

warm personality with a small streak of rebelliousness

'Galerie Quintessens is presenting paintings, objects and installations by Jackie Sleper in an exhibition that will be travelling to eight Mexican museums in March 2008 and the mid-2009. The collection embodies the artist's authentic expression of the soul of the Mexican people, felt and revealed through her art. Among the pieces on view in Utrecht are fifteen works that came about through her own meetings, conversations, experiences and discoveries in Mexico.

Jackie Sleper has developed an iconography all her own over the course of the past decade: an unassuming language that cuts to the quick of such situations as defy her sense of righteousness and humanity. The indignation she feels is layered within enchanting beauty, qualifying humour, delightful metaphors, exotic colours and grisly fairy tales. The starting point for her paintings are black-and-white photographs, none of them manipulated or set up in any way. Oil paint is applied directly onto the photographic print, resulting in pieces that utterly blur the boundaries between the artistic disciplines of photography and painting.

For her sculptural works she first builds (scale) models of polystyrene, wax and rubber, which form the basis for a sculpture executed in porcelain, sometimes in combination with polyester and wood. Like her paintings, each of her sculptures is one-of-kind. Sleper consciously chooses not to produce her work in small series, despite the possibility to do so, because she feels that any work of visual art should be singular and exceptional. Another eye-catching feature of these works is her addition of natural elements, either directly or in the form of impressions or casts, suggesting riches and excess. Rubies and red coral are elements that typically feature in this approach.

Jackie Sleper Biography By Wim van der Beek

Jackie Sleper speaks in metaphors. She wraps social concern and political messages in visual statements whose form comes across as less harsh and ruthless than the daily realities in which they are rooted. The viewer is not immediately forced into a confrontation. The works reveal themselves once the viewer allows them to sink in; only then does one begin to recognise their deeper layers of meaning and frames of reference. Surface sheen and shimmer

is seen, upon closer inspection, to crush and chafe. The situations with which Jackie Sleper confronts viewers are often bittersweet, but never cynical or stark. Though she comes across as a self-possessed and independent spirit, manifesting a warm personality shot with a small streak of rebelliousness, it will never be her aim to represent reality as harsh or tarnished.

During her travels in Mexico, Jackie Sleper found herself confronted with new impressions that she needed to incorporate into her visual art. In her previous works (such as about the Dalai Lama and the children of Beslan) she had already demonstrated an ability to broach shocking facts in a manner that intrigues, but never sacrifices integrity or lapses into false sentimentality. A prime example is her attempt to rehabilitate the composer Richard Wagner from his disgraced status through her small-scale rendering of the knight Lohengrin. She counters bloody and bloodcurdling scenes with stories that are comforting and hopeful, even as they lay bare the very essence of the problem at issue. Her images are never compromising, but neither do they make any compromises. Each of her works is graced with a facility to inform the viewer without their ending up feeling traumatised or frustrated, or turning away in disgust.

Jackie Sleper's aim is not to shock, but to make things tangible and manageable. She does not want to magnify injustices, but to offer solutions in the form of positive and unorthodox ways of seeing. Her rebellions are enacted in ways that are endearing, moving and dignified. Memories are re-moulded to create a personal and compelling universe in which facts and events are placed in a fresh context. The colourful rituals and – by Western standards – unusual relationship with death, the difficult life led by Frida Kahlo; these and other subjects that touch the very heart of Mexican society are all given new life in a visual art that links the blush of shame with beauty, that offers the hope of a better future, and that shows that the answer to injustice and inequality lies with the children. It is through them that our victory will come, since they still believe in a world where anything is possible. It is this world that Jackie Sleper represents, though without ever denying reality.'