

CLARA SPILLIAERT
PORTFOLIO 2023

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DRAWINGS



diary drawing

12/16.12 (2015), mixed media on paper, 148x210 mm

Installation view at solo Clara Sekirara (2022), Contemporary Art Foundation, Tokyo, Photo: Keizo Kioku



diary drawing
7/19.5 (2014), mixed media on paper, 148x210 mm



diary drawing
12/3.2 (2015), mixed media on paper, 148x210 mm



diary drawing
18/19.8.15 (2015), mixed media on paper, 148x210 mm



When I was sixteen, I made the move to Belgium from Japan. My artistic development took off in response to the necessity of assimilating a foreign culture and as a means of communication with people around me. Besides learning Dutch, I developed my own artistic language by daily confiding my mental images and experiences as drawings to paper. This very personal and graphical identity building was kept in motion by churning out intimate diary drawing books.

diary drawing
5/9.3 (2016), mixed media on paper, 148x210 mm



Installation view at Paper Cuts (2023), Keteleer Gallery, Antwerp
Photo: We Document Art/Alex Shlyk

MURALS



Making of *Verboden Paradijs* (2018), acrylic paint, 2x8m, Geraardsbergen



Verboden Paradijs (2018, detail), acrylic paint, 2x8m, Geraardsbergen



Commissioned by the city of Geraardsbergen, I accomplished this eight-meter-long mural in a passage near the Grote Markt. The medieval market fountain is honored and accompanied by the plant and animal motifs from the Hortus Conclusus tradition. The woman carrying a large bowl with fish on her head refers to a local folk festival in which fish from the Dender river play an important role. Here again, water – as an indispensable thematic element – forms a source of inspiration.

Verboden Paradijs (2018, detail), acrylic paint, 1 x 1 m, Geraardsbergen



Window painting with porcelain-slib (2022) at LLS Paleis, Antwerp
On the occasion of book launch "SEKIRARA"



Window painting with porcelain-slib (2022) at LLS Paleis, Antwerp
On the occasion of book launch "SEKIRARA"

CERAMIC WORKS



Self-portrait (2015), mixed media, 45x45x190 cm
Installation view at Belvédère Boekentoren (2015), Gent



An enshrined fountain in the shape of a narcissus flower symbolizes as it were seven years of producing diary drawings. The continuous flow of water epitomizes an inner source of vitality. Water drops on the mirror allude to repetitive self-reflection.

<https://vimeo.com/196454257>

Self-portrait (2015), mixed media, 45x45x190 cm
Installation view at solo Clara Sekirara (2022)
Contemporary Art Foundation, Tokyo, Photo: Keizo Kioku



from the series *Fertile Vases* (2020), glazed ceramic, 50x35x10 cm



from the series *Fertile Vases* (2020, detail), glazed ceramic, 50x35x10 cm



from the series *Fertile Vases* (2020), glazed ceramic, 25x25x30 cm



Since 2018 I have been working intensively with ceramics. This series of sculptures refer to the tradition of vases, a container to be filled with water, as well as to symbols of motherhood or how I experience fertility. The pistils of flowers often form a starting point, sometimes accompanied with the animal elements. They are at the same time welcoming and protective, representing the duality of motherhood.

from the series *Fertile Vases* (2020, detail), glazed ceramic, 25x25x30 cm



Wapenschilden (2020), glazed ceramics, group of 20 works
Installation view at solo Clara Sekirara (2022), Contemporary Art Foundation, Tokyo, Photo: Keizo Kioku



