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#07

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AMIE DICKE





Original photography by Tomas Näsström Blend Magazine Issue #5 The Modern Minimalist

THE CUTTING EDGE

For this Anniversary Issue, fine artist Amie Dicke (b. Rotterdam, 1978) tackled Blend's The Modern Minimalist Issue with an ax. She has been known to carefully carve into fashion magazines, stripping away the models' eyes and surroundings, and for spray-painting her personal belongings with make-up. Now it is time to find out what really moves Amie Dicke to capture spaces in an aggressive but extremely aesthetic way.

– Text Bienneke van der Does

How did your artistic career start?

Art has always been present in my life. My father is interior designer; my mother is stylist and artist. There was always a certain sense of aesthetics, colors, and interiors in my youth. It wasn't a surprise that I went to art school. I was born and raised in Rotterdam, so I went to the Willem de Kooning Academy. Being 17, I was one of the youngest students in the Fine Arts. I was very disciplined, but I still needed to develop my field of interest back then. At first, I was really into audiovisual design, since I wanted to have control over the equipment. I studied that for three years. Then I discovered I didn't want to work in an applied way, and conform to the desires of a client. I wanted to work autonomously. Luckily, I could switch within the academy and so I started with fine art. I graduated with a sculpture, a molding of the space between my legs made of sugar and marzipan. I was told the material would last for three years, but during the graduation exhibition, it started to collapse and tear apart. This was quite a shock for me. I had no control over the work. It made me realize that some things are not containable, and I found the decay fascinating. This, for me, was the motivation to start cutting into magazines. The sugar sculpture was a posture, a

literal stand, I had given myself, and now I wanted to discover how models in a fashion magazine would maintain their position, while I would cut away, making the pages sag. It's all about creating empty spaces and giving them meaning. As with the sugar sculpture, the work was very close to my skin, but I was not present myself. My work is often very revealing, but without actual presence. I find this tension between extremes very interesting.

After your graduation you went to New York. Did living there affect your work?

New York is a fast-moving and energetic world, but it's difficult to become part of it. It was tough for me to become a part; Internet and mobile services were not like they are today. I was pretty lonely and homesick. All I had was a bed and a lamp. The big billboards in the city fascinated me; they made me feel small, but they also became benchmarks of the city for me. Almost like some sorts of starting points or counselors. The billboards had a great influence on my work. I projected my own loneliness on these images and started to remove elements by carving into fashion magazines. I wouldn't call it collage though. The works I made then were cuttings. I always try to stay within the framework of the magazine, by removing or adding. I think it's important to give myself restrictions and make it mine nevertheless.

For Blend's Anniversary Issue, you tackled The Modern Minimalist Issue with an ax. Why?

It was a coincidence actually. I had never worked with an ax before, but while I was moving my studio from Berlin to Amsterdam, I discovered I owned one. I decided to give it a try. It felt good to hack into the word Minimalism. Haha.

My body of work is all about removing elements and looking for less. Although my work doesn't fit the movement of Minimalism, I still appreciate it. One of the fashion series presented a lot of repetition of images, but you had to flip the page to see that. Those pages emerged through the aggressive choppings, which created an aesthetic repetition, without turning the page. A violent contradiction. As a result of the chopping, there were snippets of paper everywhere, creating a festive look, like confetti. As this new issue of Blend is all about transitioning from the former archive, I thought this was a nice way of throwing a little farewell party.

It was a sort of farewell party for you as well, since lately you've been working on installations, instead of cuttings. Is there a similarity between these different kinds of works?

I stopped with the cut-outs when it got out of hand (in a positive way). My last exhibition of cut-outs was at the gallery space of *V Magazine* and led to a publication with them. Since I used that magazine a lot for my cut-outs before, and as I was working on the last ones at the same place where the magazine was made, I thought it was a nice moment to end it there, so close to its origin. Right now, I'm concentrating on installations, but there are a lot of resemblances. Adding by removing, and the empty space, are recurrent themes. I'm very much into interiors at the moment. This started when I was asked for a group exhibition at *Foundation Castrum Peregrini* (Amsterdam) in 2009. The foundation focuses on maintaining this former hiding place where young German Jewish boys found refuge during WWII. But it is not a museum. The owner, the woman who offered the hiding place, still lives there. When I first visited, I entered the room of Claus Victor Bock, who lived in the house even after

the war. He died in 2008, and when I came there, everything was still in place. The furniture had to be taken out, so I wanted to find a way to capture the presence. "What creates a certain sphere?" I was thinking. Is it about the space itself, or about the individual objects, or the space between them? For me, it was about the whole space, so I covered the entire interior with transparent plastic and tape. After that, the individual chairs, table, and closets were removed. This had to be done very carefully of course, so it made the people of the foundation very aware of each item. And then all that was left was a transparent, yet suffocating interior. Aggressive and fragile, at the same time. It relates back to my sugar sculpture, because again it was really close to the skin while the actual presence wasn't there, only the outlines, or contours, were. This work was named *Claustrofobic*, which relates nicely to the man who lived there, Claus Victor Bock. This work was very important to me; it made me realize I could work in larger settings as well.

This way of capturing memories was also the starting point of your work for the Arnhem Mode Biennale this year. Can you tell something about that installation?

I want to embrace and understand a certain atmosphere. Not the esoteric kind, but the kind Peter Sloterdijk, German cultural philosopher, speaks of. I can be led by an existing interior, but also by personal memories that I want to give shape to – even if only temporarily.

The installation at the *Arnhem Fashion Biennial* was a setting made of my personal belongings, things I had gathered through the years. Things I couldn't throw away for some reason. I put them up in an interior setting, and then 100 liters of foundation were sprayed automatically, by sprayguns, that hung

above it. It was pretty painful to see my personal belongings get destroyed. Even after the installation was finished, I wanted to keep certain things, which was impossible because the foundation didn't dry. There were so many layers of it. With this project, I put myself in a vulnerable position; I didn't know what the result would be. It was interesting to see that after a couple of layers, more people started to relate to it; they weren't my items anymore. By taking away significant patterns, in this case, you give others the opportunity to use their own imagination. Again only the contours remain. It was also funny to notice that I had chosen another feminine approach; make-up is something that women use mostly. It is soft, and again the transitional theme. The amount of make-up was an important aspect as well. We normally use just a small amount of make-up, and we don't want anyone to notice it. It's so close to your skin, like an extra layer. In the installation, the whole setting was transformed into one flesh tone, like where you keep your memories, under your skin. I also like the name of the material: foundation. It sounds sturdy and fundamental, while the material is actually weak. Here I demanded something of the material – to cover up my personal items. Normally you're not even supposed to see this material.

Amie Dicke's work is represented by several galleries. She has collaborated with *Mario Testino* and *Mario Sorrenti*, and her work has been published in numerous publications, such as *AnOther Magazine* and *V Magazine*. She is working on a solo exhibition at the *GEM / Gemeentemuseum Den Haag* next year, and is preparing to release a book.
amiedicke.com

