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31 March 2018 till 08 July 2018

THE FEMALE TOUCH

Since the 1980s female artists have transformed figurative painting. Their portraits address contemporary social problems and issues concerning gender, religion, racism and sexuality, and respond to art historical traditions like the erotic depiction of women. *The Female Touch* explores how women use the body in painting.

Since the early 1990s American artist Lisa Yuskavage has been creating her own fantastic female world in which sexuality and eroticism are part of the everyday. Apparently innocent women take centre stage in her dreamlike interiors. The soft, smooth look of the paintings attracts us, but the overt eroticism leaves us with an uncomfortable sensation.

Humans and the human body are the starting point for Marlene Dumas. She is guided by experiences from her own personal life, the art world and society. Her paintings always contain multiple references, including to sexual and political issues. Natasja Kensmil uses important historical figures to raise issues like seduction and violence in relations between men and women. Her sister Iris Kensmil often paints African-American and other activists in a style that is clearly drawn from western painting traditions, in an attempt to give them a place in the European canon. Ina Van Zyl focuses on the shame and embarrassment still associated with the body.

Yet this is not just a contemporary practice. *The Female Touch* shows us that early modern artists like the German Expressionist Paula Modersohn-Becker and Dutch painter Charley Toorop also took their own identity as the basis for their drawings and paintings. The surprising combination of works in this exhibition is drawn from the Gemeentemuseum's own collection and the Monique Zajfen Collection.

Monique Zajfen Collection

The Monique Zajfen Collection is a collection of contemporary art owned by the De Broere Charitable Foundation, which includes work by artists like Marlene Dumas, Luc Tuymans, Thomas Schütte and Stephan Balkenhol. Monique Zajfen was a close friend of the Broere family and former owner of Galerie 121 in Antwerp. The Monique Zajfen Collection has been on long-term loan to the Gemeentemuseum since 2014. Twice a year the museum stages an exhibition combining work from the collection with work from its own collection, displayed in a specially designed gallery.