

SPROUTED BEHAVIOR 2019

JACQUELINE DE JONG

PATATOE LOVE

Why potatoes? Though Vincent van Gogh painted various still-lives with potatoes, artists generally partial to blushing red tomatoes, ripe wine-colored eggplants, onions – flawless or sprouted, alluring orange carrots and, of course, the plethora of fruit sorts in all their multicolored hues and shades. Potatoes, on the other hand, at first sight, appear to be nothing more than an unremarkable clay-like lump.

It is thus notable that the potato has been an object of Jacqueline de Jong's fascination for quite some time. Back in 1975 she found inspiration from woodcuts in old cookbooks and her litho where potato peels fall from heaven, as if God himself is doing the peeling, is based on the book, *Eet meer aardappelen* (Eat More Potatoes). Still, potatoes, at the time, were more of a mealtime ingredient than an object for artistic expression.

It has been twenty-five years since Jacqueline planted her own potatoes for the first time. She had bought a chateau in central France on a large terrain with a vegetable garden. It did not take long before she was charged with excitement about growing these tubers: you put a whole potato into the earth and your harvest has multiplied underground. She began to experiment with different sorts, observed their beauty when they flowered – from white to bright purple – and thought about the land barons who, as they say, wore the flowers in their buttonholes. She discovered that the sort with purple flowers developed seedpods that she could dry and transform into cufflinks. She called them, 'Les couilles des pommes de terre' (potato testicles).

She stored her yield in crates on the long tables in the root cellar of her French home, and learned that with time they grew sprouts, some up to a meter long. The more the sprouts grew, the less potato there was because the tuber dehydrated. Even after reaching maturity, the potatoes continued to grow; new potatoes growing from the parent tuber was not the cause but, instead, ever-shifting forms. Irrespective of the sort, the sprouts could take on a range of colors. At times, they appeared to be deep lilac stalks searching for a way to be light; only later to change again to bushy-bruin witch hair. De Jong developed an eye for the morphology of the potato and suddenly envisioned endless possibilities for jewelry, collages, and installation, thus not just objects but material resources.

Jacqueline de Jong's latest work she made for the exhibition 'Sprouted Behavior,' at EENWERK, includes a diptych, gilded potato-objects and a potato floor installation. For her publication, *La psychogéographie des pommes de terre* (Potato Blues, onestarpres 2016) she photographed her modified potatoes. These photo's she used for the diptych that she worked with oil paint and applied relief with pumice stone, acrylic and dried potatoes.

For the potato floor installation (to be seen in the greenhouse above the gallery), she gathered thousand potato sprouts from the 2018 harvest that together forms a potato carpet. The sprouts are from her cellar in France. 'Sprouted Behavior' shows the different facets of the morphology of the potato. De Jong investigates, deforms and modify's. In this way, the potato evolves within her oeuvre from clay-like edible clog to gold-gilt object.

Xandra Schutte

Since the early 1960s, Jacqueline de Jong (Enschede, the Netherlands, 1939) has been creating a multifaceted oeuvre, effortlessly shifting between diverse artistic expressions – such as expressionistic painting, new figuration and pop art. Her work also ranges in scale, from small diptychs and hand-written diaries to monumental canvases where an absurd, and oftentimes violent and erotic, world rules. She was also deeply involved with the avant-garde scene in Europe and beyond and participated in the Situationist International (These are Situationist Times!, Torpedo Press 2019). De Jong works primarily in series; and a focus on the narrative is a constant factor in her oeuvre with themes ranging from violence and eroticism to space travel and gastronomy; from dialogue with icons to art history and literature, to the potatoes she grows in her garden in France. Following her recent retrospective exhibition, Pinball Wizard in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, De Jong will show her new series of works titled Sprouted in EENWERK Gallery.

Work of Jacqueline de Jong can also been seen at:

Durst Britt & Mayhew, The Haque

Rodolphe Janssen, Brussels / Fiac Paris 2019

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London / Frieze Masters 2019