

In a recent series of paintings Marilou van Lierop combines techniques and depictions prevalent through her work with a volumetric support that suggests more than simply an underpinning function. The paintings are done on large, semi-spherical convex surfaces patterned with small holes. They are similar, comparable to, climbing surfaces used for indoor bouldering found in sports climbing gyms. Placed on them is an array of diffuse imagery intimating obscure origins. One contains a swirling crowd together in a gathering; figures are sharply defined in the foreground beyond which is a dark swelling mass. Another painting shows a vortex-like sky view of a mineral mine behind which are the lineaments of a distant landscape. There is a largely dark grey painting bisected by a foreshortened white line with oblique lines springing from either side. It also contains washed-out strokes beneath the white ones, a part of the under-painting. Graphically, it is reminiscent of cryptic pre-historic landscape patterns. In this series is an example of an image with religious significance, Mount Arafat covered with pilgrims during the Hajj. While van Lierop has used different supports in the past, these images traverse a weighty structure, an emphasis on dimension that would seem to exceed pictorial significance. This property of the works, however, also spurs an embrace of ambiguity which occurs throughout the artist's oeuvre: a disposition to the *hidden*.

Since graduating from the Academy of Fine Art in Antwerp in 1981, her work has been consistently driven by pictorial themes and technical innovation showing deep curiosity about both the natural and social worlds. Since beginning she has been concerned with natural law. Whether exploring it through drawing, in details of painting, or seeking the idea of natural order in other media such as film, the fascination is evident in landscape drawings, different formal aspects of painting, and in the study of crowds and figurative depictions. The concept of natural law, while not developed categorically into a scheme of work, is treated with affection as an on-going resource throughout her practice. The *inexplicit* has been immanent to the graphic content of her imagery, and in a multi-media formulation, to some of her choices of support, throughout. Threaded through her output is an on-going tension between formal demands and representation that establish a process of admixture of abstraction to signification. This creates scope for the visibility of explicitness in which is embedded implicit meaning. At the same time as illustrating possible stories her work also supplies cause for visual doubt as to their specificity. Meaning is, in this way, constantly a matter of interpretation, each piece is 'read' in layers of graphic significance. Since 2000, the work can be divided into three parts: early landscape and figurative drawings and paintings, paintings of crowds and groupings of figures enhanced through compositional frameworks, and studies of individual characters. The early landscape drawings are large, visually dense all-over studies. Other works combine this with three dimensional structures, as is the case with panoramic paintings from 2003 and 2006. Crowds and groups of people, as well as in some cases groups of animals, have occurred since 2005. Often in these paintings individuals are linked by white lines of varying tautness as an additional binding structure to the pictorial order. In many cases, however, this feature is absent and instead the environment, the place in which people are interacting, suffices in establishing the temper of representation. Van Lierop's works involving single individuals often involve an accumulation of different elements of portrayal on them, and can be read with respect to animal and human combinations or through the inference of known iconography. The following is a selective survey that comprises the different parts since 2003, and a summary account of the importance of *mood* in what she does.

Based in Antwerp, van Lierop's contemporaries form a group of painters linked by similar aesthetic concerns. Luc Tuymans, Koen van den Broek, and Guy Van Bossche,

are some who are known for figurative or landscape painting involving reduced pictorial detail either connecting figure-ground relationships or in rendering human environments. Although many of their paintings tend to muted tones and sparing depiction of features, and van Lierop's work seemingly grasps at intricacy with which to lay out her pictures, her work does contain the puncturing psychology of these other artists. These artists offer a viewer a conundrum, an emotive difficulty in coming to terms with events relative to what appears, or in how what is excluded plays a part in what is depicted. There is, at the very least, a kind of absence of certainty at making plain the actuality of what is represented. Recent local art history has traits that have marked, in a wide sense, her agenda. This is by no means a matter either of the arbitrariness of influences on her nor is it determining as such in any parochially art historical way. It may be described as a role for the *inconclusive* in kindred practices that guide an interpretation of these artists together with respect to the sense of subject matter.

