

Idleness' Owl

Priscila Fernandes
with Terje Øverås

Priscila Fernandes traces parallel narratives in an alternative Boijmans collection guide. In *Idleness' Owl* Fernandes refers to artworks in the Boijmans collection by imagining the inner and (somewhat) fictional lives of the artworks and their makers. *Idleness' Owl* has been commissioned as part of the wider project 'The Artist as Educator', initiated by Yoen Meessen (Head of Education) and developed in collaboration with Lisa Heinis (Curator of Education) and Birgit van Beek (Coordinator Boijmans Hillevliet).

Priscila Fernandes gaat op zoek naar parallele verhalen in een alternatieve collectiegids voor Boijmans. In *Idleness' Owl* verwijst Fernandes naar kunstwerken uit de collectie van Boijmans door zich het innerlijke (en enigszins fictieve) leven van de kunstwerken en hun makers voor te stellen. *Idleness' Owl* is gemaakt in opdracht als onderdeel van het project 'The Artist as Educator'. Dit is geïnitieerd door Yoen Meessen (Hoofd Educatie) en verder uitgewerkt in samenwerking met Lisa Heinis (Conservator Educatie) en Birgit van Beek (Coördinator Boijmans Hillevliet).

Idleness' Owl

Priscila Fernandes
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With thanks to *Edward Clydesdale Thomson* for his insightful advice without which this book would not exist.

lately, something strange has been going on
we have seen an owl flying around in the museum
a grail-shaped alchemist, a bristling copper artichoke
her ciborium head — a transformation chamber
comingling birth, death, and rebirth
she is herald, witness, and factotum



Owl beaker
anonymous (in 1500–1600)
Redware, lead glaze, copper oxide,
scratched, 11 x 8 cm
Accession number: F 9395 (KN&V)

flapping her wings eagerly in the air
then hop-hop-hopping on the ground
then shooting through the ether with feathers on fire

she is a sacred glyph — a vitruvian owl
a light-mill, a wheel of colours and ideas
spinning in four dimensions



Untitled
Rob van Koningsbruggen (in 1986–1987)
Oil on canvas, 93 x 70 cm
Accession number: 3154 (MK)

eyes wide open, pupils dilating and contracting
from eternity to infinity, from night sphere to pin prick
swivel-headed hunter gliding on wings of silence

three-lidded eyes spelling spells that transfix
noble orbs, brimming with sable tincture, seizing its prey
with rings of gold descending before the claw



Painting
Rob van Koningsbruggen (in 1986)
Oil on canvas, 76 x 69 cm
Accession number: 3127 a-b (MK)



perched on a tower like a fluffy hourglass
waiting for the hour when lightning will topple
the already trembling structure

brick piled on lofty brick, mortar mixed with blood
obscene tongue poking at passing clouds and stars
bound to fall and crack, to shatter language and thought

The Tower of Babel
Pieter Bruegel (I) (in circa 1568)
Oil on panel, 74 x 59 cm
Accession number: 2443 (OK)

little owl, yawning friend, the museum is your playground
and hunting ground. you feed on the fine and the foul
but do you ever get a little drunk on the blood of saints?

the charming pellets that you regurgitate
bear witness to a brittle past, and your discreet stools
cause a subtle ferment in fertile soil



New Babylon
Constant (in circa 1963)
Lithography, 40 x 73 cm
Accession number: MB 1963/46i (PK)

sipping colours like fine wine, nibbling on curious shapes
drinking fluid thoughts, sucking the marrow of cracked concepts
soaking up all the sepulchral nourishment of the past

baroque columns of fat smeared with blood and ink
ligaments built from who knows what esoteric protoplasm
all digested unceremoniously by the eager enzymes of the owly gut



No Title
Han Schuil (in 1984)
Oil paint and alkyd on canvas, 195 x 220 cm
Accession number: 3129 (MK)

rooting around in entrails slimy with unpalatable controversy
gnawing at bones of outdated ideas, even chewing the brim of an old hat
the owl does not shy away from any dinner invitation

the gastric chaos of the owl's innards is a purgatory
where taste has been suspended and judgement averted
being eaten is a grace, being shat out is a forgiveness



