

PRESS RELEASE

Pieter Slagboom

Saturated Manuscript

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The work consists of drawings. The growing scale of the new drawings has influenced their content, measuring 321 x 214 centimeters (10 x 7 feet), made specifically for the gallery space of Bridget Donahue. The monumental scale creates a sense of immersion. Human figures and body parts in the works are larger than the spectator. Intimacy is magnified, and redefined.

The drawings are a poetic analysis of contemporary society through the visual image. At the same time, they depict an inner private world. The coercion that culture and religion exert on body and intellect also plays a role: the human as conflict is central in a maze of religion, biology, architecture, and art history. There is no entry or exit. In the course of time, an obsessive iconographic program emerges.

The way the works are created is a combination of travel and working in the studio, and the drawings are produced in phases. I look at the figurative from abstraction. I observe architecture, the streets, skin and the movement of people. But also everyday objects such as apples or chairs in a hotel room. Their impact can be seen and felt only on the spot.

After the sensory, there is the analytical aspect. Perception undergoes a metamorphosis, and I end up in what I call an interpretation vacuum. A form of blindness arises, with all the images I have seen being compressed into one in my head. Observation is becoming intertwined with pictures that I have carried with me all my life.

I first make small drawings as studies for larger drawings, and because of these I see the world around me differently the next day. This process, this image psychology, continues for a few days. Eventually an independent image emerges. As well as an ambiguity. The large drawings are done in the studio on monumental linen canvases and large sheets of paper, extending the image to the physical world of colour, perception and visibility.

In the large drawings, colour and size have an abstracting activity on the subject. My aim is to detach the colour from the subject matter. The introduction of certain colours is for functional reasons, and often not for aesthetic reasons. Coloured pencil itself has a slight physical presence, and is built up in layers to give the drawing a spatial activity, which becomes stronger when the work is enlarged. In a number of works I create figuration in a monochrome colour saturation. As a result, they take longer to decipher.

My stays in Paris and New York between 2013 and 2018 are two examples of the way I work. In Paris, the Seine had flooded the city, and there were almost no people on the streets. I had the museums to myself, which was surreal. It kept raining. I went underground, where it was busy. I stepped onto a very crowded subway train. In the train compartment I was pressed together with other people. Air and space were forced out of the train compartment. I was infused with the warmth of the other passengers. I smelled unknown combinations of scents. The wet skin. Hair. Being stuck between bodies gave me a feeling of a standstill. In the meantime the train moved very fast. Because there were no doors between the compartments I could see the whole train up to the front. It squirmed like a flexible animal, and I felt like I was in the intestines of this animal. Back in my hotel room, I started to draw.

Sometimes, the drawings have little to do with the environment where I walk at that particular moment and what I see. Specific surroundings however bring about the frame of mind that brings forth the images.

- *Pieter Slagboom*

Pieter Slagboom (1956, NL) has previously exhibited at Vleeshal, Spaceburo Antwerp, Bytheway Projects Amsterdam, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Albada Jelgersma Gallery, Amsterdam (group show), and Krammig & Pepper Contemporary, Berlin. His drawing projects "Parma Violet" (2010) and "Salt" (2017) were published by Revolver Publishing in Berlin.