Wapenschilden (2020), glazed ceramics, group of 20 works
Installation view at solo Clara Sekirara (2022), Contemporary Art Foundation, Tokyo, Photo: Keizo Kioku



from *Wapenschilden* (2020), glazed ceramic, 12x15x1 cm



from *Wapenschilden* (2020), glazed ceramic, 12x15x1 cm



from *Wapenschilden* (2020), glazed ceramic, 12x15x1 cm



from *Wapenschilden* (2020), glazed ceramic, 12x15x1 cm



from *Wapenschilden* (2020), glazed ceramic, 7x9x0.5 cm



from *Wapenschilden* (2020), glazed ceramic, 10x10x0.5 cm



At the root of this series lies a strong interest in heraldic beasts and other fauna and flora as guardian symbols. How do these symbols, which are understood across languages and cultures, participate in the formation of group identity and how do they simultaneously represent the relationship between humans and nature? By applying the plasticity of clay I tried to create a personal and contemporary interpretation of this traditional patriarchal symbolism.

from *Wapenschilden* (2020), glazed ceramic, 6x8x0.5 cm



Wedding Dove (2021), glazed ceramics, 22x5x8 cm



In various rituals, different animals play symbolic roles. White wedding pigeons released during a wedding intrigue me in particular. What should this bird carry on its wings? The grasping handprint is engraved on their bodies, at the moment of sublime human happiness. At the same time, the dove is scared, uncomfortable and suffocated, which seems to imply the dilemma of marriage.

Wedding Dove (2021), glazed ceramics, 22x5x8 cm



Installation view of *Stambomen* (2021), LUCA School of Arts, Gent



Stambomen (2021)
in the film *Spilliaert* (2022) directed by Lisa Spilliaert



At the root of this series rests my interest in family trees to represent kinship. A Brussels sprout – indispensable in Belgian folk cuisine – takes on the scale of the human body and becomes a monumental family tree. Leaf veins become blood vessels running between the buds, sometimes interrupted, sometimes dripping. It is a praise for the vegetable that has been grown and eaten for centuries in my father's homeland. The making process – the slow, manual build-up with clay – symbolizes the development of my own identity. The sprout family tree is accompanied by a series of totem-like statues; a family portrait, a feeding mother bird pistil, umbilical cords entwined like ivy, a fusion of a body and a tree... each of which tells its own story, but together they form a large forest.

Installation view of the *spruit-stamboom* from *Stambomen* (2021)
Ceramics, 0,6 x 0,6 x 2,4m De Wandelaar, Knokke-Heist



Hairy Tale (2023)
Installation at Lichtekooi Artspace photo:Thor Salden



Hairy Tale is an in-situ installation based on the analogy between our handling of our body hair and the vegetation in our gardens. Body hair and gardens can equally be understood as borders between ourselves and the outside world, and operate as protective layers. Body hair is a field of tension that exposes the division between human, animal, child, adult and gender. The garden is a terrain to shape conceptions of nature. Both natural growth are manageable and provide a stage on which the owner's identity becomes visible.

Both the intervention on body hair and vegetation in gardens are subject to the prevailing norms of specific cultures. The social pressure to remove one's body hair is increasing and removing unexpected vegetation in the garden and around the house is a common obsession. This phenomenon touches me deeply and encouraged me to create this work.

Hairy Tale (2023)

Installation at Lichtekooi Artspace photo: Thor Salden



For *Hairy Tale*, I created a hilly landscape in clay in Lichtekooi, which upon closer inspection turns out to be a large body. The floor's light blue color makes the figure appear to float on water. The clay islands form body parts that rise above the imaginary water surface. At the bottom of the space is the leg, on which grow black sprites. Next comes the pubic area, the belly and the navel, the breasts, the armpit and finally the face. Various fragile plants, made of fired clay, grow on each island. Some bloom, others have fruits. Many stems have hairy leaves that, because of the scale of the figure, blur the boundary between the body hair and plants. From the scalp grow little stones that continue into the actual garden of the exhibition space.

Hairy Tale (2023)
Installation at Lichtekooi Artspace photo: Thor Salden



The figure, comfortable and intimate with itself and the vegetation, stands in stark contrast to the Wall of Hair, exhibited in the passageway to the garden. This work consists of 35 individually framed wax strips with body hair of visitors of the exhibition's opening. The waxing was performed by Lisa Spilliaert, who was dressed as a domina, to emphasize the painful and masochistic nature of the depilation. The strips were framed in anti-root cloth – a black plastic tarp used to prevent weeds from growing in gardens. I also wore a costume made out of this anti-root cloth during the opening to humorously criticize our social oppression of body hair.