Illustration for 'The Songs of Maldoror'
Salvador Dalí (in 1934)
Photogravure and drypoint, 16 x 21 cm
Accession number: BRL 1999-01 10 (PK)

the owl will gladly eat a horse without nostrils
who has lost its voice, but whose tail laments quietly
while serenading the dinner guest

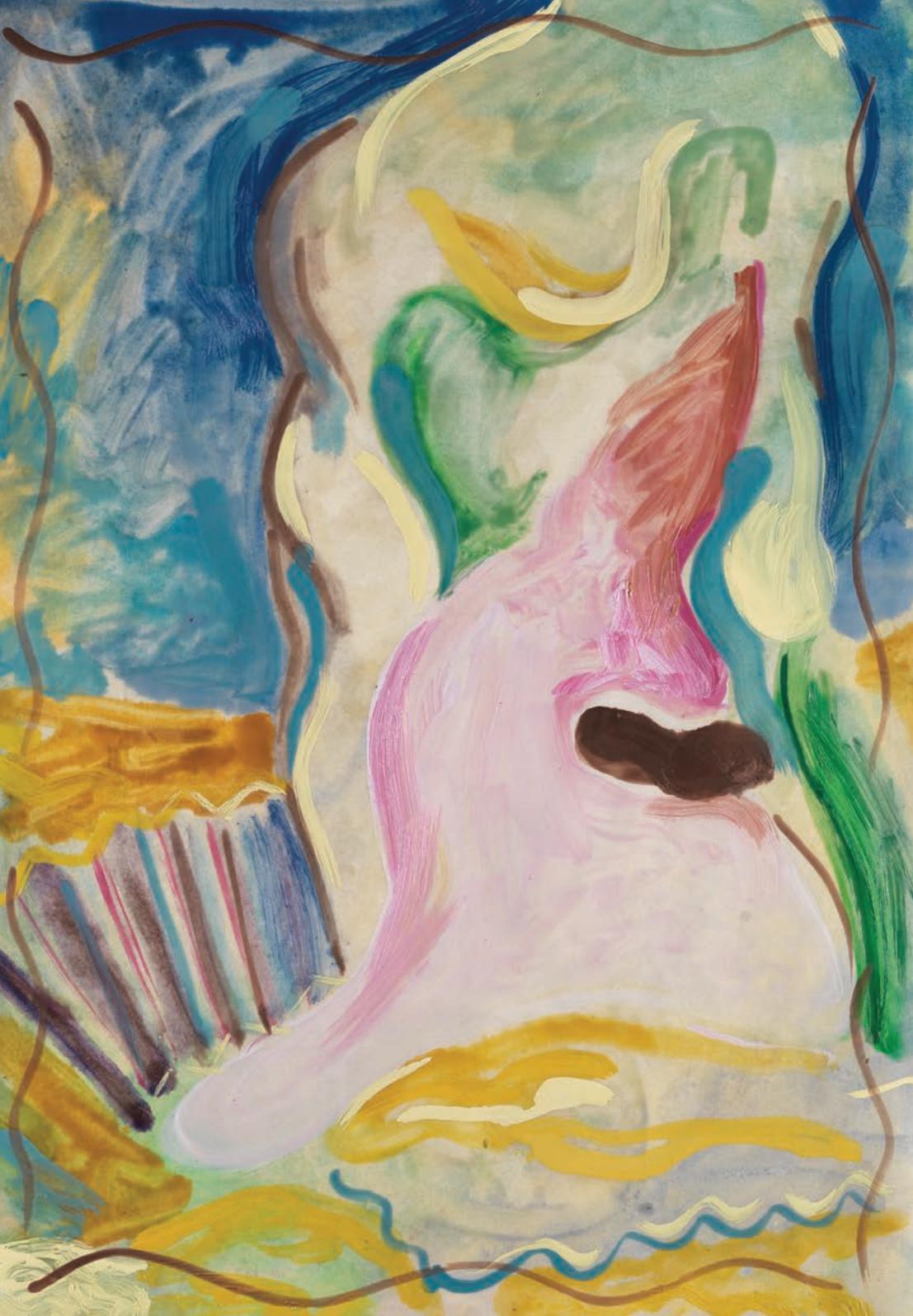
from this reanimated carcass I could fashion a steed
a sixteen-legged horse fit for the apocalypse
or to ride out and fight against it