Van Lierop's work gains strength by disrupting pictorial conventions. A charcoal drawing from 2003 shows the instantiation of both a naturalist attitude and a graphic elaboration that would undermine it. It appears to be an illustration of the upper edge of a hill or the side of a cliff exposing an anatomy of earth, or sand, lying beneath. The underground feature acts in a façade-like way covered with planar renderings and holes spread at points laterally across the upper middle of the picture. At the upper left, in the distance, is a tuft of bushes, they jut out to the left as if blown by a wind. This work is important because it is both believable as a landscape while inviting, on closer examination, a biological-like and almost animate organization of detail that is important apart from what role it might play as part of the larger image. As the drawing pulls the viewer into worlds representing phenomena it maintains a mystery of what constitutes the structure that holds nature together. The success of this draws attention away from a true-to-life portrayal and into a different type of world, seemingly out of order with what would otherwise be expected in the depiction. The large size of the work encourages engrossment in the meticulousness of its detailing. Similar strategies can be viewed in other work since this. Importantly, however, in the closest examples of similarity, it is necessary to regard the support as purposively difficult. This can be seen in her partial or completely panoramic paintings from 2003 and 2006. A particular mode of viewing is demanded of these, determined by the support. The panorama is a continuous landscape and the semi-circular panorama suggests one. Full of details from nature rendered quasi-naturalistically, the images are viewable on a narrow band requiring concerted effort to view. In the case of the fully panoramic, a viewer has not only to go into the space of viewing but separate the painting from surrounding objects.

Van Lierop's paintings of crowds form networks, in some cases this is emphasized with the introduction of lines painted between depicted figures, or left un-delineated, they are instead implied by elements in paintings that draw together the attention of people. She has also carried similar ideas into other media. Early examples of this work are untitled, where the artist has chosen an enigmatic quality of the image to remain unnamed. Any gleaned excitement or ennui in the viewer is coupled with giving an eponymous role over to him or her. The paintings are done largely in grey tones, and where the strands are represented, by lines. Different examples show various instances of linkage with different emphases. There are examples where groups of figures appear active toward one another or are brought together in relation to a common source of interest. In a painting from 2005 two women stand together with hands touching in the air, as though faith-healing, and are linked from there down to the bottoms of their dresses in flat white. Also from 2005, an image shows a group of men dressed in working clothes and wearing hats all attending to something un-shown in the foreground. Some of the men stand while others crouch, but the

head of each is connected by a white line to the object of their collective attention. A painting of 2006 is composed of shelves of pigeons; black and white wires join them with the lower right.

Two works from 2008 show lines performing functions in which their pictorial presence seems requisite but limited, almost reflexive. One depicts three baby prams and a baby's mobile chair, the chair smaller than the prams, all stationary on a set of tracks in the snow. The tracks form a complete elliptical circle contained within the traced paths of the baby carriers. The other portrays two groups of people crouching and handling a rope. The image is foreshortened, leading off to the upper left from the bottom right. The rope, represented as a white line, an absent or unpainted object, is parallel with two other lines in front and behind it in a scene most likely of a farmer's field. In between the two groups of people is a circular white mass suggestive of a dangerous substance. The anonymous character of these paintings, all small and approximately the same size, provide unknown stories along with studied visual subversions, their staging issues forth intimate disturbance.