Hairy Tale / Make your own Garden (2023)
Performance at Lichtekooi Artspace photo: Thor Salden

PUBLIC SPACE



*Happy 50th Anniversary (2021), porcelain sound installation, 4 x 4 m
Publiek Park, Vrienden v/h S.M.A.K., Citadelpark Gent*



Happy 50th Anniversary (2021), porcelain sound installation, 4 x 4 m
Publiek Park, Vrienden v/h S.M.A.K., Citadelpark Gent



In Japan, there is an ancient belief that the sound of bells scares away evil spirits and protects yourself. If you go back in the history of these bells, you will arrive at a sacred musical instrument called Kagura-suzu. The Kagura-suzu I discovered during my trip to Kanazawa, was the starting point for this work. Near the museums in Ghent's Citadel Park, stands the Kotoji lantern. It was a gift from the city of Kanazawa in honor of the 35th sisterhood between the two cities. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary in 2021, the Young Friends of Vrienden v/h S.M.A.K. asked me to create an artistic intervention. I made an installation in which 50 ceramic bells were hung from a tree next to the Kotoji lantern. The trunk of the tree can be seen as the handle of the Kagura-suzu, and instead of shaking it by hand, the wind jingles the bells. Each bell is shaped like a split peach, referring to the primordial fruit as the origin of the bell instruments.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTe9uljM-mCl&ab_channel=StadGent

*Happy 50th Anniversary (2021), porcelain sound installation, 4 x 4 m
Publiek Park, Vrienden v/h S.M.A.K., Citadelpark Gent*



1000 bakstenen (2022-23), wall sculpture, Kerkhof Rupelmonde



1000 bakstenen (2022-23), 2 benches, WZC Poldervliet



Due to the distance rules and the ban on physical contact, COVID-19 made us aware of the importance of touch. The habit of shaking hands, a simple connecting gesture, was suddenly taken away from us. A hand, a touch can mean so much in human communication. This gesture and the universal desire for touch is therefore the basic concept for '1,000 bricks'. A project that was commissioned by Kruibeke to create a monumental artwork as a reminder of the victims of COVID-19 and as a tribute to the aid workers.

I chose to work with locally quarried clay. The region belongs to the Boom clay layer and has a history of brickyards stretching back to the 14th century. This shared ground and history connects the three sub-municipalities: Kruibeke, Bazel and Rupelmonde.

1000 bakstenen (2022-23), participation at WZC Poldervliet



In the fall of 2022 I stood in the three districts with bins full of handmade bricks in soft clay. Residents were invited to place their handprints there. Some did this subtly, others firmly, each in their own way. In total, about 1000 bricks were made.

The fired bricks can be found at six locations across the three sub-municipalities in the form of benches, walking paths and a wall sculpture. By combining the stones with handprints into various art integrations, the inhabitants of Kruibeke are symbolically brought back together.

<https://www.kruibeke.be/1-000-bakstenen-een-covid-19-herdenkingsmonument-voor-kruibeke>

1000 bakstenen (2022-23), bench, Kerkhof Kruibeke



1000 bakstenen (2022-23), walking path, Mercatoreiland



1000 bakstenen (2022-23), walking path, Mercatoreiland

B'ROCK ORCHESTRA HOUSE ARTIST

As a seasonal house artist 2022 - 2023, I created visual responses to every concert program - fourteen in total - of the B'Rock Orchestra.
<https://b-rock.org/nl/brock-huisartiest/>



