the everyday, nothing so treacherous as that which inspires confidence. Pan tends to conceal himself in peaceful stillness in order, with a shriek from his inmost being, to tear it into shreds. Is De Moor trying perhaps to lure him from his hiding place in the hope that he will then take fright and flee in panic? Time and again she approaches seeming reality with ironic reserve, exaggerates the slightest doubt and tugs at its obvious mask. As if she wishes to recognise only the enigma of existence, the inscrutable and ineffable. As if it is her task to strip everyday things of their ordinariness, to expose their strangeness, to go in search of the *fremdkörper*, the detail that dislodges the whole structure and turns it upside down. In her dark wood the knowledge of not-knowing is celebrated, the agnostic feast of the indecipherable code. For in the mystery cult of poetry, reality can only be decoded by transcribing it into a new code.

Not that De Moor cherishes the illusion that this provides any real release. Judging by her work she does not believe in answers, only in questions. A mask is only an attempt to impose a permanent form on fleeting facial expressions, and reality is only a mask behind which there is always another mask. The world is a fraud, it pretends that it really exists, or in the words of Sallust: 'One may call the world a myth'. Many myths and fairytales have the theme of the endless hunt. One creature pursues another, but when the hindmost seems about to be caught it changes into something else. The hunt begins all over again, until at the last moment the prey escapes once more through a metamorphosis. Such fairytales usually end with the downfall of the hunter.

Reality does not let itself be captured, but escapes through a never-ending metamorphosis. A second reality presents itself through a disguised tear in the first, and a third through a crack in the second, and so on. But we are overwhelmed by reality. We experience it as we do a film, while conversely we often see a film as realistic. Possibly the best way to approach reality therefore is by representing it in a distorted way.

Originally history was transmitted orally, around a campfire. The flames kept not only the people, but also their memories alive. But memory changed history. People also remembered things that never happened. The flames and the surrounding darkness stimulated the imagination. In the words of William Blake: 'The world of imagination is the world of eternity'.

Rogier Ormeling, 2006