Later works such as these are larger in size, they represent a greater scale of crowds, employ more diverse imagery, and some contain titles. There is advancement in the type of imagery displayed in the work, from modest-sized realist paintings containing deliberative pictorial additions to fantastic and symbolic-like compositions in subtly different styles. The features of van Lierop's paintings that act as supplemental devices linking figures, white lines, flat planes of white, remain in some of the later paintings. They are often less emphatically part of the picture, rather they isolate individuals or small groups within a larger setting. Works such as *Mountain of Happiness* of 2010, or *Mountain of Happiness/sea* of 2011, show such a progression. Detailing of white abstract lines between figures in 2010 reveals an integrated pictorial function, with the exception of a single spot-lighted figure in the foreground. In 2011 largely discrete groupings of people are selected for white outline, providing a flatness that highlights the idea of a figure/ground relation within a general aerial perspective. Another development showing the feature progressively minimized can be seen in two related works, respectively: *White Suburbia* of 2012 and *White Suburbia 2* of 2015. The earlier painting, populated with a combination of surreal faces and dark passages, as well as naturalistically rendered human figures, is gathered together with the aid of white curves and implied angled rectilinear structures. The later painting is organized around a foreshortened swirl of a crowd on flat farming land. Centred in the swirl is a round dark build-up suggesting intense activity, figures painted in the surrounding area are either washed out in the background, in the foreground they fork into the composition with greater pictorial resolution. Surrounding rectilinear structures and curved lines open up the cluster to a larger dynamic flow. The sense of movement in the crowd, corresponding to something unknown but compelling, takes over from focus on representing, openly, its different characters. The more general and provisional the structure of the crowd, the more anonymous its source of interest becomes.

Van Lierop has expanded into other media. In 2008 she produced a maquette of a sports stadium, an interior lit structure with sloping planes from the upper outer edge to the central bottom. The surface of the planes is textured and marked as if to indicate crowds, a black linear complex connects parts of the crowds with the stadium ground, specifying a zone of activity but not the nature of it. In 2014 she made a film entitled *Total recall of mundane conversations*. A bird's eye night vision security camera records a crowd of people shifting slowly as they witness a blaze beside a statue in a public square. In this case quite specific study is made of the crowd as a moving mass in the midst of an event. Occurrences happen within the crowd, to people in ever-present barely-decipherable detail, revealed in and by time. Time also shows the same movement simultaneously across the gathering, transmuted into an organism seemingly pulsing away regardless of any natural law. The camera

is like a participant in what is happening; uncertainty is what it records, separate and astonished. In fact the film records the fundamental fabric of group dynamics through a duration that can be entered into almost at any point. These developments are important in part because they extend the visualization of her paintings into other media, requiring greater awareness from a viewer, and in part because they also show more which may imply the unseen. They suggest that more explicitness in the visible; extended by an object and in film, the more that can remain hidden.

The artist's studies of individuals, while maintaining technical consistency with her other work, add identity to people. This has occurred either through a modification of the human figure so that animal and human combinations are seen, or by linking the figure to known iconography. A small grey-toned painting of 2007 shows a girl holding a cat. Both the girl and the cat face out toward the viewer. Although human in general appearance, the girl's face is formed to look like that of the cat, with particular emphasis on her eyes and the lower portion of her face. Work in 2010 contains animal and human combinations that can be seen using different techniques. A painting in oil on photo-paper contains a hybrid figure with three heads, each of a different type of animal. The figure stands forward, its left hand encased in a knight's gauntlet and holding a sword at its waist. Its upper body is covered in chain mail, a Bolnisi cross is spread across its breast. Three depictions converge at the place of its head, similar to the wolf, lion, and dog in Titian's *Allegory of Prudence*. They comprise instead the heads of three different animals, the one facing the viewer being a fawn, and the other two on either side of the head face away from each other. Surrounding the figure at the bottom are three different animals, all on plinths, two dogs and a fawn. The latter is outlined in white as if to link it to the forward-facing figure. In two separate photographs both entitled *Mountain of Happiness* an individual is shown wearing different masks and engaged differently. In one instance a person is standing still on a box, holding a neon light attached by wire beyond the picture. The individual wears two animal head masks in a Janus-like coupling and has several masks slung from his neck. Standing on a box holding a pair of glasses a dog sits to the left looking up at the costumed figure. In the other instance the person is crouched over to the right, wearing two animal head masks, and is holding a disk and a long stick. The idea of hybridity in these additive works is calculated to hide the face of the *human*, as if the mind of an animal controls our actions.

