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90 x 90 cm

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Rob Scholte

Amsterdam-born Rob Scholte studied at the city's Gerrit Rietveld Academie from 1977 to 1982, subsequently joining the artists' collective W139. Here he debuted together with Sandra Derks in 1982 with the 'masterpiece' Rom 87, a series of variations painted in free style on a book of children's colouring pictures.

Rob Scholte went on to jettison this style in favour of minutely detailed paintings which he started to exhibit in the Living Room in 1984. Scholte's works were selected for the prestigious Documenta in Kassel in1987 and in 1990 he was commissioned for the Dutch pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

For Scholte, there is no such thing as originality: reproductions play a major role in his art. Reproductions ensure that a work reaches out to the largest possible audience, and that's why the most frequently reproduced work of art is the most important, he once stated. In a precise, realist style (as if it were already a reproduction) Scholte copies existing images from the media, publicity and picture books.

In 1986 he caused a furore with Utopia, a copied postcard that drew accusations of flagrant plagiarism. Scholte's work played on Manet's Olympia, portraying its reclining nude and her black servant as wooden artist's puppets. That idea was not new, but derived from a work by an automaton maker pictured on a little-known postcard, an art critic charged. Scholte countered the accusation with a massive canvas depicting the newspaper article in question.

In 1991 Scholte won the commission for a massive frieze for the walls and ceiling of the Huis Ten Bosch Resort in Nagasaki, Japan. The mural, measuring 1200 square metres, took Scholte and his large team of assistants years to complete. Entitled Après nous le déluge, it took as its theme the continued recurrence of war through history.

During this period Scholte survived an attempt on his life, although the car bomb cost him both his legs. Nevertheless the Nagasaki masterpiece was completed on time. It was unveiled on August 9, 1995 to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the nuclear bomb attack on Nagasaki.

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