Plein Air with Noseless Horses
Asper Jorn (in 1959)
Oil on canvas, 75 x 65 cm
Accession number: 3680 (MK)

nor is the owl a prude — it will gladly peck away at sexual organs
in flagrante delicto or in post-coital repose
it will even lap up the light leaking out of the energized enthusiast

regardless of whether you are a musician practicing alone
or a member of a choir singing together in ecstatic harmony
the owl will take part in your pleasure



Afternoon
J.H. Moesman (in 1932)
Oil on canvas with rope frame, 75 x 87 cm
Accession number: BRL 93-04 (MK)



the owl has an indefatigable hunger that only art will satisfy
a sketch for breakfast, a still life for lunch, an abstract sculpture for dinner
a voluptuous, reclining nude as a night snack

the museum is a grand buffét catering to discerning owls of promiscuous taste
and ours is a veritable gourmand, a strigiform glutton
a masticator of masterpieces and a tippler of marginal doodles

Egoïsme
Francis Picabia (in 1947–1950)
Oil on plywood, 153 x 110 cm
Accession number: 3400 (MK)

after a hearty meal, a ruminative mood tends to set in
as the art is digested and its ideas are broken down and metabolized
the owl puffs on a pipe and lets out rainbow-coloured farts
an æthanor of entrails where history is transmuted, solve et coagula
the inevitable nigredo, the ablution of albedo, citrinitas —
the expulsion of solar micturition and bilirubinedo before a final projection



Painting
Kees Smits (in 1983)
Acrylic on canvas, 180 x 180 cm
Accession number: 3161 (MK)

while straining over the chamber pot, the owl studies astrological charts
will this tiny turd fecundate the green pastures of art
or will it merely enrich the patina of an insignificant caryatid?

a benign natal chart might grant the stool a fairy godmother
while an unfortunate ascendant might degrade its status to a mere coprolite
take heed and plan your bowel movements accordingly



Again, the Gemini Are in the Orchard
Léonora Carrington (in 1947)
Oil on panel, 91 x 60 cm
Accession number: 4220 (MK)

the owl peers into the soiled bedpan with a concerned expression
looking for the stirrings of minuscule homunculi
in that dubious, primordial sludge, retching a little at the pungent bouquet

(artists are notorious coprophages, they eat their own excretions
and those of their peers — they wipe their bungholes with the pages
of history books and then lick their fingers clean — you are what you eat)



On the Origin of Species
Rob Scholté (in 1988)
Acrylic paint on canvas, 150 x 150 cm
Accession number: 3186 (MK)

a chemical wedding is taking place in the porcelain retort
and a light shines down on the union like a blessing
but the light descends with such force that the pot breaks

still, the wedding celebrations carry on like nothing has happened
the carousing and revelling seems never-ending
and the light pours down from the skies like wine



The union of England and Scotland
Peter Paul Rubens (in 1630–1633)
Oil on panel, 92 x 77 cm
Accession number: 2516 (OK)

the owl keeps amusing herself with the other wedding guests
while starving acrobats swing censers like bored choirboys
the mouth feels a little dry and the feet a little cold, perhaps

because the light is now mixed with soot from a chimney in the clouds
a palace of evil arts — the celebrations are getting out of hand
someone breaks a beer barrel, and a drunken priest pulls out a knife



