

Britt Dorenbosch | 1986

Lives and works in Utrecht (NL)

I am four years old. Wearing a turquoise t-shirt and orange shorts with big pink dots. I sit on the back of my mother's bicycle. "Look!" She says. "See the white cow parsley along the cycle path. And can you smell it too? And there, a red bridge with those dark clouds behind it? And that rapeseed, really bright yellow! Later at home I make a painting of it. "Do it with lots of colour", my mother says.

It's not without reason that colours fascinate me. They have been there since I was a child. Even now that I am older, it is the powerful colour combinations that catch my attention. Just as my mother pointed out to me the colours around us, I now use snapshots from my daily life in which colour literally comes to you. My daughter's feet in brightly striped socks on the bright blue seats in the train. A bright yellow tulip among subtle shades of spring green. The red painted toenails in my coloured sandals. Images that recur in my collages. While painting and drawing, I add or cut away loose parts. It gives an extra dimension in which paper, canvas and oil paint combine freely with egg tempera, oil pastel and coloured pencil. In the layering of collages, apparent mundanity comes together with the experience of motherhood linked to the memories of my youth.

Although at first it felt uncomfortable to make work about motherhood. It was precisely that discomfort, the stigma of the mother as a sentimental woman, that triggered something in me: the need to be explicitly visible as a mother in my work. In a broader context, my work is about that, about female power, fertility and the impact of having a child. It is the female artists in our art history who inspire me. Also because of their often disadvantaged position, which is not in proportion to their talents and capacities. Artists like Amrita Sher Gil, Leonora Carrington and, in relation to motherhood, Paula Modersöhn Becker and Mary Cassatt.

On a small level, I watch my daughter's hands and feet discover the world. A world in which I take her, just like my mother, along my colours, preferences and interests. My work is an ode to mothers and parents in general. It tells about life as a woman, about love, about the formation of family identity and how preferences trickle down from one generation to the next. How identity is passed on from parent to child and how far back that goes. I see it in my work, in which images of nature (a passion of my father and grandfather) and my love of colour (passed on by my grandmother on my mother's side) are typical of my work. It is the generations before me who make who I am and how I watch the world. And with the arrival of my daughter, a new generation has joined me. One to which my daughter is now gradually adding her own new identity.