Paintings that refer to known iconography depicting people leave interpretation open as to the meaning for doing so. They do not correspond to a given theory of appropriation but instead instinctively subsume any theory to a precise and expressive visual elaboration. A work from 2010 portrays Saint Sebastian as a football player manipulated so as to appear in motion. His body is riddled with white line-like arrows, as if to suggest that the powerful and dynamic body is encumbered, slowed down by some act of martyrdom the nature of which is unknown. In 2011 the artist produced an image of a compromised man in front of a crowd of people, some sitting, others standing on a structure behind him. He leans forward wearing a long conical hat as if in some act of contrition. The work is reminiscent of Goya's *Inquisition Drawings*, particularly his painting of the theme *Inquisition Scene*, 1812-1814. A painting from 2014 revisits, in part, the theme of Saint Sebastian, this time as a portrait. It depicts a frontal image of an albino man sitting on a bed. Painted in two tones, dividing the canvas horizontally approximately in half, the lower portion is naturalistic, the lower body of the man is sitting on the bed in a relaxed way. The upper portion, where the painting has been glazed, shows the chest and face of the man covered in white line-like arrows. His face appears calm and resolved to a martyr's fate. Behind him are darkened shadows of figures, possibly of black people. These works provide enough detail to join existing images in art to the apparition-like curbing of naturalism common to van Lierop's pictorial

tactics. They refigure pre-existing imagery removing art historical importance, leaving behind an open-ended significance.

The hidden, the inexplicit, the inconclusive, the dissembling of the human; all describe the mood of the art. This has a double meaning: the work expresses different modes of being which are comprised of a mysterious tenor, nevertheless, provoking viewers by means of emotive content. The effect of her oeuvre shows not only ways of being but also, in a bare way, opening to riddles. In a recent publication her work has been interpreted to be a rewriting of stories, in the publication that accompanied the exhibition *The String Traveller* at the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent 'she wants to focus on the underlying, unspoken storylines and rewrite them' (S.M.A.K, 2014, p.21).¹ While this may be a valid interpretation, it is also important to question how much the *unconstructed story* is effectively the message of her work.

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In a recent series of paintings Marilou van Lierop combines techniques and depictions prevalent through her work with a volumetric support that suggests more than simply an underpinning function. The paintings are done on large, semi-spherical convex surfaces patterned with small holes. They are similar, comparable to, climbing surfaces used for indoor bouldering found in sports climbing gyms. Placed on them is an array of diffuse imagery intimating obscure origins. One contains a swirling crowd together in a gathering; figures are sharply defined in the foreground beyond which is a dark swelling mass. Another painting shows a vortex-like sky view of a mineral mine behind which are the lineaments of a distant landscape. There is a largely dark grey painting bisected by a foreshortened white line with oblique lines springing from either side. It also contains washed-out strokes beneath the white ones, a part of the under-painting. Graphically, it is reminiscent of cryptic pre-historic landscape patterns. In this series is an example of an image with religious significance, Mount Arafat covered with pilgrims during the Hajj. While van Lierop has used different supports in the past, these images traverse a weighty structure, an emphasis on dimension that would seem to exceed pictorial significance. This property of the works, however, also spurs an embrace of ambiguity which occurs throughout the artist's oeuvre: a disposition to the *hidden*.

Since graduating from the Academy of Fine Art in Antwerp in 1981, her work has been consistently driven by pictorial themes and technical innovation showing deep curiosity about both the natural and social worlds. Since beginning she has been concerned with natural law. Whether exploring it through drawing, in details of painting, or seeking the