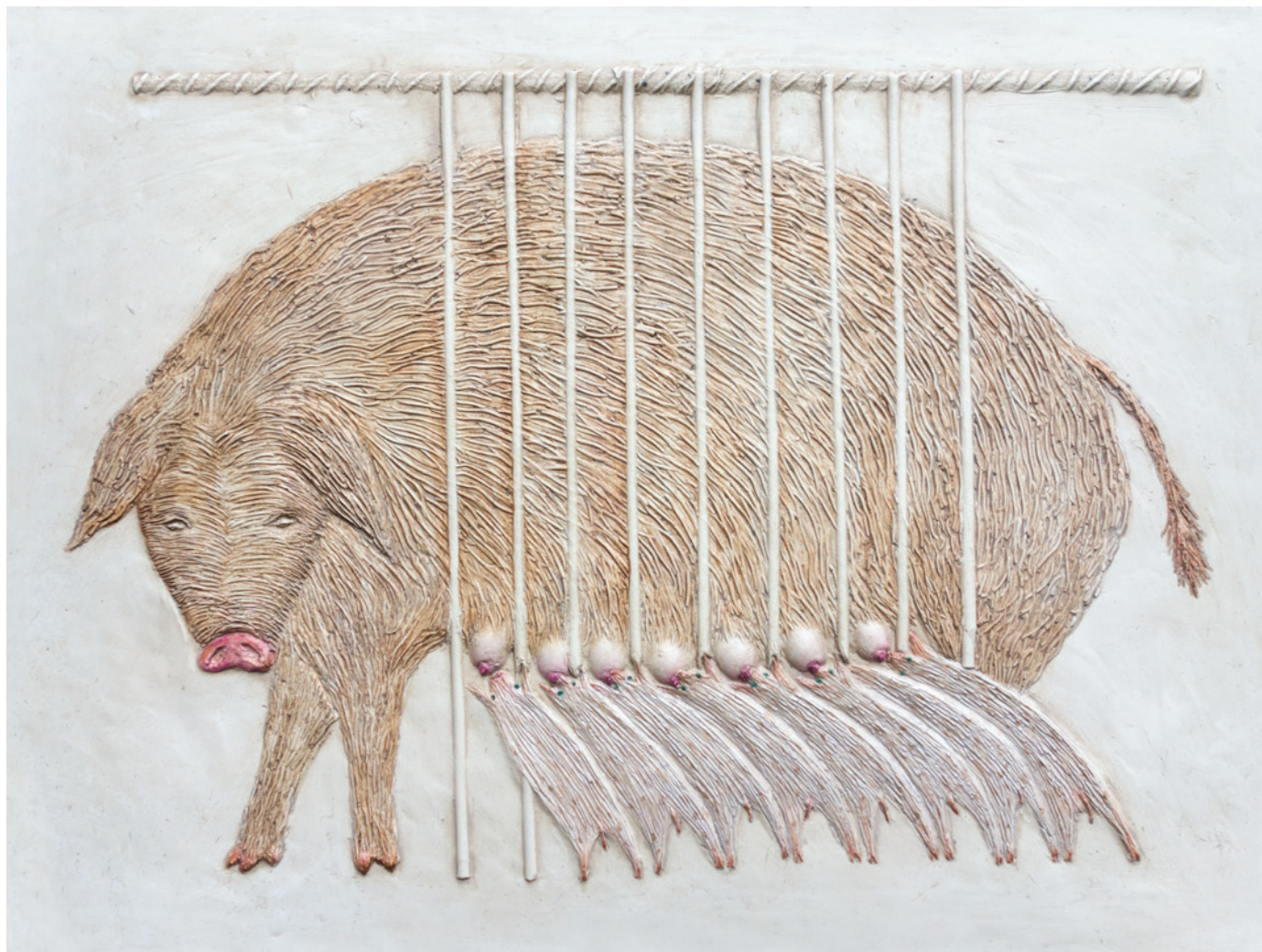
Adventurers (2022), plaster with watercolor, 24,5x31x2 cm



Madrigals (2022), plaster with watercolor, 24,5x31x2 cm



Antwerp Requiem (2022), plaster with watercolor, 24,5x31x2 cm



Bach & Pergolesi (2023), plaster with watercolor, 24,5x31x2 cm

VIDEO WORKS



A still from *Hotel Red Shoes* (2013), 15"02'



This first video work in collaboration with my sister Lisa Spilliaert is about a double transition. On the one hand, the cultural reorientation from Japan to Belgium and, on the other hand, the transition from child to adolescent, with reference to the advent of sexual awareness. The emotional intensity of leaving a certain place or state is transcended by the ritual gestures of singing, cutting and burning.

