

PRESS RELEASE

JAPAN. WAR & FAIRYTALES

ELLA REITSMA.SNOEP

October 17 – November 19, 2020
Opening Saturday, October 17, 5-7 PM

Annet Gelink Gallery is pleased to present *Japan. War & Fairytales*, Ella Reitsma.Snoep's third solo exhibition in The Bakery. In *Japan. War & Fairytales* Reitsma.Snoep seeks to explain the contradictory relation that is at the heart of Japan's identity: its past as both aggressor and seeker of beauty. Steering clear of either vilifying or romanticizing, Reitsma.Snoep explores the complexities that underly this contradictory identity.

Having been interred as a child - together with only her mother - in Indonesia's infamous Japanese internment camps for 'enemy foreigners' from 1941 until 1945, Japan was a taboo subject for Reitsma.Snoep growing up.

The Japanese were considered cruel, unpredictable and the personification of pure evil. That said, though the beauty of Japanese artefacts, architecture and design had intrigued her as an Art History student, it was not until 2017 that she dared to visit the country. A successful trip that quickly led to a further exploration in 2019.

These trips form the foundation of the photomontages on view in The Bakery, with the works showing the various layers – modern and traditional - that shape the country Japan has become. Striking to Reitsma.Snoep was the dismissal of the crimes inflicted by the Japanese army; rather the emphasis when looking back to World War II was on Japanese anguish. From the young kamikaze sent to their deaths in name of honor to the unthinkable horror of the atomic bombs dropped on Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the trauma of history provides a stark contrast to the beautifully manicured gardens and parks, the well-kept shrines and temples, the fairytale like golden pavilion in Kyoto, and the bright lights of modern-day Japan.

She neither attempts to explain or justify the Japanese stance, yet portrays the culture in all its complexities: from the salary men and women rushing to work, the garish styles and accessories of Japanese pop culture, to the anguish and horrors of war and the position of the emperor, and the calm and aesthetics of the shrines and the traditional architecture. A mix especially poignant this year as August 15, 2020 marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Indonesian internment camps. Searching for an answer to bridge the gap between the aggressor and the tranquil beauty, Reitsma.Snoep rather finds the two sides coexist without impeding either. As she states, perhaps this duality is a cliché, but one that provides her with the path towards acceptance.

Reitsma.Snoep began her career at one of the Netherlands' most influential magazines, 'Vrij Nederland', working there as an art critic for 25 years and as art editor for 15 years. Alongside her writing career Reitsma.Snoep also made a name for herself as a puppeteer, traveling through the country and setting up performances for children. The puppets and sets for these performances were made by Reitsma.Snoep herself, whom acted out all the different roles herself. She cemented her name as puppeteer, by setting up her own puppet theatre in the barn of her 17-th century farmhouse in Abbekerk. In the past decade Reitsma.Snoep has published various books, including *Maria Sibylla Merian & Daughters* which accompanied the exhibition of the same name at the Rembrandthuis and the Getty Museum Los Angeles. She turned to photography, as part of her book *Duizend en meer verhalen op sterk water* (A thousand and more stories in formaldehyde). She picked up the camera to help tell the story of the Zoological Museum of Amsterdam. In her varied career the story and the telling of that story, whatever it might be, has always been the main focus. Whether that be as art historian, journalist, performer or artist.



Ella Reitsma.Snoep, *Precorona. Going to work Kyoto. Buddha temple*, 2020