

Ticking timebomb of grinding middle-class happiness

Like the Real Thing

SASKIA DE COSTER

Manon and Max, along with their teenage daughter Noah and poodle Kim, seem to be the perfect hipster family. Both parents are getting ahead in their jobs, they like good food, and are proud of their successful sex life. A combination of money and taste has persuaded them to buy a crumbling mansion with 'great potential'. The fact that the front door jams and often completely refuses to open not only highlights the need for extensive renovation (which is repeatedly postponed), but also a deteriorating relationship. While her father loses himself in an affair with a neighbour and her mother makes a career overseas, teenager Noah explores her sexuality.

An apt and comical portrait of a young generation of parents

TROUW

In 'Like the Real Thing' Saskia de Coster tells a personal story about love, parenthood, and infidelity through a fictional account of a family in a gentrified district of Antwerp. The chapters about relationships falling apart alternate with shorter reflections on De Coster's own unfaithfulness, her role as a mother, and the family in which she herself grew up. In this meta-commentary, visually enhanced by the use of white letters on a black background, she explores the unstable relationship you enter into with those around you when you are a parent, and how it's impossible to excel.

De Coster's style is clear and compelling, with room for gothic and horror elements. The house comes to life and the small distortions of day-to-day existence become out of proportion. Beneath the banality, madness lurks. De Coster dissects contemporary relationships in all their manifestations, a minefield in which she is able to exhibit her comic talents. It makes 'Like the Real Thing' a delightful contemporary comedy of manners.



AUTHOR



Saskia de Coster (b. 1976) is an artist, playwright and regular participant in television debates, but above all she is the author of a unique literary oeuvre. Her family chronicle *We and Me* became a bestseller and was nominated for just about every Dutch-language book award there is. The more personal and semi-autobiographical *Night Parents* is an ode to love and non-biological parenthood. Characteristic of De Coster's oeuvre are the striking images and profound stories. Most of her novels have been or are being translated. Photo © Koos Breukel

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