

Fruitschaal

screenprint

1988

70 x 80 cm

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Eugène Brands

Eugène Brands is frequently mentioned in the same breath as CoBrA, and yet he was only briefly a member. He left the movement shortly after the notorious joint exhibition in Amsterdam's Stedelijk Museum in late 1949. His very personal views on art made Eugène Brands – a talented painter and a very likeable man - more of a loner.

And so he remained. Brands had an abiding interest in pre-colonised cultures, especially their music, attempting to express their magical elements in his work. For much of the Fifties his work also betrayed a fascination with children's drawings – a characteristic CoBrA feature, aided in Brands' case by the fact that his daughter Eugenie was a toddler at the time. For years he drew inspiration from this source, creating magnificent little paintings, most of them oil on paper.

In the Sixties Brands gradually abandoned representational art in favour of abstraction. He began to paint large areas of colour "of an impenetrable, cotton wool-like substance," as CoBrA historian Willemijn Stokvis writes. He continued doing so until well advanced in years, except that from 1993 onwards he concentrated on gouaches on paper, which he found less physically demanding. Eugène Brands died on 15 January 2002, the day of his 89th birthday.

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