idea of natural order in other media such as film, the fascination is evident in landscape drawings, different formal aspects of painting, and in the study of crowds and figurative depictions. The concept of natural law, while not developed categorically into a scheme of work, is treated with affection as an on-going resource throughout her practice. The *inexplicit* has been immanent to the graphic content of her imagery, and in a multi-media formulation, to some of her choices of support, throughout. Threaded through her output is an on-going tension between formal demands and representation that establish a process of admixture of abstraction to signification. This creates scope for the visibility of explicitness in which is embedded implicit meaning. At the same time as illustrating possible stories her work also supplies cause for visual doubt as to their specificity. Meaning is, in this way, constantly a matter of interpretation, each piece is 'read' in layers of graphic significance. Since 2000, the work can be divided into three parts: early landscape and figurative drawings and paintings, paintings of crowds and groupings of figures enhanced through compositional frameworks, and studies of individual characters. The early landscape drawings are large, visually dense all-over studies. Other works combine this with three dimensional structures, as is the case with panoramic paintings from 2003 and 2006. Crowds and groups of people, as well as in some cases groups of animals, have occurred since 2005. Often in these paintings individuals are linked by white lines of varying tautness as an additional binding structure to the pictorial order. In many cases, however, this feature is absent and instead the environment, the place in which people are interacting, suffices in establishing the temper of representation. Van Lierop's works involving single individuals often involve an accumulation of different elements of portrayal on them, and can be read with respect to animal and human combinations or through the inference of known iconography. The following is a selective survey that comprises the different parts since 2003, and a summary account of the importance of *mood* in what she does.

Based in Antwerp, van Lierop's contemporaries form a group of painters linked by similar aesthetic concerns. Luc Tuymans, Koen van den Broek, and Guy Van Bossche, are some who are known for figurative or landscape painting involving reduced pictorial detail either connecting figure-ground relationships or in rendering human environments. Although many of their paintings tend to muted tones and sparing depiction of features, and van Lierop's work seemingly grasps at intricacy with which to lay out her pictures, her work does contain the puncturing psychology of these other artists. These artists offer a viewer a conundrum, an emotive difficulty in coming to terms with events relative to what appears, or in how what is excluded plays a part in what is depicted. There is, at the very least, a kind of absence of certainty at making plain the actuality of what is represented. Recent local art history has traits that have marked, in a wide sense, her agenda. This is by no means a matter either of the arbitrariness of influences on her nor is it determining as such in any parochially art historical way. It may be described as a role for the *inconclusive* in kindred practices that guide an interpretation of these artists together with respect to the sense of subject matter.

Van Lierop's work gains strength by disrupting pictorial conventions. A charcoal drawing from 2003 shows the instantiation of both a naturalist attitude and a graphic elaboration that would undermine it. It appears to be an illustration of the upper edge of a hill or the side of a cliff exposing an anatomy of earth, or sand, lying beneath. The underground feature acts in a façade-like way covered with planar renderings and holes spread at points laterally across the upper middle of the picture. At the upper left, in the distance, is a tuft of bushes, they jut out to the left as if blown by a wind. This work is important because it is both believable as a landscape while inviting, on closer examination, a biological-like and almost animate organization of detail that is important apart from what role it might play as part of the larger image. As the drawing

pulls the viewer into worlds representing phenomena it maintains a mystery of what constitutes the structure that holds nature together. The success of this draws attention away from a true-to-life portrayal and into a different type of world, seemingly out of order with what would otherwise be expected in the depiction. The large size of the work encourages engrossment in the meticulousness of its detailing. Similar strategies can be viewed in other work since this. Importantly, however, in the closest examples of similarity, it is necessary to regard the support as purposively difficult. This can be seen in her partial or completely panoramic paintings from 2003 and 2006. A particular mode of viewing is demanded of these, determined by the support. The panorama is a continuous landscape and the semi-circular panorama suggests one. Full of details from nature rendered quasi-naturalistically, the images are viewable on a narrow band requiring concerted effort to view. In the case of the fully panoramic, a viewer has not only to go into the space of viewing but separate the painting from surrounding objects.

