

## 'Pretty Much Everything' – Photographs 1985-2010

★★★★★

FOAM, until 15 September

When is photography an art form and when is it merely a publicity tool? The Dutch shutterbug duo Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin is a successful brand on the contemporary art market, and the photographers are familiar names in the world of fashion photography. Their work seems ubiquitous and appears almost interchangeably in fashion magazines and serious newspapers like *The New York Times*; they sell limited-edition prints at high-end contemporary art galleries. Some of the images are black-and-white glamour shots and others are slick, staged and highly manipulated digital images.

Under the suggestive title 'Pretty Much Everything', FOAM presents a survey of some 300 works by Van

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Lamsweerde and Matadin made since they started collaborating some 25 years ago. The show's studied disregard for the hierarchy between genres, subject matter and techniques mirrors the art on display. It blurs the boundaries between high art and popular culture and explores the ambiguous nature of identity.

'Pretty Much Everything' transforms the two floors of the FOAM building on the Keizersgracht into a labyrinth of ever-shrinking alleys. The photographs hang side by side with almost no space between them despite their varying format and framing. Haunting images like 'Anastasia', a portrait of an androgynous girl with a black mask painted on her whitened face, hang next to a psychedelic portrait of Bjork.

Also punctuating the show is a set of fragile assemblages of cut-outs of black-and-white photographs and thin metal bars that look like insects pinned on to the wall. They are the product of a five-year collaboration between Matadin, Van Lamsweerde and her uncle, sculptor Eugene van Lamsweerde.

On the ground floor, the viewer barely has room to turn around, let alone contemplate the images from a distance. One is trapped in a visual maze. The photographers designed the show together with M/M, the Paris-based design bureau with an aim



Top: 'Delfine', Inez van Lamsweerde & Vinoodh Matadin  
Bottom: 'Joanna', Inez van Lamsweerde & Vinoodh Matadin

to give viewers the feeling they are taking a walk into the artists' mind – a place where images merge without concern for their original use. It is a diachronic flow of images, a kaleidoscopic view on a prolific career.

As one walks through 'Pretty Much Everything' it's hard not to wonder if these unlikely juxtapositions aren't just an attempt to redeem the fashion ads and celebrity portraits by placing them alongside the truly disquieting images that are the better work. These more substantive images are what have earned Van Lamsweerde and Matadin a special place in art history books. It's a pity one isn't able to appreciate them without the commercial element. They become a bit like having a television on in the background of a serious conversation: just so much visual noise.

Catherine Somzé

Art