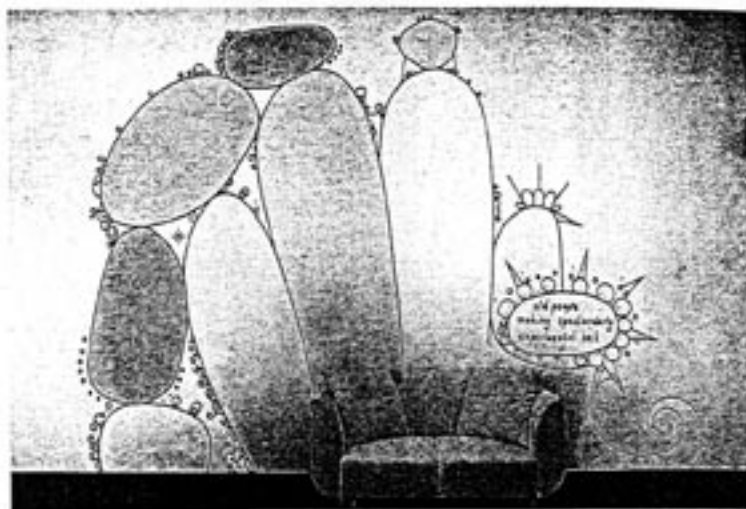


LILY VAN DER STOKKER FEATURE, INC.

It had to happen: As boomers rack up the birthdays, old age becomes a hot topic. A few months back, the *New York Times* announced: MODELS, DEFIANTLY GRAY, GIVE AGING A SEXY NEW LOOK. At around the same time, Lily van der Stokker (born at the boom's peak, 1954, in the Netherlands) offered an artistic counterpart to defiantly gray models: an untitled exhibit that included such works as *Old Women and Experimental Art*; *Spectacular Experimental Art by Older People*; and *Extremely Experimental Art by Older People* (all 1999). She considered calling the show "Old-Fashioned." Get it?

Nearly all of this spectacular, extreme experimentalism was rendered in van der Stokker's characteristically demure medium: colored-pencil drawings on paper about the size and quality of letter-size Xerox bond, presented as designs for wall paintings and their settings. Most of the drawings call for furniture positioned in front of each painting; however, the sofa in *Old People Making Spectacularly Experimental Art*, 1999, the single wall painting on view, was sadly off-limits for sitting. The drawing 1980-81, 1998, which is labeled "Monument for the Past," pictures two pale-blue contemporary sofas before a large gray form crossed with diagonal lines, its upper edge evoking a graph of the passage of time (life's ups and downs?). In *Art by Older People 70 & 72*, 1998, a pair of lemon-yellow chairs brackets a sign bearing that title; spreading leftward is a yellow blob in which brightly colored elliptical shapes float—a stunted expression of a '60s light show. A patchwork of multihued shapes makes up the bright, chirpy, Klee-ish *Not Bad This Weather*, 1998.

Having gained a reputation for aggres-



Lily van der Stokker, *Old People Making Spectacularly Experimental Art*, 1999, acrylic on wall, couch, 16' x 12' x 34'.

sively cute art, van der Stokker has moved on to pure, and old-fashioned, ideas about what's new and edgy and "modern." One could imagine her producing this work with the help of an art class at her local senior citizen center. An ongoing concern of van der Stokker's is the gap between the elitist art world and the creativity of everybody else, which leads her to link two factions: radical, out-there artists and people "left aside by society, making no movement," as she notes in girlish script in the margins of *Art by Older People 70 & 72*.

Van der Stokker includes herself in the project, as part of the generation that is, or soon will be, considered old (and will probably invent a new word for it). In works like *My Mother Is 84*, 1998, and *Lily & Jack 41 57*, 1998, the numerical facts are so many casual lies. But it's insouciance with a shade of seriousness: Van der Stokker makes herself any age she wants—not to seem more youthful but to question notions of age, or time. Ages made permanent on a wall are eventually wrong, anyway.

Van der Stokker's fudging of numbers is akin to her goofing in a recent interview, in which this champion of beauty-as-banalities, this unabashed promoter of prettiness, claimed she now wants "to put more ugliness in the world, because beauty doesn't work and maybe has had its time." The contradiction is calculated—and carries a strong hint of possibility. Van der Stokker's art, so blandly pretty and assertively dumb, has sublimated into something people find enchanting and meaningful—not unlike models and those

who worship them. Why not put ugliness in the same mysterious vacuum?

—Julie Caniglia