

Helmie Brugman (1957) shows the installation *Who Cares?* at De Cacaofabriek in Helmond(NL). It is a fine presentation centered on achievability, vulnerability, vitality and care.

The one David is not the other David,

Written by Anneke van Wolfswinkel, daily newspaper Thursday 19 June 2014, EINDHOVENS DAGBLAD (culture section).

A little army it is, a small procession of little boys. Still and quiet they stand in the attic of De Cacaofabriek, all with the same face. Different colors of clay have been used to create them, white, light brown, terracotta and black. They appear to be fragile and are supported by planks, lashing straps, pieces of foam and Styrofoam. Some hands are missing and some arms are bandaged. They all bear the same name: David,

Helmie Brugman (1957) created the statues for the installation *Who Cares?* during a working period in Sundaymorning@EKWC, the Bossche ceramic atelier. This exposition not only shows the statues but also the creative processes. Drawings, clay templates, a collection of "botched" heads and faces are all on display. A misshapen form of a little boy lies on the bottom shelf of small cupboard. These templates and failures are not meant as a sort of documentation but form an essential part of the installation. The statues that did make it into the army are not perfect either. Far from it! Seams don't fit, legs are bowed, the clay might be far too thin or at times too heavy. The power of this work is expressed by the fact that children show these deformities. A child, not even an image of a child, leaves no one unaffected. Children present innocence, promise, future and growth.

A child should not be damaged or broken as these little Davids are. That's why the bandages and the caringly added pieces of foam are so touching; these children are looked after. Or not? The planks, glue-clamps and the lashing straps make it all look quite brutal.

The more one looks the more ambiguities one sees. The cupboards full of experiments makes one think of the art-academy where students endlessly draw human figures from models. But, because of the deformities, they also look a bit like old medicinal cabinets exhibiting skeletons and babies in bottles filled with formaldehyde.

And the line-up of the boys? It refers to the Terracotta Army which was given as a tomb gift 2,200 years ago to the Chinese Emperor Qin Shi Huangdi. But these boys do not look like they are destined for eternity. Brugman has, just outside the area where the statues are placed, created two extremes. High upon a pedestal a David is placed, this David does not need to be supported. He stands proud, with his head held high, a pose that is taken from the world famous Michelangelo statue *David in Florence*. He is the ideal boy, perfectly formed, strong, brave, a young action hero. In the rear of the room there is another extreme, a boy who during the exhibition literally falls to pieces. He sits on his knees, a gaping hole in his back and one of his hands has been broken off the arm. His own ruins surround him. *Who Cares?* is a powerful and impressive installation. Even though small damaged children are being shown, this is far from a one sided story on for example abuse or child molestation. Through the subtle and poetic references and layers of significance the viewer is invited to create his or her own story on achievability, vulnerability, vitality and care.