

## Lili Dujourie

(Roeselare, Belgium, 1941)

Over the course of a long career which began at the start of the 1960s, Lili Dujourie has explored the expressive potential of a wide range of media and materials. While in the initial predominance of bare or painted metallic elements, placed on the floor or more often, leaning against the wall, an echo of American Minimalism may be sensed, from *Amerikaans Imperialisme* (1972), in one fell swoop she rejects US political and cultural hegemony and the depersonalisation of a prevalently male art form. This date marks another turning point in Dujourie's research, for it was at the same time that she began to experiment with video, producing a corpus of just under twenty works over the course of the decade. Purchased for the collection, the series *Hommage à... I-V* (1972) brings together five films which share the same framing and protagonist, i.e. the artist herself, portrayed completely naked on the bed as she tosses and turns between the sheets or abandons herself on the floor with a slow, lazy and bored rhythm. The use of suspension points in the title is intentional. In taking on this sequence of horizontal positions, Dujourie intends to evoke the many female subjects to be found in the history of art, yet without identifying with a figure or an artist in particular. Instead, she leaves it to the viewer to trace its origins in the classical Venuses, in the women of Courbet or in Duchamp's *Étant donnés*. The homage by the artist, who nevertheless never adhered explicitly to the feminist ideology of the day, highlights and questions the totality of a history which for many centuries was written only by men, relegating women to a passive object of the gaze. Her following videos, decidedly less connoted along the lines of provocation, are coupled by sporadic photographic proofs and various collage series, produced with scraps of paper torn by hand, or with images cut out of magazines, photo novels and advertising flyers.

*Zonder titel (Blauw naakt)* (1980) is the work that marks her definitive detachment from her experimentation of the 1970s. Although this double projection in colour features once more the figure of a naked woman, beside here for the first time appears a velvet drape: an element which would become a recurring theme in Dujourie's art from this moment on. Two years later, the installation *Maagdendale* marks her return to the three-dimensionality of her work, and the start of a more introspective and nostalgic research, endowed with references to the painting of the Flemish Primitives and the Baroque theme of *vanitas*. It was in this moment that the Belgian artist began to investigate the potential of materials through the contrast between the sinuosity of the drape and the coldness of the smooth surfaces of marble and mirrors. In the 1990s, her language changed once more, turning to leaden sculptures, portraits in iron wire and small objects in clay, right up to her more recent compositions in papier-mâché.

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