**Christian Wisse - Individu / Individual
Exhibition: 6 September - 11 October 2014
Opening: Saturday 6 September 16-18hrs**
Christian Wisse (1956, Terneuzen, NL) has a long-standing relationship with Galerie De Witte Voet, with her latest body of work made specifically for exhibition at the gallery. Individu / Individual presents a series of larger-than-life ceramic heads, faces that lie just beneath the surface of vision. Melancholic expressions, contorted faces, and those that stare in a serene silence, as the terrors of the world unfold around them. Its initial inspiration is drawn from the shell shocked, emotionally wounded and traumatised faces that line the pages of newspapers and magazines, media clippings of the human condition in all of its traumatic glory. The artist finds herself drawn to images of human suffering, images that stir her emotions, and elicit her empathy, ordinary people dealing with the injustice of life. The pain and sickness of innocent children seeming to resonate the most, perhaps because they have not yet learnt to conceal their emotions, and their expressions still contain a raw truthfulness. On top of their faces lie a patina of colour, embellished with gentle, swooping circles, daydream clouds, aggressive spots, and shining black dots. The circle has been a reoccurring pattern within her work over the years, instinctively significant. It seems a fitting shape for her subject matter, the difficulty of drawing a perfect circle, like people they are full of imperfect lines and symmetry.

The imperfection of the human condition is a reoccurring theme within Christian Wisse’s work, in her last exhibition at De Witte Voet in 2008 she produced a series of idiosyncratic ceramic portraits, beautiful yet slightly grotesque. Deliriously content, smiling creatures, with skin tags, and holes that expose the vulnerability of their surface. Her sculptures seek to draw out the truth, the hidden delicacies of what it is to be human, opposed to it being something that society seeks to hide. This current exhibition of portraits echo this rather successfully, the truth and anguish of their faces, juxtaposed with layers of colourful glaze that cover them with false light and meaning, the washes of colour and pattern creating a distraction from their anguish and intensity. We all find ourselves hiding behind a similar façade, which becomes very difficult to unveil.

Some of the portraits possess an intense and bold stare, whilst others filter off into a state of transcendence, bliss or the ecstatic stare of human horror. Some seem melancholic, and pensive, others defiant with rage. One of them almost looks like a Grecian saint, her face deploring, innocent and pure, immortalised in an ancient kind of youth. Antique in its structure, but her modern veneer betrays this heritage, large spots circle her face, with skin that dissolves in yellow pools, creating an appearance almost akin to the soft flocks of textured wallpaper.

The soft creamy surface of the unglazed clay, and the quiet pale suffering of the replicated image seem so pure and untarnished that the artist says the first coat of glaze is the most difficult to apply, it is like passing over a threshold, as if committing an act of destruction. But with each layer she is released from this attachment as the person it once represented gradually moves further away, as if the curious ability of the paint creates the lustrous illusion of distance.

For more information about Christian Wisse visit her website: [www.christianwisse.nl](http://www.christianwisse.nl)

© Jennifer Picken 2014