

Hidden poetic logic

(...) In that open field
If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,
On a summer midnight, you can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little drum

East Coker, I, T.S. Eliot

The paintings of Lara de Moor, at least at first sight, show recognisable representations, painted in an extremely meticulous style. Apart from the evocativeness of an expressive, rapid brushstroke, often labelled as typically Dutch, De Moor aspires to a compactness and intensity which seem to stem from her predilection for early renaissance painting. Nonetheless her work too is marked by great evocative power. This lies primarily in the nature of what she depicts. Whether the subject is a wood, a pool in a park or a dress hanging in front of a curtain, an inner tension is always evident in the image.

In the painting 'First Day', for example, the curtain behind the dress has not been closed because it is night-time, since we can see bright daylight through a gap. This must be the reason why the red curtain is so brilliant in colour. The light, almost completely transparent dress hangs there limply, but seems at the same time to be well-nigh absorbed by it. The lower part of the dress is darker in colour. Unaccountably so, but it gives the impression that some event has taken place before this scene. The dress is not hanging there for no reason, nor is it just a dress.

De Moor's paintings stem from a personal perception of reality, which goes much further than actual observation. Painting for her is the essence of private contemplation. As she says herself, everyday matters as well as major events in life, have made her see how powerful and at the same time mysterious life is. De Moor often has the sensation that the reality she perceives is concealing a certain truth. Without detracting from this inscrutability, her paintings are translations of states of mind and emotion, reflections of what sometimes goes on behind our eyes.

This can be seen almost literally in the painting 'Mirror'. This shows a woodland path that curves to the right. On either side of this, attenuated tree-trunks soar into the air. Outlined against the strikingly pale sky is an agitated but graceful tracery of branches and leaves. Above the horizon a yellow radiance glows in the distance. Although you do not consciously experience the image as unrealistic, it evokes a mood which is different from that produced by looking at a 'neutral' landscape. This mood is recognisably depicted in a large pool of water in the foreground. The pool reflects the scene visible above, but not quite according to the usual logic. In the mirror image the graceful tracery has become a fantastic tangle of tree-trunks and branches, now suddenly wine-red in colour, narrowing to capillaries. The pool of water seems almost like an opening in the painting, offering a glimpse into the interior of this landscape, a fermenting, simmering 'inner self'.

Although never actually disturbing in the sense of frightening, De Moor manages to imbue her paintings with a suspense with which she gradually puts the viewer inexorably under her spell. At first sight her images are attractive, through a painting style and use of colour which are alluring in themselves. Without much apparent effort De Moor captures your attention by this means. But then, 'stealthily' as she calls it herself, she makes you aware of a certain distortion in the depiction. Suddenly there seems to be something odd about the image, something inexplicable. By the time you have become fascinated by this and, against your better judgement, start

looking for possible explanations, you have already forgotten how the artist got you into this position.

It is the sign of a good storyteller, this ability to manoeuvre the listener, or in this case the viewer, into a position where he cannot miss the message. De Moor has mastered this strategy, as 'The Key' also shows. This painting, with a film-like suspense, offers the viewer a glimpse into a room where a naked woman is bending over a bathtub. We see her from the side, her face lost in her hair. She is reaching into the bath with both arms, an enigmatic action which evokes all sorts of conjectures but from which nothing can be deduced with certainty. The light that filters through the net curtain via a large window allows you to count every rib in the woman's thin body. She is not aware that she is being watched. Willingly or not, the viewer is put into the position of a voyeur: the whole scene is visible through an open door which fills the left side of the picture. The key mentioned in the title juts prominently out of the lock.

One can only guess at the link between the key in the lock and the naked woman, her thinness, her action and the reason why we are spying on her. The depiction, as always with those of De Moor, is by nature inscrutable. De Moor does not invest the images that she perceives in daily life and in her immediate surroundings with any significance: it is rather the other way round. The images which for her form the impetus for a painting have an intrinsic significance in her personal experience, a hidden poetic logic which is concealed in these things and can be translated through patterns and connections. She attempts to enhance some elements of this, and to filter out the background noise. The objective is to translate the essence, while retaining a certain measure of inscrutability.

An image, according to De Moor, does not have to signify anything more than what it is in itself: 'A mystery is only a logical result of a path which cannot be followed'. In her paintings the viewer himself can go in search of what lies hidden behind things. The transparent dress in 'First Day', for example, continues to fascinate as more than simply a dress, which is more than simply hanging in front of that red curtain. De Moor saw this image of the garment on the day after the birth of her child. The title refers to this: the first day. In spite of this information the painting remains largely a mystery. This much is clear: here, in an intriguing way, something strictly personal is being achieved.

Arjan Reinders, 2006