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ANTWERP

ANNE-MIE VAN
KERCKHOVEN

GALLERY ZENO X

Provocatively titled "Headnurse," Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven's recent exhibition appropriated two thousand years' worth of sexist stereotypes. This may sound pretentious, but despite the philosophical, historical, and scientific references riddled throughout the artist's work, her latest alter ego—a nurse who uses clichéd depictions of women to "cure" psychological and philosophical problems—radiates humor and high spirits. Van Kerckhoven grouped the material, including '50s pin-ups, into three categories: women clad in nothing but a belt, figures exposing their breasts while looking unabashedly back at the spectator, or models removing their blouses over their heads. Assembled according to such taxonomies, the found images call attention to just how ludicrous these clichés can be.

Structures do not demonstrate, 1995–96, juxtaposed two controversial figures: the former Russian security chief Alexander Lebed and a female Pakistani freedom fighter—bringing together establishment and rebel, male and female, victor and victim. Another prescription for curing

conventional thought patterns resulted in a weird cocktail: thirty-six fashion models drawn with acrylic and marker on scraps of wall-to-wall carpet; words sampled from Frank Vermorel's outrageous Vivienne Westwood biography, *Fashion and Perversity* (1996); and tongue-in-cheek quotes from an Italian fashion magazine called *Collezione—Donna*. This interactive installation (viewers were encouraged to rearrange the position of the models) was a tribute to the Greek goddess of laughter, Baubo, who was said to see with her nipples and speak through her vulva. Like that ribald goddess, Van Kerckhoven's installation was both sensual and comical, its lighthearted critique of sexist stereotypes taking "girl power" to a whole new level.

Moral Rearrangement, 1996–, a twelve-minute computer animation, was the last "chapter" in Van Kerckhoven's narrative. This work in progress presents the first twenty-four female characters of a projected ninety-six, embodying "one's capacity . . . to organize the self within an open system." In a written text that was presented here, the artist borrows a quote from Piet Mondrian: "Art will disappear when life comes into balance." For Van Kerckhoven, as for Mondrian, this quest is never-ending.

— Jos Van den Bergh



Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, 3/*Distill* (detail), 1996, computer printout and Plexiglas.