



Hadassah Emmerich

Hadassah Emmerich (Heerlen, 1974) is regarded as one of today's most important Dutch painters. She makes exuberant, sensual paintings that stimulate the senses. Her creative process has a cyclic character, in which shapes and patterns keep recurring in a different composition or context, so that her works are in continual dialogue with one another. Emmerich thus spins an ever bigger and denser web of themes and associations. Her long, laborious creative process demands great physical and mental effort and concentration, which lends extra overtones and meanings to each detail. The ensuing monumental and generous works have a profound effect on the viewer and can evoke feelings of ecstasy.

The power of fusing is a central feature of Emmerich's oeuvre. In her work, she mixes together figures and patterns of flowers, plants and the female body, resulting in ornaments with an erotic appearance. The alluring images clearly refer to a fundamental life force and fertility, which are essential to both nature and mankind. Emmerich's blends, which in itself already suggest reproduction and sexuality in themselves, give rise to new life forms that are stronger, more colourful, more energetic or sometimes more virulent.



Sunset Curve, 2021, oil and ink on vinyl, 71 x 53 cm, credits: Hadassah Emmerich



Oben Ohne, 2021, oil and ink on vinyl, 71 x 53 cm, credits: Hadassah Emmerich



In her recent work, which is well illustrated by *Kiwi Kiss* (2021), Emmerich's visual idiom is more stylised. However, this does not lend an abstract detachment to what is depicted. On the contrary, a refined interplay of forms gives the whole work an undeniable physicality. Ambiguous shapes may suggest either leaves or genitalia, and foliage has the appearance of licking tongues. Viewers are continually surprised and challenged to use their imagination.

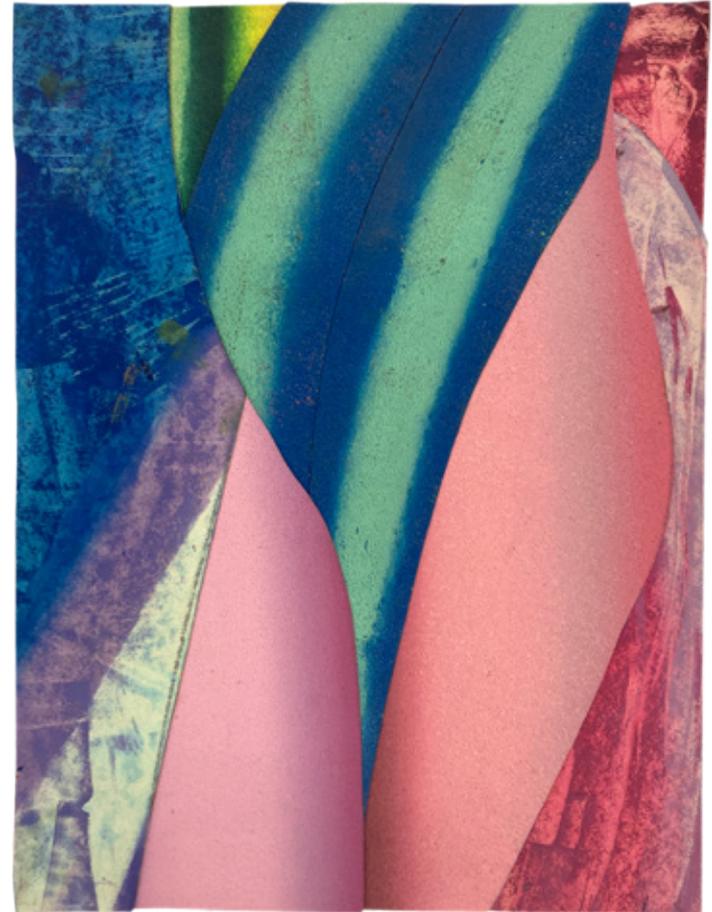
Emmerich's work is imbued with great urgency. With directness and self-awareness, it deals with the power relations between the various genders and feminism. In her themes, an important role is also played by power relations in the post-colonial era, which adds a raw, dark edge to her cheerful and luxuriant works. A good example of this

is the work *Rainbow Warriors* (2020). On the one hand, the hermetic composition is reminiscent of the coercive straitjacket in which we are restrained by today's physical ideals. On the other, the coloured, piled-up bodies of these warriors erect a barricade that protects and liberates us.

Repetition is an important element in Emmerich's creative process. She works with templates, stencils and printing techniques in order to keep using shapes in new ways in her work. It allows her to explore the reproduction and recontextualisation of knowledge and meaning. She also uses these methods when creating her murals, where their relationship to this place-specific art form is paradoxical. The necessarily one-off nature of a mural appears to contradict the idea of reuse, but ultimately it provides a

unique new context for the forms that appear, thus creating a new layer of meaning for the next time they are used. The mural *The Harvest* (2021), originally created for CENTRALE for contemporary art in Brussels, is an excellent example of this. Emmerich refers to the overwhelming work as a form of expanded painting: the work does not stand alone, but forms a total environment that transports the viewer. The erotic shapes are displayed grandly on the walls. This sensuality is not intimate, but overpowering. The viewer has to yield to it.

In 2021, Emmerich took a new step in her oeuvre. She decided to incorporate the pieces of inked vinyl that previously served as printing templates for her paintings and murals into a new series of vinyl collages. The used pieces of vinyl are reminiscent of leather or hide, and bear traces of use like scratches and scraped layers of paint. The playful placement of the material creates a painterly, illusory space. Once again, the fringes of painting are explored in the series, which weaves a new thread through the fabric of Emmerich's oeuvre. By spotlighting the working materials of previous projects, all the preceding works are given a new layer of meaning. In this way, Emmerich says, the collages help her to gain new insights.



Aussendusche, 2021, oil and ink on vinyl, 71 x 53 cm, credits: Hadassah Emmerich