Stills from *Hotel Red Shoes* (2013), 15''02'



A still from *De Zeven Natuurwonderen* (2019), 03''19'



In this short stop-motion film without sound, I experiment with plant elements that are brought to life to tell mysterious, animistic stories.

Created on the occasion of Moving Word at Art Cinema OFFOFF, Ghent.

<https://vimeo.com/373484431>



Stills from *De Zeven Natuurwonderen* (2019), 03''19'

PUBLICATION

In 2022, a book “SEKIRARA” was published by Borgerhoff & Lamberigts with a selection of 240 drawings from more than 4,500 drawings made between 2009 and 2017. Graphic designed by Studio Luc Derycke, with an introductory poem by Delphine Lecompte.

<https://www.borgerhoff-lamberigts.be/mer/shop/books/sekirara>



Publication SEKIRARA (2022)
MER. Studio Luc Derycke / Borgerhoff & Lamberigts



Publication SEKIRARA (2022)
MER. Studio Luc Derycke / Borgerhoff & Lamberigts



Publication SEKIRARA (2022)
MER. Studio Luc Derycke / Borgerhoff & Lambergits

CV

Clara Spilliaert

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Education

2018-2021

Credit Visual Arts, Glass and Ceramics
LUCA School of Arts, Gent

2014-2015

MA Visual Arts, Fine Arts
LUCA School of Arts, Gent

2011-2014

BA Visual Arts, Graphics and Drawings
LUCA School of Arts, Gent

Exhibitions

2023_ Hairy Tale (solo), Lichtekooi Artspace, Antwerp, BE
2023_ Paper Cuts, Keteleer Gallery, Antwerp, BE
2023_ Installation at Courtisane Film Festival, Gent, BE
2023_ 1000 bakstenen, Kunst in Opdracht, Kruibeke, BE
2022_ History of the Future, NEST Stadslab, Damme, BE
2022_ The Thinking Hand, Tatjana Pieters, Gent, BE
2022_ Clara Sekirara (solo), Contemporary Art Foundation, Tokyo, JP
2022_ Window project & Book launch, LLS Paleis, Antwerp, BE
2021_ Rising Stars, Ginza ATRIUM, Tokyo, JP
2021_ Beauty and the Beast, CC Scharpoord, Knokke-Heist/Duinbergen, BE
2021_ Publiek Park, Vrienden v/h S.M.A.K., Citadelpark Gent, BE
2020_ CAF Award 2020 (Grand Prix), Contemporary Art Foundation, Tokyo, JP
2020_ Condition Report, Vandenhoove Centre for Architecture and Art, Gent, BE
2019_ Zomer residentie Carré, LUCA School of Arts, Gent, BE
2018_ MUREN, Kunst in Opdracht, Geraardsbergen, BE
2016_ Atlantis na Plato, Croxhapox, Gent, BE
2015_ Shame, Museum Dr. Guislain, Gent, BE
2015_ Jonge Kunstenaars 2015, Sint-Lukasgalerie, Brussels, BE.
2014_ West-Flanders Art Prize, Be-Part, Waregem, BE
2014_ Dark Chambers, Museum Dr. Guislain, Gent, BE

Prizes

2023_ Prix Fintro Prijs 2023, Category Visual Arts, Grand Prize, BE
2020_ Contemporary Art Foundation, CAF Award 2020, Grand Prize, JP
2015_ Jury Prize, Graduation, LUCA School of Arts Gent, BE

Screenings

2019_ Moving Word, Art Cinema OFFOFF, Gent, BE
2016_ Image Forum Festival, Theater Image Forum/Kyoto Art Center, Tokyo/Kyoto, JP
2015_ Rotterdam International Film Festival, Rotterdam, NL