

MAAK
VAN
JE
HART
GEEN
MOORDKUIL

ERICA VAN ZON

TAKE
THIS
WITH
YOU

TEXT BY HAROLD GRIEVES

Before I ever knew Erica I had a role trawling through the HSP archive and in the dusty storeroom I found a pile of Styrofoam cups. By pile, I really mean column. They were covered in dust and leant up in the corner of a backroom. It seemed odd, but not too odd. I did wonder why the cups weren't being used, or hadn't been used. So while that was a bemusing mystery, it was still far too much of a struggle to get at them, so I simply left them alone. It was only a couple of weeks later though that I came across a text about a group show Erica had been in. She'd made a water-cooler work and well, yeah, these were the cups. Curiously, and rapt to have a piece of the jigsaw puzzle, that is HSP's exhibition history so easily fall into my lap, I decided to rescue the cups from their stalagmite existence. This is when I discovered they all had a peculiar long-winded phrase printed on each and every single one of them.

That was the first work I ever saw of Erica's, not that this was really a work at all, more just a fragment of a work and a small piece of text describing the situation in which the cups were displayed along with a water cooler. While I can't remember the exact quote any longer, I can recall the cups were hand-stamped, some of them smudging but most of them totally legible. I'm not sure what exactly the point of bringing all this up in relation to the new neon work at NEWCALL is, it's quite different. I mean, the long-winded quote has vamoosed in favour of the adage, and the size of the text is now something like fifteen times the size. Perhaps you wanna say its still using the language of advertising, only that the neon-sign is more like the loud-hailer than the intimate dispersal of the hand-held object – which would mean you could also say the neon work's more honest – at least in regard to the insidious sublimation the water-cooler fount supposes. Anyway, while I suppose this could construe a progression, from humble material, hand stamped to outsourced object, it'd be misleading to dead-end the neon sign as a concluding statement but it does let me suggest that perhaps a productive way to read the neon sign is to think about how the Delft tiles Erica made a few years back might intercede.

Like the cups, and the neon sign, the Delft tiles were objects used to carry an adage or quote. They were also, quite obviously hand-made, what with their dimples and exaggerated signs of personalised caress. This carefully staged appearance allowed the tiles a certain mobility, which turned their centre-pieced adages into petite slogans. Of course this had everything to do with their tactility as small objects, but I also mean it in relation to the serialisation of the slogans which I think the neon work continues. I think this mobility has everything to do with the way the adages are treated, which tends not to empty their content as mere pastiche, but instead tactfully approaches a form of sentimentality that is attentive to both the anxious and self-assuring qualities of the pop-psychology lexicon. What we get then is neither a derogative cynicism, nor an emotional caterwauling, but a reassured and almost sympathetic equilibrium that whilst being quite blasé about its almost laissez faire sample approach contains enough critical integrity to neither take itself too seriously nor too indulgently.

I think my favourite show of Erica's that I've seen was at HSP in 2006. Like the work on show at NEWCALL it too was an adage spelt out in sculptural form. Back then it was the phrase, 'people come, people go' which was spelt out in soft black fabric cushions. Slouched up against the wall and forlornly spread across the floor, the work's slumping carried with it a charged abandonment that postured a readiness entirely complicit with its comfortable laconic drool. This turned the adage less into that commiserating doorstep for passing travellers or wayward friends, but instead encoded a tactical abeyance, the type of layabout ruses which are capable of seizing upon opportunities as they present themselves. Of course that fits the type of temporising subjectivities I envisage as an articulate response to consumer culture, but it also pieces together what I mean about Erica's use of pop-psychology as neither a sentimental indulgence nor an emotional catch-cry response.

NEWCALL's neon phrase is a translation of the Dutch proverb, "Maak van je hart geen moordkuil". I really like how scary that word moordkuil sounds, and I think, from what Erica's told me, its translation into English as 'lion's den' just doesn't cut it. Then again the translation itself is pretty glib at passing off what it gets by and that makes it seem kind of safe, so maybe it doesn't need to be so scary after all. Most of the time I think it's a phrase about regret or perhaps about forgiveness. Then again I think maybe it's about relationships or maybe not, maybe it's just about being an open-minded person. I'm not entirely sure; I mean I can imagine the contexts it might get used in, as a sort of pop-sage piece of advice, a kind of throwaway comment at the end of a consultation – perhaps? I mean that's the point. These adages oscillate into cliché, but sometimes, and when it does it's all about timing and context, they actually carry a type of meaning that's hard to garner in a thousand words. That I think is the brunt of Erica's ongoing serialisation of such adages and it's beholden to the context they appear in. That's why I think it's quite apt that this particular adage appears in an almost red-light context, or a least taunts with a birthday pink hue, both codings suggest a bemusing innocence gone awry, but then, how we interpret these signs is dependent on the fostered phrases and lexicons that make up the temporising and momentary meanings we inherit.

Harold Grieves