

Localizations, Positioning

Notes on the series of works ERTUSSENDOOR and INBETWEEN

Gracia Khouw, October 2022

In ERTUSSENDOOR series I use the Dutch words: eroverheen (over it), ertussendoor (in between – something), ervandoor (getting away from or out of something) as a starting point.

The words indicate the interrelationships between objects, or between man and object. They are the so-called pronominal adverbs (voornaamwoordelijk bijwoorden). Writing prepositions and pronouns together is a remarkable grammatical construction in Dutch and German. I thought: I have found "residual forms" in the Dutch language. Words that connect one thing to another and mean nothing by themselves. Categorizing them as '...adverb' makes it seem like they don't matter. But if you don't know whether something takes place or happens over it, in between it or from it, the meaning of a sentence would elude you.

The INBETWEEN series also grew out of a fascination with words for localizations and positioning. In English, words like "anywhere, everywhere, inbetween" are the so-called "adverbs of place"; they tell us where something happens between people or objects. This makes an event specific, not exchangeable. The elements on a flat surface, such as a painting or a sheet of paper, have names or definitions: form, residual form, interspace, white space or negative space. Reflecting on space touches on the existential meaning of time and space: where exactly are we? How do things and people, like myself, the desk I am sitting at, the painting on the wall in the studio, relate to Amsterdam or to the planets?

Going back to the paintings. I have left the shapes of the letters bare, the remaining shapes are painted in the colors red, blue, black or green. The grain of the wood is visible as an accidental drawing; therefore each painting is different and unique. 'In limited edition' in this case means that a maximum of three copies of the smaller formats are produced. The largest form is made once and is one-of-a-kind in the traditional sense.

For a new image, I first have the smallest sizes cut out and I will paint these pieces. Next, I manufacture several copies in the different sizes. All those copies are unique. In other words, I do not make an original artwork and then a series of multiples or editions. You could say, I outsource the uniqueness of the work. I do not pick the sheets of birch plywood myself, I leave that to the company that laser-cuts. A related practice I did earlier with the series FIVE FOUR ..., prints of four-letter words, where there is not just one original but several. Thus painting has become a small-scale production process in this way in addition to manual craft. With this working method, I raise questions about the concept of uniqueness.

The image of words is laser-cut from a 6 mm birch plywood board, then processed and painted. Over time, the wood will darken. As to the extent, it is impossible to say. An MDF support is attached to the back, allowing the work to hang 2 cm from the wall; it floats slightly. This construction also allows the work to be hung four ways, at a 90-degree angle. Those four views of the object is an essential part of the painting.