La muse vénale
René Daniëls (in 1979)
Oil on canvas, 150 x 209 cm
Accession number: 3025 (MK)

the owl tucks into some vintage Dürer to get some fibre in her diet
the people in the picture are also guests at the party, they are also eating
it is their wedding too — all weddings happen simultaneously, in eternity

a sound is heard, like a double thunder, a siamese fulguration
the owl knows that the tower has finally succumbed to its destiny
and that the serpent sleeping at its root has been let loose again



Adam and Eve
Albrecht Dürer (in 1504)
Engraving, 24 x 19 cm
Accession number: DN 1274/225 (PK)

adam: *“my darling, why have you come to work dressed like that covered with a fig leaf — put it back in the case behind the plinth chaste popes and anaemic queens have not been seen in these parts in ages”*

the owl hangs upside down from the branch of a tree and ponders the prudent pudendum while swinging like a pendulum has this got something to do with the lilies of the field, she wonders



Still Life of a Home Seamstress
Wout van Heusden (in 1936)
Oil on canvas, 31 x 41 cm
Accession number: Stad-S 52

eva: *“my darling, you are always thinking about work
I came here dressed to contemplate — to vegetate, as it were
by the light of this green candle”*

the owl lets itself fall to the ground with a soft thud
she thinks the vegetables are up to some mischief
the roses are about to grow thorns



Adam and Eve
Albrecht Dürer (in 1504)
Engraving, 24 x 19 cm
Accession number: DN 1274/225 (PK)

"I have no time for that," says adam, looking at the clock in the museum
*"the animals will not name themselves, you know, and we have to be
fruitful, and multiply"* — he reaches for his pen and pocket calculator

the owl spits out a bit of engraving and looks at it closely

it is black and white — yet shimmering lysergically

it must have been tampered with, laced with something



Clock
Peter Behrens (in 1910)
Copper, glass, metal, synthetic,
10 x 26 cm
Accession number: V 2217 (KN&V)



the owl stops chewing for a moment — this is taking a wrong turn
almost like the infamous king midas caper
the owl takes a big gulp of cask-strength kandinsky to take the edge off

the owl looks nervously around the museum
things look the same, but maybe the taste is a bit blander
a bit duller, somehow at a remove — something is amiss

Grosse Studie
Wassily Kandinsky (in 1914)
Oil on canvas, 101 x 79 cm
Accession number: 2677 (MK)

Vases Indios. Owl on Branch
Fred Carasso (in 1956)
Drawing, 327 x 250 mm
Accession number:
MB 2020/T 231 (PK)

seeking affirmation that all is well, she walks into a pastoral tableau
she finds revellers sleeping — a peasant, a soldier, a clerk
poor man, rich man, thief — no war, just harmony

the owl lies down next to them and tries to rest, but her heart is beating
a little too fast, and a cold sweat is breaking out, her bowels
are rumbling and she feels a little ill



The Land of Cockaigne
Pieter van der Heyden (in circa 1570–1572)
Print, 19 x 27 cm
Accession number: BdH 12956 (PK)

the owl hums a little tune to calm the nerves: “oooooo,
*I am just a little owl lying in a field — oooooo, just a little owl
minding her own business — oooooo, just a little owl getting some rest”*

the owl listens to the snoring of the companions, but she can find no peace
“*I will have to go to the bathroom again soon,*” she thinks, a little annoyed
“*I should probably eat a little more, even though I am not even remotely peckish”*



Terra
Crispijn de Passe (I) (in circa 1590–1600)
Engraving on paper, 17 x 29 cm
Accession number: BdH 15964 (PK)

even Hercules allowed himself a little rest now and again
why is there no time to rest for little owls? what is the great hurry?
as if we are running out of time all of a sudden, as if someone is eating it
the owl is quiet, trying to hear the covert ingestion
but the snoring of the exhausted revellers is too loud
or maybe the sinister chronophage is too sly and clever to be caught at it



Hercules resting from His Labours
Giorgio Ghisi (in 1567)
Engraving on paper, 26 x 39 cm
Accession number: BdH 12484 (PK)

