

## **JEWYO RHII**

7 September – 26 October 2014

Opening: Saturday 6 September, 6 – 8pm

### OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE

#### CONTINUED

Written by Irene Veenstra

#### Day 10

Memories: they always come suddenly and unprepared for, and yet there is always a reason for them. With hindsight, I understand them as the key to the unexpected and always slightly incomplete images that appear before my eyes, which are based on what can really be seen, but which appear more important the longer they manifest themselves. This may partly be the result of the mysterious way in which they came into being.

The incomplete, not-quite-right images of which memories are built do not stop us from going back to earlier events: they are part of our curiosity as to what is missing. They stand in stark contrast to the gaps in this imaginary film that lies stored somewhere deep in the brain and, at a steady tempo, spread over countless moments and recorded almost unnoticed simply by looking and continuing to look, gradually acquire a logical sequence and connectedness, with sharply focused details that never become blurred or unclear.

When I think of the works of Jewyo Rhii, I see sharply focused letters, intricately carved from wood, forming the word “fear”; words written high on the wall in thin pencil; a small wooden table made from pieces of wood ingeniously fitted together; an open door with no handle and another with a handle; the drawn contours of two bodies in which the lines have a very precise relationship with one another, but are also playful in a way that perhaps exists only in the drawing and in love. And then I see the long series of typewriters with iron bars weighted with stones that you kick to make the stamps on the other ends of the bars print words vertically on the wall: no birds, no trees. Sounds that die away in a written language.

#### Day 11

There is one particular work that springs vividly to mind wherever I am. I think of it as two separate images appearing in sequence: I see a narrow, open corner cupboard made up of slats and wrapped in soft whitish paper held together with pieces of sticky tape. On top of this is a thin grey pencil drawing on wallpaper stuck to a piece of wood, and then I see the same cupboard (which appears to be standing on its head, because the shelf is lying on the ground and the small legs stick out on top), but this time with another drawing done in the same way, but slightly bigger. The two drawings overlap slightly as though someone added the second one later, and each has two identical words written on it: to live to live.

The infinitive of life – here language becomes abstract because events are no longer situated somewhere and begin to be conceptualised – here the whole verb is used, so you could say that it describes a continuous movement. Here, language creates the possibility of seeing life as a

phenomenon of time, “to live” means to exist in time, and the detachment of place and event opens up a dual perspective of future and past, which means the concept of future and the concept of past, which in turn simply implies that an awareness of time is formed as something that is, was and will be.

To live is to move forwards and reach back, to fall back, to walk forwards again or to go backwards, stand still and then run on, to look around you as you continue. But then there is that second drawing, the repetition, still the same but now slightly different. The second drawing is bigger, so that it is not only closer but also in the foreground and completely visible, turning the one behind it into a memory. The distinction is subtle, life, and the memory of life. And in memory I reach back to my mother's house, the source of the wallpaper used for the drawing.

Two worlds, and my attention jumps from memory to a room that no longer exists, a shuffling mother who often opened the door in case I came, and then to the drawing on wallpaper, and wonder what type of reality I am in, and whether it is a reality that exists outside of time. When I dream and immerse myself in memories, there is someone behind me looking on as I do, who again is an image of someone who does not really exist, but who keeps the memory alive.

Repetition is a fascinating phenomenon, because our whole existence is played out in a cyclical context where, in the shifting perspective of time, *the same* becomes *the next*. Looking at waves breaking on the beach is an almost magical act in which the rhythmic cadence of the sound of water, wave after wave breaking, is inseparable from the playing, flickering light that continuously changes the colour of the water. Repetition is absolutely not simply the same thing happening again, because it will always manifest itself in relation to movement and changing circumstances. And here, art has always played a special role because for each image that we perceive, the nuance, difference, distortion, twisting and deformation are highlighted in relation to that which we saw earlier and elsewhere: something that has already been known from another world, for centuries.

Day 12

I think in increasing detail about the rooms containing Jewyo Rhii's works in the Van Abbemuseum in Eindhoven and the MMK in Frankfurt. The ornamental linkage of different materials stuck together to make a temporary structure is seemingly placed in a wider context by including words, written sometimes on the wall and at other times on paper or wood.

There is always water, both for plants and people, and when it is shown as an image the magical notion of time always comes to the fore. The work is flowing and full of little movements and the quiet hum of the fans; and the intricate placing of loose objects makes everything in the room immediately tangible, and in that tangibility there is a moment in which life is as big or as small as the touch itself.

Eindhoven, July 2014