Van Lierop's paintings of crowds form networks, in some cases this is emphasized with the introduction of lines painted between depicted figures, or left un-delineated, they are instead implied by elements in paintings that draw together the attention of people. She has also carried similar ideas into other media. Early examples of this work are untitled, where the artist has chosen an enigmatic quality of the image to remain unnamed. Any gleaned excitement or ennui in the viewer is coupled with giving an eponymous role over to him or her. The paintings are done largely in grey tones, and where the strands are represented, by lines. Different examples show various instances of linkage with different emphases. There are examples where groups of figures appear active toward one another or are brought together in relation to a common source of interest. In a painting from 2005 two women stand together with hands touching in the air, as though faith-healing, and are linked from there down to the bottoms of their dresses in flat white. Also from 2005, an image shows a group of men dressed in working clothes and wearing hats all attending to something un-shown in the foreground. Some of the men stand while others crouch, but the head of each is connected by a white line to the object of their collective attention. A painting of 2006 is composed of shelves of pigeons; black and white wires join them with the lower right.

Two works from 2008 show lines performing functions in which their pictorial presence seems requisite but limited, almost reflexive. One depicts three baby prams and a baby's mobile chair, the chair smaller than the prams, all stationary on a set of tracks in the snow. The tracks form a complete elliptical circle contained within the traced paths of the baby carriers. The other portrays two groups of people crouching and handling a rope. The image is foreshortened, leading off to the upper left from the bottom right. The rope, represented as a white line, an absent or unpainted object, is parallel with two other lines in front and behind it in a scene most likely of a farmer's field. In between the two groups of people is a circular white mass suggestive of a dangerous substance. The anonymous character of these paintings, all small and approximately the same size, provide unknown stories along with studied visual subversions, their staging issues forth intimate disturbance.

Later works such as these are larger in size, they represent a greater scale of crowds, employ more diverse imagery, and some contain titles. There is advancement in the type of imagery displayed in the work, from modest-sized realist paintings containing deliberative pictorial additions to fantastic and symbolic-like compositions in subtly different styles. The features of van Lierop's paintings that act as supplemental devices linking figures, white lines, flat planes of white, remain in some of the later paintings. They are often less emphatically part of the picture, rather they isolate individuals or small groups within a larger setting. Works such as *Mountain of Happiness* of 2010, or *Mountain of Happiness/sea* of 2011, show such a progression. Detailing of white abstract lines between

figures in 2010 reveals an integrated pictorial function, with the exception of a single spot-lighted figure in the foreground. In 2011 largely discrete groupings of people are selected for white outline, providing a flatness that highlights the idea of a figure/ground relation within a general aerial perspective. Another development showing the feature progressively minimized can be seen in two related works, respectively: *White Suburbia* of 2012 and *White Suburbia 2* of 2015. The earlier painting, populated with a combination of surreal faces and dark passages, as well as naturalistically rendered human figures, is gathered together with the aid of white curves and implied angled rectilinear structures. The later painting is organized around a foreshortened swirl of a crowd on flat farming land. Centred in the swirl is a round dark build-up suggesting intense activity, figures painted in the surrounding area are either washed out in the background, in the foreground they fork into the composition with greater pictorial resolution. Surrounding rectilinear structures and curved lines open up the cluster to a larger dynamic flow. The sense of movement in the crowd, corresponding to something unknown but compelling, takes over from focus on representing, openly, its different characters. The more general and provisional the structure of the crowd, the more anonymous its source of interest becomes.

Van Lierop has expanded into other media. In 2008 she produced a maquette of a sports stadium, an interior lit structure with sloping planes from the upper outer edge to the central bottom. The surface of the planes is textured and marked as if to indicate crowds, a black linear complex connects parts of the crowds with the stadium ground, specifying a zone of activity but not the nature of it. In 2014 she made a film entitled *Total recall of mundane conversations*. A bird's eye night vision security camera records a crowd of people shifting slowly as they witness a blaze beside a statue in a public square. In this case quite specific study is made of the crowd as a moving mass in the midst of an event. Occurrences happen within the crowd, to people in ever-present barely-decipherable detail, revealed in and by time. Time also shows the same movement simultaneously across the gathering, transmuting it into an organism seemingly pulsing away regardless of any natural law. The camera is like a participant in what is happening; uncertainty is what it records, separate and astonished. In fact the film records the fundamental fabric of group dynamics through a duration that can be entered into almost at any point. These developments are important in part because they extend the visualization of her paintings into other media, requiring greater awareness from a viewer, and in part because they also show more which may imply the unseen. They suggest that more explicitness in the visible; extended by an object and in film, the more that can remain hidden.