*“what about my own eating?” the owl ruminates, “is it yay or nay?
 have I been overdoing it? should I show some restraint? what about the shitting?”*
 the owl looks around, sees the chamber pot still leaking a stream of dross

*“idleness can be a virtue too,” she thinks, “but every virtue casts a shadow
 but then again, maybe every sin sparks a light? whatever the case might be
 today I do not feel like doing anything — I will stay in this field for a while”*



*Ulysses and the Cattle of Helios, the Sun
 God (Odyssey, Book XII)*
 Johannes Stradanus (in circa 1600–1605)
 Pen and brown ink, blue wash, heightened
 with white, framing lines with the pen and
 the brown ink, 18 x 27 cm
 Accession number: MB 332 (PK)

the owl leans back and stretches her legs out among the flowers
the world starts spinning and the colours bleed into a blur
and slowly her eyes fall shut and sleep sets in

it pours down from somewhere, filling her head like a cup
then the cup spills over and sleep fills up the entire world
a sleep without borders, without shapes — limitless



Untitled
Rob van Koningsbruggen (in 1985)
Painting, 70 x 70 cm
Accession number: 3126 (MK)

as she glides through dreams like water through water
she forgets her language, her memories, her habits, her desires
if freedom is the opposite of necessity — then idleness is a subtle revolution



Selfportrait with Landscape
Jim Dine (in 1969)
Lithography 53/75, 97 x 135 cm
Accession number: MB 1971/50 (MK)

Priscila Fernandes is a visual artist whose practice is rooted in an ongoing research into education, play, and the dialectics of work and leisure. Her work has been included in *Live Uncertainty* – 32nd São Paulo Biennial; *Lesson 0* at Foundation Joan Miró, Barcelona; *Back to the sandbox: Art and Radical Pedagogy*, Reykjavik Art Museum; *Playgrounds*, Museum Reina Sofía, Madrid; *Those bastards in caps come to have fun and relax by the seaside instead of continuing to work in the factory*, at TENT, Rotterdam; and *Leisure School*, at CIAJG, Guimarães. Other publications include *The Book of Aesthetic Education of the Modern School* (2014) and *The Waterslide of Abstract Art* (2022). Together with Edward Clydesdale Thomson, she is the Head of Department of BEAR (Base for Experiment Art and Research) at ArtEZ University of the Arts, Arnhem.

Terje Øverås is a recluse from the frozen north. He is the Janitor and Toilet Attendant at the Septentrian Collège of 'Pataphysics. In his spare time he drinks tea and climbs mountains.



Scan QR code to enter the online collection of Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, which the descriptions are referring to.

Priscila Fernandes is een beeldend kunstenaar. Haar praktijk bestaat uit een doorlopend onderzoek naar onderwijs, spel en de dialectiek van werk en vrije tijd. Ze heeft recent deelgenomen aan tentoonstellingen zoals *Live Uncertainty* – 32e Biënnale van São Paulo; *Lesson 0* in Foundation Joan Miró in Barcelona; *Back to the Sandbox: Art and Radical Pedagogy* in het Reykjavik Art Museum; *Playgrounds* in Museum Reina Sofia in Madrid; *Those bastards in caps come to have fun and relax by the seaside instead of continuing to work in the factory*, in TENT, Rotterdam en *Leisure School* in CIAJG, Guimarães. Andere publicaties van haar hand zijn: *The Book of Aesthetic Education of the Modern School* (2014) en *The Waterslide of Abstract Art* (2022). Samen met Edward Clydesdale Thomson is ze afdelingshoofd van BEAR (Base for Experiment Art and Research) aan ArtEZ in Arnhem.

Terje Øverås komt uit het hoge noorden en leeft solitair. Hij is conciërge en beheert de toiletten van het Septentrian College van Patafysica. In zijn vrije tijd drinkt hij thee en beklimt hij bergen.



Scan de QR-code om toegang te krijgen tot de online collectie van Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, waar de beschrijvingen naar verwijzen.

CONCEPT/ CONCEPT
Priscila Fernandes
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**museum van
boijmans beuningen**

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