



"Lily van der Stokker," 2002.
Installation view.

MILAN

LILY VAN DER STOKKER
GALLERIA FRANCESCA
KAUFMANN

Dutch artist Lily van der Stokker covered the exterior of an entire building with white on pink decorative motifs for Expo 2000 in Hannover. Adjusting this ornamental gigantism to the more ordinary dimensions of an interior gallery space, the artist perhaps allowed more subtlety to come into play. Large sinuous lines delineating fuchsia or similarly syrupy-colored flowers, typical of the artist's style, were repeated uniformly. There was a difference in the treatment of the gallery's two rooms that, though it was not obvious at first, ultimately revealed the conceptual dimension of van der Stokker's work, despite its apparent banality. The untitled wall painting in the first room—which is the gallery proper, the exhibition space—was conceived as the work to be "shown"; it was thus presented in the empty room. The adjacent room is a functional space (the office), and it was likewise decorated with analogous floral volutes, in the same patently mawkish adolescent style. In this space, however, the decoration was intended simply as decoration, and the wall painting assumed the function of simple wallpaper. In fact, a careful observer might have noted that in one area of the wall the painted motifs ran into each other with some confusion, the way patterns fail to line up properly when one does a poor job of applying wallpaper.

Moreover, the change in function from one room to the other was evident despite the consistency in style. On the office wall van der Stokker chose to hang

some small drawings related to previous wall-painting projects, all accompanied by an image of a sofa, which, in her drawings, always indicates the work's domestic, utilitarian fulfillment. Naturally, van der Stokker's intentions are polemical. The kitsch (I don't know how else to define it) of her colors and forms seems to have emerged from the notebooks of a daydreaming female student—one devoid of any visual culture. But simply by contrasting these motifs with the seriousness of the art discourse into which she interpolates them, van der Stokker seems to denounce art's detachment from the quotidian reality of ordinary people. And she addresses that reality's aesthetic implications, even those pertaining to subcultures about which we never have anything to say. A title typical of her small drawings is *Spectacular Experimental Art by Older People*, 2000, and she herself—not yet fifty—defines "old" in response to the hysterical pursuit of the "new" in the culture industry. These painted walls also inevitably brought to mind the utterly precise, masculine rationalism of an artist like Sol LeWitt, to whose work van der Stokker presents a deliberate contrast. Her art questions the distinction between the beautiful and the ugly, the meaning of creativity and aesthetic self-expression, and the place of pure pleasure (even when it is regressive) within intellectual experience. She carries out this interrogation with operations that become provocative simply because they are not legitimized by the art system's established conventions.

—Giorgio Verzotti

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.