The artist's studies of individuals, while maintaining technical consistency with her other work, add identity to people. This has occurred either through a modification of the human figure so that animal and human combinations are seen, or by linking the figure to known iconography. A small grey-toned painting of 2007 shows a girl holding a cat. Both the girl and the cat face out toward the viewer. Although human in general appearance, the girl's face is formed to look like that of the cat, with particular emphasis on her eyes and the lower portion of her face. Work in 2010 contains animal and human combinations that can be seen using different techniques. A painting in oil on photo-paper contains a hybrid figure with three heads, each of a different type of animal. The figure stands forward, its left hand encased in a knight's gauntlet and holding a sword at its waist. Its upper body is covered in chain mail, a Bolnisi cross is spread across its breast. Three depictions converge at the place of its head, similar to the wolf, lion, and dog in Titian's *Allegory of Prudence*. They comprise instead the heads of three different animals, the one facing the viewer being a fawn, and the other two on either side of the head face away from each other. Surrounding the figure at the bottom are three different animals, all on plinths, two dogs and a fawn. The latter is outlined in white as if to link it to the forward-facing figure. In

two separate photographs both entitled *Mountain of Happiness* an individual is shown wearing different masks and engaged differently. In one instance a person is standing still on a box, holding a neon light attached by wire beyond the picture. The individual wears two animal head masks in a Janus-like coupling and has several masks slung from his neck. Standing on a box holding a pair of glasses a dog sits to the left looking up at the costumed figure. In the other instance the person is crouched over to the right, wearing two animal head masks, and is holding a disk and a long stick. The idea of hybridity in these additive works is calculated to hide the face of the *human*, as if the mind of an animal controls our actions.

Paintings that refer to known iconography depicting people leave interpretation open as to the meaning for doing so. They do not correspond to a given theory of appropriation but instead instinctively subsume any theory to a precise and expressive visual elaboration. A work from 2010 portrays Saint Sebastian as a football player manipulated so as to appear in motion. His body is riddled with white line-like arrows, as if to suggest that the powerful and dynamic body is encumbered, slowed down by some act of martyrdom the nature of which is unknown. In 2011 the artist produced an image of a compromised man in front of a crowd of people, some sitting, others standing on a structure behind him. He leans forward wearing a long conical hat as if in some act of contrition. The work is reminiscent of Goya's *Inquisition Drawings*, particularly his painting of the theme *Inquisition Scene*, 1812-1814. A painting from 2014 revisits, in part, the theme of Saint Sebastian, this time as a portrait. It depicts a frontal image of an albino man sitting on a bed. Painted in two tones, dividing the canvas horizontally approximately in half, the lower portion is naturalistic, the lower body of the man is sitting on the bed in a relaxed way. The upper portion, where the painting has been glazed, shows the chest and face of the man covered in white line-like arrows. His face appears calm and resolved to a martyr's fate. Behind him are darkened shadows of figures, possibly of black people. These works provide enough detail to join existing images in art to the apparition-like curbing of naturalism common to van Lierop's pictorial tactics. They refigure pre-existing imagery removing art historical importance, leaving behind an open-ended significance.

The hidden, the inexplicit, the inconclusive, the dissembling of the human; all describe the mood of the art. This has a double meaning: the work expresses different modes of being which are comprised of a mysterious tenor, nevertheless, provoking viewers by means of emotive content. The effect of her oeuvre shows not only ways of being but also, in a bare way, opening to riddles. In a recent publication her work has been interpreted to be a rewriting of stories, in the publication that accompanied the exhibition *The String Traveller* at the Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art in Ghent 'she wants to focus on the underlying, unspoken storylines and rewrite them' (S.M.A.K, 2014, p.21).¹ While this may be a valid interpretation, it is also important to question how much the *unconstructed story* is effectively the message of her work.