

## Speech Sara Guiducci at the vernissage of the exposition “PINK de Thierry”

A huge welcome to all of you here at the Hall in Haarlem. And a huge thank you to Lidewij, Manique and all the team at the Frans Hals Museum for organizing today and the exhibition. Pink was a ‘Haarlemse’ artist. She was born and grew up in Haarlem and though she didn’t live here during her adult life, some of her most important performances took place here, including her first large solo performance aptly named ‘At Home’ that took place here at the Grote Markt, as well as VideoSketchBook (recently acquired by the Rijksmuseum) and one of Pink’s most significant pieces Standing Stone, where she slept in the museum.

To those who wonder who I am, I am Sara, Pink’s daughter. The little girl in many of the pictures that you can see in the exhibition.

As the child of the artist people often ask me ‘what was it like to be part of the performances?’. I am afraid that I have no exciting answers. A young child accepts the world around them as fact. I do have memories of visiting museums with my mother, where I was always allowed to choose a postcard to remind me of my favourite piece of art. But here was the difficulty, as a child, I believed that artists made the prettiest most beautiful creations. When my mother took me to a museum, I was often baffled by the pictures that I saw as they were not always pretty and sparkling. I loved Monet and his gorgeous gardens, but struggled to understand most of what my mother showed me in modern art museums. As a child I struggled to understand the performances that my mother created, though I loved her later work on canvas, which is beautiful to admire. But children grow up and learn to understand the world and make choices. It is only as I studied classics and theology, that I learned that writers and artists don’t only create for our visual enjoyment but are also commentators on their time; they remind us of what is important and critique the world around them.

Pink embodied this concept of an artist. One of my favourite pieces, sadly not here today, is Checkpoint to Dutch Arcadia. She created this in 1994, where she commanded a troop from the Dutch army (yes, the Dutch army...the only time as far as I know that they worked for a civilian. Pink could be persuasive!), asking them to fill sandbags and rebuild part of a dyke that originally had been built as a defence. A defence against a human enemy (rather than water). Looking back, the timing was so poignant. She created Checkpoint to Dutch Arcadia in 1994; only 5 years earlier (in 1989) the Berlin wall had come down and only 3 years earlier (December 1991) we saw the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 1993 President Bush had travelled to Moscow to sign a treaty with the aim of reducing the strategic nuclear arsenal. It felt that the shadow of war had finally left Europe. Even as a 14 year old child, I remember it as a time that we believed in peace in Europe and there was talk that

having an army was superfluous. My mother, who was never a fan of the army, created Checkpoint to Arcadia against this backdrop and added a street sign, welcoming people in the main languages of Europe, while at the back was written 'see you again in Arcadia' in the languages that represented the largest groups of refugees at the time. At some point, they would not be refugees but part of our society. It was not a fashionable piece when Pink created it, but fast forward 30 years and Pink's work feels incredibly relevant.

What is it that people fight for? What do we need dykes and soldiers for?..... It is simply peace, family and the 'huiselijkheid van het leven'.

The nuclear family was a key concept of Pink's work. Husband, wife, child. This was not about gender or the size of family, but about the continuity of life, the nucleus of our existence and we fight for it. There are people who walk half way across the world to give their children a better life away from war, destruction, natural disaster and famine. Husband, wife, child is a key feature of Pink's work.

And with the nuclear family came another key concept of Pink's work: het thuiselijk leven, a word that is almost untranslatable. Pink came closest when she called it 'At Home'. While we stand here, there are soldiers in Ukraine fighting to safeguard the 'At Home' that they know with their families. There are people fleeing Sudan, leaving behind their 'At Home' to create a new 'At Home' in a safe place, forever longing for the 'At Home' that they have lost. To see how important 'At Home' is to our culture, we only need to look at social media to see that endless perfect picture of 'At Home'. It is an ideal so many strive towards. Pink reflected this in VideoSketchBook, where there are a series of portraits of the same nuclear family in the coziness of different sitting rooms in the Spaarnrijkstraat in Haarlem. I think some of the people who lived, or live now in the street, are here tonight. If I was a journalist, I would love to know what they think about the work.

We travelled a lot when I was little, we travelled in a large blue bus through Europe. And whenever Pink opened the door of the bus, she would say 'Sara, this too is your garden. The whole world is your garden'. Those that knew her well, know how passionate Pink was about her garden. It was her place of paradise, her place where nature could grow and her place to entertain. Pink and Donald hosted everyone in their garden from museum directors like Derk Snoep, art critics like Max van Rooy and even a streetfighter (at least, that was what Peter van Gogh used to call himself!). The garden as paradise, or at least the ideal that we humans have made it, was immortalised in Et in Arcadia Ego Sum.

Though Pink strongly believed that the whole world was your garden, she also believed that the museum was the home of the artist. In the way that René Magritte in 1929 painted a picture to convey that a painting of an object is not the same as the

object (Pink loved that work), in 1989 Pink made a performance to express her sense of the museum as the home of the artist. With her nuclear family, she slept in the museum, in fact in this museum, and she dined in this museum, together with her friends and family (I remember it well). Who are the friends of the artist? Who are the people the artist dines with?... obviously it is those that curate art, write about art and preserve art.

If Pink had stood here today, she would have said 'welcome to my home'. Where the artist's art is, is her home. Creating an exhibition takes time and the foundation for this exhibition was laid when my mum was alive and well. For Donald and me, and many of her friends here, it is incredibly difficult that she is not here and cannot experience it. But over the last few weeks, I was reminded again and again of something she used to tell me as a child.

She told me from a young age that an artist is the worst art critic and that when an artist dies, the art will start to live its own life. A few weeks ago, Pink passed away. And though for Donald, myself and many of her friends this is personally a great grief that we are still coming to terms with, yet at the same time, it also means that for her art, it is a new dawn. It is going to live its own life. Her oeuvre is finished and is now complete. It is now free to go into the world.

The work is made for you, the spectator, the guest of the museum, the art critic, the curator, all that I ask as her daughter is that you enjoy it, learn from it, look after it and allow it to blossom. Pink always asked 'ou est l'original?'. Well, the original is here. It is ready to live its own life. Enjoy.

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