

BIRTHE PIONTEK: ARTIST STATEMENT

*Her Story* (2016)

“... one must see many cities, men and things. One must know the animals, one must feel how the birds fly and know the gesture with which the small flowers open in the morning. One must be able to think back to roads in unknown regions, to unexpected meetings and to partings which one had long seen coming; to days of childhood that are still unexplained, to parents that one had to hurt when they brought one some joy and one did not grasp it (...); to childhood illness that so strangely began with a number of profound and grave transformations, to days in rooms withdrawn and quiet and to mornings by the sea, to the sea itself, to seas, to nights of travel that rushed along on high and flew with all the stars-and it is not enough if one may think all of this. One must have memories of many nights of love, none of which was like the others, of the screams of women in labor, and of light, white, sleeping women in childbed, closing again. But one must also have been beside the dying, one must have sat beside the dead in the room with the open window and the fitful noises. And still it is not enough to have memories. One must be able to forget them when they are many, and one must have the great patience to wait until they come again...” - Rainer Maria Rilke

*Her Story* is a meditation on my mother's and grandmother's loss of memory due to Dementia and Alzheimer's disease and examines the relationship between memory and identity.

*Mimesis* (2012–14)

With *Mimesis* I continue my exploration of the self and the human quest for identity.

While the complexity and fleetingness of our self might make it look like a futile task to truly capture the essence of our identity, we create, share and look at millions of images of ourselves every day, in a tireless attempt to provide tangible proof of our existence. To be reassured, we somehow need to make ourselves more seen – by self and other.

As any look in the mirror, photograph taken or portrait painted only offers a small glimpse of a being, images merely serve as a representation of the original. But what is the reality of the self?

With *Mimesis* I create a fictional world of representation that mediates our relationship to reality. I appropriate, change and reinterpret the original representations, in an effort to invite the viewer to look beyond the surface.

Here one may discover further embedded layers – the uncanny, the mysterious, the sad, the joyful, the painful – an expanding perceptual experience inviting exploration of the unknown parts of the self.

Thus *Mimesis* encourages us to engage with our deep, emotional longing to understand, articulate and visualize the complexity and universality of the human condition; and to take us beyond our usual, conditioned way of seeing and feeling.