

Let me introduce myself. My name is Marliz Frencken.

I grew up in northern Limburg, and didn't see an exhibition till I was 16. The first exhibition I saw was when I did a train trip around Holland. Me and a friend of mine went to a Arnhem Museum of Modern Art and saw a film about a drop falling into a bucket of water. The film lasted a long time. At a certain point the bucket overflowed and that was the end. It left me dazed, and I thought a lot about it afterwards.

But something else happened, too. Between 12 and 17, I took painting classes with an artist from Limburg in my parents' attic (with a few friends). He was a very inspiring man, and every week he'd bring books about Renoir, Cézanne, Matisse, Paul Klee, Giotto, and many other great masters. That's when I started looking at pictures. It was only when I told this story to the manager of the Roermond Municipal Museum two years ago, and he asked me the name of this artist, did I realise that I was in fact taught by a very remarkable man. He told me that the artist, whose name was Louis Smeets, was the right hand of an internationally acclaimed stained glass artist called Nicolas. Nicolas' son told me my teacher was a great colourist.

So I learned a great deal from a young age. Something I didn't realise at the time, but I absorbed it all. My love for looking at art comes from this Limburg artist. And that's how I picked up the habit of looking at pictures. Even today, I can look at a picture in an art magazine the size of a stamp, and it can still move me deeply. I just love looking at pictures.

My mother also greatly affected the way I look at art. My mother came from the flamboyant town of Maastricht. She was a beautiful woman who unfortunately died far too young. She married my father, a businessman, and moved to the blunt and austere north of Limburg. But she brought her beauty. Always dressed in



beautiful clothes, gorgeous fabrics, beautiful jewellery, strings of pearls, embroidered table linen and silver and crystal bowls. When she fell ill, at a young age, our house was filled with priests, altar servers, altars (which they'd let me decorate), chandeliers, copper altar bells, canonicals, statues of the Virgin Mary, and rosaries. It all came in, together with the priest, that rich Roman Catholic life, but also her deterioration. This taught me how to look as well, that deep gazing, and when I was sad because I saw my mother's beauty fading away, I would hide in all those beautiful fabrics and seek comfort in them. I remember the material of all the dresses I wore when I was very little, the wonderful cloth Christmas figures my mother had made herself, and the sensation of my hands digging into the oily clay of a clay mountain – we lived opposite a brickyard. Before she died, she gave me a carton box of Mon Cherie chocolates

filled with small tubes of Talens oil paint, in all the colours of the rainbow.

I learned it at my mother's knee.